West Northamptonshire Joint
Core Strategy Pre Submission

Appropriate Assessment

Prepared for:
West Northamptonshire Joint
Planning Unit

Prepared by:
ENVIRO UK Ltd

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Executive Summary

ENVIRON and Treweek Environmental Consultants (TEC) were appointed by the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit in March 2009 to undertake the Appropriate Assessment (AA) for the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

‘Appropriate Assessment (AA)’ is required under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) for any proposed plan or project which may have a significant effect on one or more European sites and which is not necessary for the management of those sites. The purpose of AA is to determine whether or not significant effects are likely and to suggest ways in which they could be avoided.

A screening exercise\(^1\) was undertaken of the West Northamptonshire Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper\(^2\) in 2007. The screening exercise identified that the Joint Core Strategy could result in Likely Significant Effects (LSE) on European sites and therefore AA was needed. The sites identified which could be subject to LSE were Rutland Water SPA and Ramsar site and Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar site and these were ‘screened in’ to the AA.

The next stage in the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy was the preparation of an Emergent Joint Core Strategy. This document was subject to AA in 2009. The Emergent Joint Core Strategy presented some new options which were not considered at the screening stage and therefore it was necessary to ‘re-screen’ that version of the plan to confirm the European sites which needed to be considered in the AA. The re-screening exercise concluded that in line with the original screening report, the European sites that needed to be considered in the AA were:

- Rutland Water SPA and Ramsar site; and
- Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar site.

The Emergent Joint Core Strategy was then assessed in order to identify potential adverse effects on the integrity of these two sites. The results of the AA and recommendations for avoidance and mitigation measures are presented in the ‘Draft Appropriate Assessment\(^3\)’. This report was consulted on alongside the Emergent Joint Core Strategy, including with Natural England. A number of potential adverse effects of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy were identified in the AA in relation to Rutland Water SPA and Ramsar site and Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar site. Natural England confirmed that they were happy with the AA presented and the impact avoidance measures put forward to address the potential adverse effects identified in the AA.

One of the measures recommended in the Draft AA Report 2009 was to undertake survey work in the vicinity of the Clifford Hill Gravel Pits to inform the avoidance and mitigation measures required. Clifford Hill Gravel Pits is the component site of the Ramsar site and Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar which lies closest to Northampton and perform

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a key role in the functioning of the site. The scope of the survey work was agreed with Natural England and survey work has been undertaken during 2009 and 2010 to provide data for the AA of the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy.4

The AA of the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy has used the AA of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy as a starting point. Please note that the preparation of the AA included discussion with Natural England and this informed the drafting of the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy. The steps undertaken in the AA of the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy are as follows:

**1. Rescreening of policies:** In light of both the site conservation objectives and a understanding of the ecological structure and function of the European sites, the policies within the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy were screened to ascertain whether they have the potential to result in LSEs. Policies for which LSEs were not identified were not subject to any further specific assessment. However, these policies continued to be considered in light if the affect of the plan as a whole and the opportunities these policies provided for mitigation measures.

The rescreening exercise confirmed that potential adverse effects on the Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar site needed to be considered in the AA, but no other European sites needed to be considered.

**2. Assessment of ‘screened in’ policies:** Policies which were not screened out were considered further in the AA. In line with the AA of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy, an assessment table for each European designated site was prepared and potential effects of the ‘screened in’ policies of the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy were identified. The tables then recorded whether the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy included mitigation for potential adverse effects (such as through the incorporation of impact avoidance measures identified in the Draft AA of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy) and a conclusion was reached regarding whether a potential adverse effect still remains. Further impact avoidance measures were then identified where necessary.

**Conclusions of the AA**

The previous issues regarding loss of supporting habitat, fragmentation, water quality, disturbance and pet predation resulting from the Emergent Joint Core Strategy were largely due to the development of the Northampton South East Sustainable Urban Extension and supporting habitat. This option has not been included in the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy and so reducing the risk of impact.

With relation to the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy:

The Southern Extensions to Northampton (Policies N5 and N6) could lead to loss of “sub optimal” or “optimal” supporting habitat and so further ground truthing and site survey will be needed. Policy BN4 provides for this but it is recommended that **Policy BN4 should also be amended to include “where there are existing buildings, development should reflect surrounding building heights”** to address comments received from Natural England.

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The reduction in quantum of development, additional information from the emerging water cycle strategy and additional wording in Policy S10 “to maximise water efficiency, and for all development (unless it can be demonstrated that it would not be viable) to achieve as a minimum standard code for sustainable homes level 4” has removed the risk of adverse effects associated with reduction in water levels at Rutland Water SPA and Ramsar site and Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar site.

The non-inclusion of the Northampton South East Sustainable Urban Extension and measures to incorporate natural open space with natural and semi natural areas in all new residential development as well as policy BN4 which requires all new development to demonstrate through the development management process that there will be no significant adverse impacts, will remove the risk of adverse effects with regards to disturbance. However, there is still a potential issue with the need to maintain an unobstructed line of sight for the Golden Plover for predator detection which is important while feeding, resting and roosting. Development close to habitat used by Golden Plover can reduce sight-lines and therefore the habitat’s suitability for feeding and roosting. Where there is existing development, any new development will need to reflect existing building height.

However, as survey work has identified that the Upper Nene Gravel Pits is currently significantly affected by disturbance from visitors and dog walkers, it is recommended that the plan seeks to improve rather than simply mitigate the situation. Reduction in current pressures may allow the site to accommodate an increase in visitors. To provide a mechanism for the facilitation of any developer contributions towards site management it is recommended that an addition to the supporting text of BN4 is made to encourage dialogue between developers Natural England, wildlife trusts, the pSPA landowners and Northampton Borough Council in order to establish a suitable site management plan and access management plan. Funds allocated for management could potentially be coordinated through the River Nene Regional Park.

Following the addition of text within policy BN4 on limiting building height as requested by Natural England it will be possible to conclude that there will be no adverse effect on site integrity from the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy.

This AA report is being published for comment alongside the West Northamptonshire Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy document from the 17th February 2011 until the 31st March 2011. If you have any comments on this report please send them before 1st April 2011 to:

West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, PO Box 1022, Northampton, NN1 9EA
Tel 01604 837838 Email: westnorthantsjpu@northampton.gov.uk
Phone: 01604 837838

This report is also available to view and download at:
http://ldfconsultation.westnorthamptonshirejpu.org
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

‘Appropriate Assessment (AA)’ is required under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) for any proposed plan or project which may have a significant effect on one or more European sites and which is not necessary for the management of those sites. The purpose of AA is to determine whether or not significant effects are likely and to suggest ways in which they could be avoided.

This report presents the results of a Stage 2 AA (see section 2 for stages) of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and accompanies the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy during the representations period from the 17th February 2011 until the 31st March 2011.

1.2 The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) has been prepared by the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (JPU) on behalf of the three Councils of Daventry District, Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire working together with Northamptonshire County Council.

The Joint Core Strategy sets out the long-term vision and objectives for the whole of the West Northamptonshire area for the plan period up to 2026, including strategic policies for steering and shaping development. It identifies specific locations for strategic, large-scale new housing and employment and changes to transport infrastructure and other supporting community facilities, as well as defining areas where development will be limited. It also helps to ensure the co-ordination and delivery of other services and related strategies.

1.3 European Sites

On 1st April 2010 the 1994 Habitats Regulations and all subsequent amendments to date were superseded by a new statutory instrument and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 transposes into English Law the requirement to carry out Appropriate Assessment (AA) for projects and land use plans. Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 requires AA of plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on a European site. This means that the effects of such plans/projects on European designated sites need to be assessed to ensure that the integrity of these sites is maintained.

Regulation 102 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 specifically relates to land use plans and sets out that plan-making authorities need to make an AA of the implications for European designated sites in view of the conservation objectives of such sites, before the plan is adopted.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 are commonly referred to as the ‘Habitats Regulations’.

In the case of land use planning, European designated sites are Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Planning Policy Statement 9 Biodiversity
and Geological Conservation (PPS9) (ODPM, 2005) advises that proposed sites awaiting approval – potential SPAs (pSPAs) and candidate SACs (cSACs) should be treated in the same way as those already classified and approved.

PPS9 also recommends that Ramsar sites should be afforded the same level of consideration as SPAs and SACs, in policy if not in law. All SPAs, (non-marine) SACs and Ramsar sites overlap to some degree with Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). AA relates specifically and exclusively to the qualifying interests of European sites and not to the broader conservation interests or requirements under other SSSIs. However, the latter should be factored into plan-making as part of the SEA / SA process and the planning authority’s duty under section 28G of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to conserve and enhance SSSIs in carrying out their functions.

1.4 Habitats Regulations Assessment Work on the Joint Core Strategy to date

Figure 1.1 sets out the Habitats Regulations Assessment work (including AA) that has been undertaken on the Joint Core Strategy.
According to Government draft guidance\(^5\), AA can be divided into the following stages:

1. **AA Stage 1**: Screening for likely significant effects – identifying whether a plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

2. **AA Stage 2**: Appropriate Assessment – collection of information, and ascertain the effect on site integrity the effects of the Core Strategy on European sites ‘screened in’ during Stage 1.

3. **AA Stage 3** mitigation and alternative solutions – where adverse effects are identified in Stage 2, the plan should be altered until adverse effects are cancelled out fully\(^6\).

A screening process was carried out in March 2007 by ENVIRON and TEC on the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper to establish whether the Joint Core Strategy might have any ‘Likely Significant Effects’ (LSEs) on any European site and therefore to determine whether a full AA would be required for the Plan\(^7\).

Following a comprehensive review of five SPAs / SACs, LSEs were identified for Rutland Water SPA/Ramsar and for the Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar from the proposals contained within the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper. For these sites, further investigation was recommended as part of subsequent stages of the AA and this was agreed through consultation with Natural England.

The next stage was the preparation of an Emergent Joint Core Strategy which was subject to AA in 2009. The Emergent Joint Core Strategy presented some new options which were not considered at the screening stage and therefore it was necessary to ‘re-screen’ that version of the plan to confirm the European sites which needed to be considered in the AA. The re-screening exercise concluded that in line with the original screening report, the European sites that needed to be considered in the AA were:

- Rutland Water SPA and Ramsar site; and
- Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar site.

The Emergent Joint Core Strategy was then assessed in order to identify potential adverse effects on the integrity of these two sites. The results of the AA and recommendations for avoidance and mitigation measures are presented in the ‘Draft Appropriate Assessment\(^8\).’

This report was consulted on alongside the Emergent Joint Core Strategy, including with Natural England. A number of potential adverse effects of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy were identified in the AA in relation to Rutland Water SPA and Ramsar site and Upper Nene

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\(^6\) An ‘Imperative reasons of overriding public interest’ test is not listed as an official stage as the draft guidance considers it is not a standard part of the process and will only be carried out in exceptional circumstances.

\(^7\) http://www.westnorthamptonshirejpu.org/AppropriateAssessmentJune2010vn/tabid/154/Default.aspx

Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar site. Natural England confirmed that they were happy with the AA presented and the impact avoidance measures put forward to address the potential adverse effects identified in the AA.

One of the measures recommended was to undertake survey work in the vicinity of the Clifford Hill Gravel Pits, which is the component site of the Ramsar site and Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar which lies closest to Northampton. The scope of the survey work was agreed with Natural England and survey work has been undertaken during 2010 to provide data for the AA of the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy\(^9\).

The AA of the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy has used the AA of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy as a starting point. This report presents the results of the Stage 2 AA of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. AA is an iterative process and it will continue to inform the production of the Joint Core Strategy throughout the development of the submission version of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. If changes are made to the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy following submission to the Government Office, these may need to be subject to further assessment depending on the significance of the changes and the AA report may need to be updated accordingly.

### 1.5 Structure of this Report

Chapter 1 of this report (this chapter) explains the background to this study, the requirement for AA for the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, summarises the AA process and the outcomes of the previous stage of the process.

Chapter 2 presents the methodology adopted.

Chapter 3 reviews and updates the previous screening, identifies the European Sites which could be affected and presents data regarding the sites.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the consideration of potential significant effects on European sites due to the plan either alone or in combination with other plans and puts forward recommendations to be taken on board in the next iteration of the Core Strategy.

Chapter 5 sets out the conclusions of this AA report.

Assessment tables are provided in Annex A and Annex B.

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\(^9\) The full reports of this survey work can be viewed at [http://www.westnorthamptonshirejpu.org/AppropriateAssessmentJune2010vn/tabid/154/Default.aspx](http://www.westnorthamptonshirejpu.org/AppropriateAssessmentJune2010vn/tabid/154/Default.aspx)
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Tel 01604 837839 Email: westnorthantsjpu@northampton.gov.uk  Phone: 01604 837838

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2 Methodology

2.1 The Appropriate Assessment Process

Figure 2.1 sets out the overall HRA process in accordance with the CLG draft guidance10. This draft guidance document was never formalised but provides some useful suggestions for a staged approach to HRA. Current best practice has moved on since 2006 and demonstrates that a more flexible approach to the sequencing of the stages is the most effective method of assessing a plan as it develops.

CLG Guidance

Evidence Gathering – collecting information on relevant European sites, their conservation objectives and characteristics and other plans or projects.

Task 1: Likely significant effects (‘screening’) – identifying whether a plan is ‘likely to have a significant effect’ on a European site.

Task 2: Ascertaining the effect on site integrity – assessing the effects of the plan on the conservation objectives of any European sites ‘screened in’ during AA Task 1.

Task 3: Mitigation measures and alternative solutions – where adverse effects are identified at AA Task 2, the plan should be altered until adverse effects are cancelled out fully.

Figure 2.1 The AA Process

The AA has been integrated into the plan preparation process and will be used to inform both the further development of the Joint Core Strategy and the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Core Strategy. Therefore Stages 2 and 3 of the AA outlined in Figure 2.1 need to be undertaken in accordance with the following plan stages:

- A draft AA has been undertaken at the Emergent Joint Core Strategy stage and the draft AA Report was made available for consultation alongside the Emergent Joint

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Core Strategy document and the draft SA Report. This stage of the AA has been used to help draft the pre-submission document\(^{11}\).

- An AA has been undertaken at the Pre-Submission stage, which will inform the submission document. There will be formal representations period on the Pre-submission document and an updated AA Report and SA Report for six weeks. The results of the AA at this stage will inform the Submission Joint Core Strategy.

- It is not anticipated that the Submission Joint Core Strategy will differ significantly from the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy and therefore no further AA is planned. However, the AA Report will be updated so that it refers to the Submission Joint core Strategy and this will accompany the Submission Joint Core Strategy and the Final SA Report. Should the Submission Joint Core Strategy and the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy differ significantly; a further AA will be required of the Submission Joint Core Strategy.

The AA is a decision making tool as opposed to a decision informing tool. The findings and mitigation from the AA should be reflected in the SA and the SEA Directive requires consideration of “any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC”.

The following documents were used to inform the assessment:

- English Nature Habitats Regulations Guidance Notes;
- East Midlands Plan, adopted March 2009 and HRA (2009);
- Draft Water Resources Management Plan (Anglian Water, April 2008);
- Nene Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (2005);
- Rutland Water Mitigation Scheme Mitigation Habitats: Model Predictions (RPS for Anglian Water, 2005);
- Emerging West Northamptonshire Water Cycle Study (Halcrow, 2011).

The principle of AA is the protection of the characteristics and functionality of habitats to ensure that land use planning decisions are not made at this stage which will cause difficulties for project level AAs at a later stage.

The adopted approach to the AA is to focus on avoidance of adverse effects on site integrity rather than mitigation, through the policy development. In accordance with guidance, the AA should make use of an appropriate level of detail for the assessment which will provide sufficient information on which to make the strategic planning decisions required with the necessary level of confidence.

The text below sets out the stages and tasks for the AA:

**Stage 2**

**Task 2.1 – collect / update information**

Enquires have been made with Natural England representatives and associates, Local Wildlife Trusts and Anglian Water to obtain further information regarding the internationally designated sites and clarification of information, such as in relation to the Draft Water Resources Management Plan (Anglian Water, April 2008) and the expansion of Wing Water Treatment works at Rutland Water. The emerging water cycle strategy (Halcrow 2011) has been reviewed and discussed with Natural England.

**Task 2.2 – identify issues affecting site integrity and background trends**

This task has been undertaken alongside task 2.1. Natural England has confirmed that there have been no changes to background trends at the Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar since the Issues and Options screening exercise was undertaken in 2007.

In addition, the following survey work and data analysis was commissioned in November 2009 in agreement with Natural England to establish the evidence base and to inform the development of the mitigation required:

- **Element 1:** Population counts of Golden Plover Pluvialis apricaria and Wigeon Anas penelope at Clifford Hill Gravel Pits (ENVIRON UK Ltd and R S Brayshaw Ecological Consultancy, December 2010);
- **Element 2:** Field surveys of Golden Plover and Wigeon at Clifford Hill Gravel Pits (recreational, disturbance and bird behavior) (ENVIRON UK Ltd and R S Brayshaw Ecological Consultancy, April 2010);
- **Element 3:** Desk study to identify criteria and GIS analysis to identify fields which could (if any) accommodate development within the proposed Northampton South East urban extension (reported in ‘Survey Work to Support the Appropriate Assessment for the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Report of Elements 3 and 4 (ENVIRON UK Ltd, February 2010); and
- **Element 4:** Desk Study to identify, if possible, the effects of urbanisation on Golden Plovers and Lapwing (reported in ‘Survey Work to Support the Appropriate Assessment for the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Report of Elements 3 and 4 (ENVIRON UK Ltd, February 2010).

**Task 2.3 – review draft plan and identify how it could result in effects on the European sites**

This task is essentially an update of the screening stage and the revised screening undertaken at the Emergent Joint Core Strategy stage in which options were assessed and the effects on sites considered. The West Northamptonshire Pre-Submission version Joint Core Strategy has been reviewed for its potential to result in significant effects (either alone
or in combination with other plans or projects) on the European designated sites. The results of this exercise are presented within table format in Annex A and discussed in Section 3.

**Task 2.4 Predict and evaluate effects**

The assessment of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy considered the likely significant effects of proposed locations for the growth of Northampton, Brackley, Towcester and Daventry, some proposed policy approaches, and the information provided on required infrastructure for the growth areas. At this stage in the development of the Core Strategy policies had not been written. The assessment of the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy (JCS) has examined likely significant effects with relation to the policies that were “screened in” as part of task 2.3.

The assessment is undertaken in relation to the designated interest features, conservation objectives and integrity of each internationally designated site, on the basis of informed judgement. Any effect which would compromise the functioning and viability of a site and prevent it from sustaining those interest features for which it was designated in a favourable condition (e.g. as defined by conservation objectives or in favourable condition tables), will be considered to constitute a significant effect. The assessment includes consideration of direct effects (location-specific) and indirect effects. Risks of cumulative effects (triggered by the Core Strategy in association with other pressures and trends) and in-combination effects (caused by the Joint Core Strategy in combination with other plans or projects) are considered. The results of this exercise are presented within table format in Annex B and discussed in Section 4.

**Stage 3**

In cases where a significant adverse effect could be caused or exacerbated by the Joint Core Strategy, the relevant policies should be reviewed and recommendations made for measures to avoid the significant adverse effects to ensure that the integrity of European sites would be maintained.

At the stage of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy, recommendations were made in relation to the elements which could give rise to effects on site integrity. These recommendations related mainly to the options considered for the location of growth and specific issues and policies relating to proposed urban extensions.

At the stage of the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy, further recommendations are made in order to ensure that the avoidance and mitigation measures within the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy will ensure that there is no impact on site integrity.

**2.2 Consultation**

Informal consultation has so far been undertaken with Natural England representatives and Anglian Water.

This report will be made available to the public on the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit website and as a minimum, circulated to the following organisations:
- Natural England (representatives covering the Upper Nene Gravel Pits area and the Rutland Water area);
- Environment Agency
- Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust;
- Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust;
- Northampton Environmental Network;
- River Nene Regional Park; and
- Anglian Water.
3 European Sites Considered

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews and updates the previous screening stage undertaken of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy, identifies the European Sites which could be affected and presents data regarding the European Sites.

The results of the screening of the Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper and the Emergent Joint Core Strategy can be found in the draft AA Report which can be accessed via the URL given on page 7.

The AA Screening report reviewed the possible effects of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper on the following European Sites:

- Portholme SAC
- Oxford Meadows SAC
- Ensor’s Pool SAC
- Rutland Water SPA/Ramsar
- Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar

Likely significant effects (LSEs) were identified for Rutland Water SPA/Ramsar and for the Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar. For these sites further investigation was recommended as part of subsequent stages of the AA.

The Emergent Joint Core Strategy ‘proposed policy directions’ and ‘growth areas’ were ‘rescreened’ to identify elements of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy which required further AA and the European Sites which needed to be considered in the AA. The ‘rescreening’ exercise identified LSEs on Rutland Water SPA/Ramsar and for the Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar.

In order to focus the AA of the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy on those policies which could result in significant effects on European sites and in order to ensure that none of the other policies could result in an LSE on any other European Site, all of the policies within the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy have been screened for LSEs against the following sites:

- Ensor’s Pool SAC
- Oxford Meadows SAC
- Portholme SAC
- Rutland Water SPA and Ramsar
- Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar

The factors affecting the integrity of the sites are summarised presented in Table 3.1. These factors were used as a basis for considering whether the Joint Core Strategy policies might exacerbate any existing adverse trends or affect site integrity, given their conservation objectives.
Table 3.1: Summary of factors which may affect site conservation objectives

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The results of the rescreening exercise can be found in Annex A and are summarised below.

**Ensor's Pool SAC**

Factors with potentially adverse impacts on the site are: disturbance, water pollution, water abstraction, and the introduction of invasive species (especially Signal crayfish). Ensor’s Pool is approximately 27 km from the Joint Core Strategy plan area. The site is not within the plan area and maintenance of its integrity depends largely on local site management. No significant effects have been identified from the West Northamptonshire Joint Pre-Submission Core Strategy alone or “in combination”.

**Oxford Meadows SAC**

Factors with potentially adverse impacts on this site are inappropriate habitat management, land take, air pollution, water pollution and abstraction, and possibly the introduction of invasive species. The growth at Brackley and Towcester could potentially contribute to increased commuter traffic on the A34 and A40 but it is unlikely to be a major source of increased traffic relative to background trends. Creeping marshwort is sensitive to air pollution, but there is not currently any evidence of adverse effects and an appropriate flood regime is more important in maintaining populations on the Oxford Meadows SAC. No
significant effects have been identified from the West Northamptonshire Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy alone or “in combination”.

**Portholme SAC**

Portholme SAC is approx. 42km from the plan area. Conditions needed to support site integrity are the maintenance of the annual cutting, grazing and flooding regime, in order to sustain the grassland structure and its characteristic plant species diversity. The hydrological regime and water quality also need to remain consistent and appropriate. The site is not within the Joint Core Strategy plan area, and there are no aspects of the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy that would have an effect on site management or its hydrological regime. This site would therefore not be significantly affected by the West Northamptonshire Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy alone or “in combination”.

**Rutland Water SPA and Ramsar**

Rutland Water has dual designation as an SPA and a Ramsar site, both of which listings are for the outstanding congregations of wintering waterfowl present on the site. Rutland Water is the primary water source for West Northamptonshire. Factors with potentially adverse impacts on this site are disturbance, water pollution, water supply and invasive species. The AA of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy originally identified that the plan could have an adverse effect on the SPA and Ramsar site due to an increase in water demand from growth in West Northamptonshire and in combination with plans for major development and growth in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands area. Three substantial changes have occurred since the AA of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy was undertaken in 2009.

Firstly, the level of housing now provided for in the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy for the same period has decreased by 23.9% in comparison to the figures in the Emergent Joint Core Strategy. With regard to adjacent districts, depending on the status of the plan predicted housing numbers have either remained the same, are currently under review or have decreased. There is no evidence of increasing housing numbers within adjacent districts at this stage. Secondly, the West Northamptonshire Emerging Water Cycle Strategy which has been published since the AA of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy concludes that “Anglian Water Services (AWS)’ strategic infrastructure and resource strategic planning within the Ruthamford Water Resource Zone will support the proposed growth within the study area until 2035”. The West Northamptonshire emerging water cycle strategy addendum January 2011 confirms that the water supply network is not a constraint to development anywhere in the plan area.

Thirdly the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy has adopted the mitigation measures suggested in the AA of the Emergent Core Strategy. This includes the requirement within Policy S10 to maximise water efficiency and for all development to achieve as a minimum standard code for sustainable homes level 4. Policy S10 also implements the recommendations within the West Northamptonshire Water emerging water cycle strategy to ensure that all new developments (including greenfield and brownfield) are built to a minimum of CSH level 3 (105 l/h/d), and preferably higher.

The West Northamptonshire Emerging Water Cycle Strategy states that “the promotion of water efficient devices and awareness of water saving measures should continue to be
encouraged. Whilst AWS have plans in place to increase the amount of water available, it must be recognised that water availability is finite and good practice should be adopted now to avoid adverse environmental consequences at a later date”.

With the reduction in growth envisaged, the initial conclusion of the emerging water cycle strategy and the proposed mitigation measures included in the plan it is possible to conclude there will be no LSE on Rutland Water SPA/Ramsar from an increase in water demand and that the site can be removed from further consideration in the Appropriate Assessment. In addition, the policy screening assessment has also demonstrated there are no new additional significant changes to the plan which may lead to LSE.

**Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar**

The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits pSPA and Ramsar site, currently under consultation regarding its designation, is situated within the plan area. The pSPA site stretches discontinuously from Northampton to Thrapston, and has been chosen as a pSPA 2000 site on the strength of the assemblage of water birds using it during winter. The site supports nationally important numbers of two Annex I species, and a population of Gadwall Anas strepera which exceeds the 1% limit for the biogeographical population that is set in article 4.2 of the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC).

The integrity of the pSPA site depends on maintenance of extensive reed bed with a wet base and open channels suitable for Bittern, a high water table in winter and the maintenance of varied topography and water levels as well as a continued variety of vegetation and prey species for the various bird species using the site.

Factors with potentially adverse impacts on this site are:

- Loss of supporting habitat through land take;
- Reduced water quality (through increase in sewage, surface water runoff and pollution);
- Disturbance by light, activity and noise of urbanisation, affecting bird species;
- Increase in visitor pressure leading to erosion and disturbance of bird species;
- Potential in combination effects with projects and development in the central area.

The part of the pSPA nearest Northampton is one of the most sensitive areas of the pSPA as it supports circa 40% of the golden plover in the pSPA. According to Natural England, the golden plover prefer to use the flood storage area at Clifford Hill (Northamptonshire Washlands) and are already subject to significant recreational disturbance, in particular dog walkers.

The AA of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy identified that the plan could have an adverse effect on the pSPA and pRamsar site due to the proximity of development and quantum of development proposed in Northampton. Although the quantum of development has reduced and in particular South East Sustainable Urban Extension option which was in close proximity to the European Designated Site has not been included in the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy, there are concerns that some of the policies will result likely significant
effects. The main species that development in the area could affect is golden plover and lapwing which feed on land surrounding the pSPA. However it is not clear where they frequent on a regular basis.
4 Evaluation of the potential effects of the West Northamptonshire Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy

4.1 Introduction
This chapter presents the results of the evaluation of potential significant effects on European sites due to the plan either alone or in combination with other plans and puts forward recommendations to be taken on board as part of the development of the Joint Core Strategy.

4.2 Consideration of in-combination effects
Other plans within the Joint Core Strategy plan area have been reviewed to identify potential in-combination effects on European Sites, including:

- East Midlands Plan, adopted March 2009;
- Northamptonshire Local Transport Plan 2006/7;
- Northamptonshire Local Waste Plan 2003-2016;
- Northamptonshire Minerals Local Plan adopted 2003-2016;
- Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework Core Strategy (adopted June 2010);
- Locations for Waste and Minerals Development, Development Plan Documents (Submission Documents March 2010);
- Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework Control and Management of Development (Submission Document August 2010);
- North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2008) and the Draft Statement of Intent on Housing Targets for North Northamptonshire (2010);
- Bedford Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (2008);
- Milton Keynes Core Strategy Proposed Submission Document (2010); and

These documents have been identified as planning for growth in neighbouring areas (mainly set out within the East Midlands Plan (including the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy) and planning for activities which could have an effect on the European sites, such as minerals and waste development. These documents have been reviewed at a point in time and will develop and evolve over time.

The review of these plans are summarised below. The potential in combination effects of these with the West Northamptonshire Joint Emergent Joint Core Strategy are examined in the assessment tables in Annex B.
4.2.1 The East Midlands Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands) (March 2009)

The East Midlands Plan provides a broad development strategy for the East Midlands region until 2026. The plan was adopted in March 2009.

The plan contains policies and proposals for sustainable growth in Northamptonshire as part of the Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth Area. Since the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy was adopted in March 2005 there has been a change to the housing provision figure for the Northampton Implementation Area following a successful legal challenge. This new figure is now enshrined in planning policy through inclusion in the East Midlands Plan.

The East Midlands Plan contains policy relating to the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Region. Housing requirements for the West Northamptonshire area are as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year Period</th>
<th>2001-2006</th>
<th>2006-2011</th>
<th>2011-2016</th>
<th>2016-2021</th>
<th>2021-2026</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2170</td>
<td>2320</td>
<td>2645</td>
<td>2645</td>
<td>2645</td>
<td>62,125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regional housing provision policies indicate that Northamptonshire will experience the greatest growth of all counties in the East Midlands region over the next 20 years.

The spatial framework for Northamptonshire is as shown in RSS Policy MKSM SRS Northamptonshire 1. The majority of development in Northamptonshire should be concentrated within the Northampton Implementation Area and the neighbouring growth towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough;

Beyond these main urban centres development should be focused at the Sub-Regional Centre of Daventry, the smaller towns of Desborough, Rothwell, Burton Latimer, Rushden, Higham Ferrers and Irthlingborough and the rural service centres of Towcester, Oundle, Raunds, Thrapston and Brackley;

In the remainder of the county, the rural hinterlands, development should be limited with the emphasis being on meeting local needs and the retention of basic services and facilities.

The levels of development proposed will be monitored against an increase in employment of 37,200 jobs in West Northamptonshire in the period to 2021. This employment figure is a reference value to be used for the monitoring and review and not as target.

Housing provision for each local authority area in Northamptonshire for each of the five year phases over the period 2001-2026 should be made at the following annual average rates:
**Policy MKSM SRS Northamptonshire 2 of the East Midlands Plan requires LDDs for West Northamptonshire to make appropriate provision for green infrastructure including the Nene Valley Regional Park which will play an important role as a strategic recreational resource and offer opportunities to protect and enhance landscape character, biodiversity and cultural heritage.**

The Coalition Government announced in July 2010 that Regional Spatial Strategies (including the East Midlands Plan) were being revoked immediately. A letter was sent by the Secretary of State in July to Chief Planning Officers that stated:

*(In the absence of Regional Spatial Strategies) Local planning authorities will be responsible for establishing the right level of local housing provision in their area, and identifying a long term supply of housing land without the burden of regional housing targets. Some authorities may decide to retain their existing housing targets that were set out in the revoked Regional Strategies. Others may decide to review their housing targets.*

However, a successful legal challenge by Cala Homes was launched in the High Court and a ruling was made in November 2010 that the powers to revoke Regional Spatial Strategies in the 2009 Act could not be used to dismantle a whole tier of the development plan system. Therefore, for the time being, Regional Spatial Strategies have been re-instated as part of the development plan with immediate effect. It is likely that Regional Spatial Strategies will
eventually be abolished under the Localism Bill but for the moment they remain as part of the Development Plan and regard will need to be made to them.

4.2.2 Northamptonshire Local Transport Plan 2006/7 – 2010/11
The LTP acts as a strategic plan for transport in the authority’s area, and sets out the authority’s plans for spending transport capital investment.

The plan proposes to increase public transport infrastructure, including the provision of 2 permanent Park and Ride facilities, 1 temporary facility, and 2 potential sites, all situated around Northampton.

The LTP asserts that ‘there is a need for significant road building in the county,’ due to a high background traffic growth, and future growth from further development. Northamptonshire’s inter-urban roads have experienced up to twice the national traffic growth rate over the last 25 years. The LTP supports the implementation of 2 major road schemes between 2006-2011; the A43 Corby Link Road, and the A509 Isham Bypass. Due to planned growth, the A43 Corby Link Road now needs to be constructed as a dual carriageway, as opposed to the single-carriageway originally proposed. Between 2011 and 2031, the LTP proposes 5 priority road development schemes identified as necessary to support the growth outlined in the SRS, and 5 schemes for future consideration.

4.2.3 Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework
This includes review of the following documents: Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework Core Strategy (adopted June 2010); Locations for Waste and Minerals Development, Development Plan Documents (Submission Documents March 2010); and Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework Control and Management of Development (Submission Document August 2010).

The Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework (or MWDF) is the land use planning strategy for minerals and waste related development in the county. It consists of a portfolio of plans which each cover distinct matters relating to minerals and waste development. It is the job of the MWDF to ensure the development of a sustainable waste management network and the provision of an adequate supply of aggregates in order to assist (and deal with the effects of) the growth of Northamptonshire.

In terms of waste, provision needs to be made for waste management facilities to meet the following waste disposal capacity gaps that will arise by 2026:

- Recycling capacity for municipal and commercial & industrial waste will need to increase by 229,000 tonnes;
- Biological processing capacity for municipal and commercial & industrial waste will need to increase by 221,000 tonnes;
- Waste management or advanced treatment capacity required to deal with the remaining waste (currently disposed of to landfill) will need to increase by 334,000 tonnes; and
- Inert recycling capacity for construction and demolition waste will need to increase by 357,000 tonnes.
It is important to note that there will still be a requirement for disposal to landfill. The total estimated disposal capacity requirement for 2026 is 709,000 tonnes.

The following spatial strategy is outlined in the document for waste management:

- The waste management network, particularly advanced treatment facilities with a sub-regional or wider catchment, will be focussed on Northamptonshire’s central spine (particularly Northampton, Wellingborough, Rushden/Higham Ferrers, Kettering and Corby) and at the sub-regional centre of Daventry. Development in the smaller towns should be consistent with their local service role;

- At the rural service centres, facilities with a local or neighbourhood catchment will provide for preliminary treatment in order to deal with waste generated from these areas;

- In the rural hinterlands, only facilities with a local or neighbourhood catchment providing for preliminary treatment, or that are incompatible for an urban development, should be provided. Where it is the latter they should deal with waste generated from identified urban areas and should be appropriately located to serve those areas; and

- Facilities in urban areas should be co-located together and with complimentary activities. Facilities in rural areas should where possible be associated with existing rural employment uses.

The Core Strategy also makes the point that provision of capacity for general non-inert disposal should only be made if the need for this can be justified and it is only for residual wastes. Where it can be clearly demonstrated that additional landfill capacity for residual wastes should be provided, preference would be for an extension to an existing site, unless it can be shown that a stand-alone site would be more sustainable and better located to support the management of waste close to its source.

Provision for inert waste disposal should be made at mineral extraction sites requiring restoration, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that an alternative location would not prejudice the restoration of these sites.

In terms of minerals development the spatial strategy is to allow extraction in glacial and pre-glacial areas and, where appropriate, selected river valleys where there is currently or has previously been extraction. River valley provision will therefore come from the Nene Valley west of Wellingborough, and the Great Ouse Valley.

Provision will be made over the plan period 2006 to 2026 for the extraction of:

- 19.36 million tonnes of sand and gravel (equivalent to an annual average of 0.97 million tonnes) provided from glacial/pre-glacial deposits and the river valleys of the Nene (west of Wellingborough) and the Great Ouse; and

- 7.9 million tonnes of crushed rock (limestone) (equivalent to an annual average of 0.39 million tonnes) provided from deposits outside unworked river valleys or from sites with old permissions upgraded to modern conditions.

Submission versions of the Locations for Waste Development and Location for Minerals Development DPDs have also been prepared, and these make the following potential site allocations:
Locations for Minerals Development DPD

- Dodford (sand and gravel);
- Milton Malsor (sand and gravel);
- Bozeat extension (sand and gravel);
- Heyford (sand and gravel);
- Earls Barton West extension (sand and gravel);
- Wollaston West (sand and gravel);
- Passenham South (sand and gravel);
- Wakerley (crushed rock);
- Ringstead (Crushed rock / limestone);
- Pury End (South) (limestone and building stone);
- Colleyweston Village (roofing stone); and
- Earls Barton Quarry Plant Site (secondary and recycled materials).

Locations for Waste Development DPD

The sites are allocated for waste management within the following categories:

- Sites for integrated waste management facilities;
- Sites for waste management use in or adjacent to urban areas;
- Industrial area locations for waste management uses; and
- Sites for waste management use in rural areas.

Sites are split between Northampton, Corby, Wellingborough, Daventry, Brackley, Towcester, Kettering, Rushden/Higham Ferrers, Oundle, Kilsby, Chevelston and Nassington.

The Appropriate Assessment Screening Report for the Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework concluded that if appropriate mitigation were not undertaken the potential locations for minerals and waste development would have both alone and in-combination adverse effects on the integrity of the pSPA site. The internationally important species and bird assemblages have been identified as being particularly vulnerable to such development due to the association between the wetland habitat and hydro-geology.

As part of the AA, proposed mitigation measures were identified from previous planning applications in the local area and associated survey work done as part of project Environmental Impact Assessments and Habitats Regulations Assessments. Furthermore, standard industry techniques and mitigation measures implemented on similar existing extraction operations throughout the County that have been demonstrated to have significantly reduced potential adverse impact on sensitive receptors have been incorporated where appropriate. Measures were assessed to determine the level to which they would be successful at avoiding or reducing the potential effects. A risk assessment based approach was utilised in order to identify the level of risk and this has used information from the planning application that has been received for the Earls Barton extension and limited...
research in relation to the level of disturbance (and associated behavioural response) resulting from lighting, noise and vibration for specific species.

The AA report concludes that the proposed mitigation measures for the site specific components of the Locations for Minerals and Waste Development DPDs are considered to be effective at avoiding and/or reducing adverse effects from impacting on the pSPA conservation objectives, site integrity and important species. This conclusion has been agreed by Natural England.

The Control and Management of Development DPD covers aspects of controlling & managing minerals and waste development, such as development criteria and locally specific issues (built & natural environment, design, restoration, Mineral Safeguarding Areas, and preventing land use conflict).

4.2.4 North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (2008) and Draft Statement of Intent on Housing Targets for North Northamptonshire (2010)

The Core Strategy relates to the area that is covered by Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Councils which border West Northamptonshire to the east and north east. The Core Strategy was adopted in June 2008. North Northamptonshire is a key component of the MKSM growth area. The Regional Strategy outlines that North Northamptonshire should accommodate 52,100 new dwellings between 2001 and 2021, with 34,100 incorporated at the neighbouring growth towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. 8,190 homes had already been completed when the plan was adopted. The growth will increase the population of North Northamptonshire by 85,000 (from 285,000 in 2001 to 370,000 in 2021). The Regional Strategy sets the goal of achieving 43,800 new jobs over the same period.

In September 2010 the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit issued a paper entitled Draft Statement of Intent on Housing Targets for North Northamptonshire. This paper states that the Joint Committee is reviewing the Core Strategy for the period to 2031 and intends to identify housing requirements below the targets in the previous RSS (including the “uncommitted planning assumption” of 28,000 new dwellings in the period 2021 to 2031). This reflects the recession and forecast housing market conditions and will allow for a more measured rate of house building, better aligned with new jobs and infrastructure and with local aspirations for how places should change.

The Joint Core Strategy review will assess options for differing levels of housing development to 2031 and its distribution between settlements, taking account of the evidence requirements set out in Planning Policy Statement 3 on Housing (PPS3) and also local aspirations and the relationship between population growth and the achievement of other planning objectives. Consultation on options will take place early in 2011.

Until the review of the Joint Core Strategy is completed, the adopted Core Strategy remains the key part of the development plan and the starting point for planning decisions. However, the adopted strategy, including the housing targets to 2021, will need to be delivered over a longer timescale. This is due to the impacts of the economic recession on the housing market and infrastructure provision, not because of a shortage of sites for house building.
(there are currently over 24,000 house plots in North Northamptonshire with planning permission or resolutions to grant permission).

4.2.5 Bedford Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (2008)

The areas of Bedford, Kempston and the northern Marston Vale (Growth Area) are the main focus points of development. 16,270 new homes are to be built within this growth area and a further 1,300 in the Rural Policy Area. Support is given to the Bedford Milton Keynes canal within the plan. This is discussed below under ‘Relevant Projects’.

4.2.6 Milton Keynes Core Strategy Proposed Submission Document (2010)

The Council is currently in the final stages of producing the Core Strategy submission document. The Pre-Submission draft of the Core Strategy sets out the following preferred spatial pattern of growth:

Over the period 2011-2026, the majority of new homes and jobs will be focused on, and adjacent to, the existing urban area of Milton Keynes. A target annual completion rate of 1,750 homes per annum has been set, translating to 28,000 new homes in total by 2026, to meet the level of new housing required across the Borough.

Four Strategic Reserve Areas (SR1, SR2, SR3 and SR4) identified in the Local Plan (2005) lie on the eastern edge of the city. It is estimated that these can accommodate a maximum 2,500 homes (plus other uses).

Some new sites for housing, especially in the rural area, will be identified in the Site Allocations DPD.

4.2.7 Rugby Core Strategy Post Submission Consultation: Schedule of Focused Changes (2010)

The latest version of the Rugby LDF Core Strategy is the Schedule of Proposed Focused Changes. The Core Strategy Proposed Submission Document was published for representations in July 2009. However, in March 2010, the Rugby Borough Core Strategy Examination in Public (EiP) was suspended by the Planning Inspector for a period of five months until August 2010. This was to allow the Council time to supplement the Core Strategy Evidence Base and to publish a Schedule of Proposed Focused Changes for public consultation in July and August 2010. The Schedule seeks to address potential issues of soundness and legal compliance in the submitted Core Strategy.

Informal consultation has been undertaken with Rugby Borough Council (E Jones, Personal Communication, 25th November 2010) and they have confirmed their latest housing numbers and employment land allocations are currently subject to change. These numbers are not yet in the public domain but will be available for inclusion in the Pre-Submission Document Appropriate Assessment Report.

Development Brief Silverstone Circuit Masterplan (February 2009)

A development brief has been jointly approved by Aylesbury Vale District and South Northamptonshire Councils for the proposed mixed use development on land at the
Silverstone Circuit and the surrounding estate. Silverstone Circuit is located partly within Aylesbury Vale and partly within South Northamptonshire Districts. Proposed land uses within the site include new pit and paddocks complex, new employment space, hotels and a central area including leisure uses.

**Other Relevant Documents, Projects and Studies**

The following projects have been identified in discussion with the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit as of relevance to the consideration of in-combination effects with the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

**Upton Urban Extension, Northampton**

The Upton urban extension to the south west of Northampton town is currently under development. The sustainable urban extension will consist of approximately 1200 dwellings and there are proposals for additional phases of development. A mix of uses is also being provided which includes a primary school, local shops and live-work units. Other commercial office use, retail and community uses will form a local centre along Weedon Road (A45) on the northern edge of Upton. The first phases of the development are completed, with the first houses now occupied.

**Middlemore residential allocation, Daventry**

Middlemore is an area allocated for residential development in the Daventry District Local Plan 1997. It lies in the Northern area of Daventry and is bounded by the disused railway line to the west, Drayton Reservoir to the south, Ashby Road (A361) to the east and open countryside to the north. Middlemore covers an area of 30ha and is anticipated to accommodate 700+ houses. In accordance with Local Plan requirements an area of 1.2ha has been reserved for the future provision of a school, and areas of public open space have been planned throughout the whole site. Outline planning permission for development of the whole site was granted in May 1999.

**River Nene Regional Park**

The Award Winning River Nene Regional Park is an independent Community Interest Company creating a green infrastructure network of environmental projects extending from Daventry to Peterborough linking the towns of Northampton, Towcester, Wellingborough, Kettering and Corby. Policy MKSM SRS Northamptonshire 2 of the East Midlands Plan (March 2009) identifies that the Nene Valley Regional Park will play an important role as a strategic recreational resource (see Section 4.2.1 for further details).

Since the inception of the River Nene Regional Park in 2004 approximately twelve million pounds has been secured for ongoing investment in this area.

The vision is that by 2016 the regional park will be:

> an independent, inclusive, reciprocal and beneficial partnership of public, private and third sector members. It will be nationally and internationally recognised as the centre of excellence for the piloting, coordination and delivery of regional sustainable development, addressing strategic issues such as climate change, the enhancement of local biodiversity and the innovative development of the environment as an asset
for social development, education, leisure and recreation, heritage and cultural activity, and as a primary vehicle of economic regeneration’.\textsuperscript{12}

The Regional Park was established due to an identified need to develop a Green Infrastructure strategy to respond to the new Growth Agenda for Northamptonshire. It adopted a pioneering approach to Green Infrastructure by establishing a strategic framework, which takes in extensive rural areas and addresses the pressures of growth on urban areas. This approach not only works to enhance the quality and character of the environment but achieves many other aims including: improving connectivity between places of interest; making a positive impact on the well-being of communities; and driving local economic growth and addressing issues such as climate change.

**Bedford & Milton Keynes Grand Union canal and Great Ouse link**

The Bedford & Milton Keynes (B&MK) Waterway Trust was established in 1995 to promote the development of a broad waterway which will link the Grand Union Canal in Milton Keynes to the river Great Ouse in Bedford through a series of Waterway Parks. The B&MK Waters Trust is proposing construction of new section of canal between the Grand Union Canal and the Ouse which, when complete, would create a circular navigation route including the Northampton Arm and River Nene. The route will be completed in stages as funds are raised over the coming 10-20 years. The Trust and its partners are securing the route in local plans and seeking funds.

The new section of canal would be built outside of the West Northamptonshire area.

This scheme, could, when complete have some implications on the Nene Valley area. These would be both beneficial in terms of tourism, recreation and economic due to increase in boaters and visitors but could also have some detrimental effect on the area. For example, issues could include the capacity of the waterways both from an enjoyment and congestion point of view and the ability of the Northampton Arm to accommodate the increase in traffic. The new route could pose a potential effect on the pSPA through an increase in boating visitors and a potential change in the types of craft accessing parts of the pSPA. The Northampton Arm is a narrow beam canal and the new canal is being designed to accommodate broad beam boats. This could result in the need to invest in improvements on the Northampton Arm in order to accommodate broad beam boats, however, it is not clear what such improvements might entail. The link could potentially extend the current boating season and number of users which could cause disturbance to breeding birds.

Support is given to the Bedford Milton Keynes canal within the Bedford Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (2008), discussed above. This scheme is not included within the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

\textsuperscript{12} River Nene Regional Park Communication Presentation
4.3 Evaluation of potential effects

Assessment tables are included within Annex B. Potential effects are discussed below for the European designated sites. For information about the sites please refer back to Section 3.

4.3.1 Upper Nene Gravel Pits

The potential adverse effects on site integrity of the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects are presented in Table 4.1. These issues and the evolution of the issues identified at the Emergent Joint Core Strategy stage are discussed in more detail below.

Loss of supporting habitat

The development of Policy N5 – Northampton South Sustainable Urban Extension and Policy N6 – Northampton South of Brackmills Sustainable Urban Extension have the potential to remove areas of land which are currently performing a supportive function to the pSPA.

Additional survey work has been carried out to attempt to identify the potential for golden plover to use fields to the South East of Northampton.

This work concluded that the vast majority of the study area is considered to be either possibly suitable or entirely suitable for usage by both golden plover and lapwing. This applies to the fields which would be developed under Policy N5 and N6. It was important to undertake this work to understand the potential of the large area and to put in context extension proposals. However there were many limitations listed in the study and the study must be seen in the context of a wider area used by the birds. With such a mobile species it is difficult to understand what the percentage loss of the supporting habitat the development of Policy N5 and N6 represents.

Natural England are aware of the limitations of the studies and the result can only be used as a guide to direct development to less optimal land. Ground truthing is needed in all cases and especially in areas considered to be sub-optimal and optimal.

Fragmentation

There was a concern regarding fragmentation in the Emergent Joint Core Strategy related to the building of the new travel connection to the south east of Northampton and the south east extension itself. These options have not been included within the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy and no other policies were identified as causing fragmentation of the pSPA with the surrounding supporting habitat. Therefore no adverse effect on integrity of the pSPA and pRamsar site has been identified due to the link road and the south east urban extension not being included within the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy.

Water supply and water level management

The AA of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy originally identified that the plan could have an adverse effect on the pSPA and pRamsar site due to an increase in water demand from growth in West Northamptonshire (in combination with plans for major development and...
growth in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands area). Changes in the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy have removed the adverse effects associated with this.

The level of housing now provided for in the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy for the same period has decreased by 23.9% in comparison to the figures in the Emergent Strategy.

The West Northamptonshire emerging water cycle strategy which has been published since the AA of the Emergent strategy concludes that “Anglian Water Services’ strategic infrastructure and resource strategic planning within the Ruthamford Water Resource Zone will support the proposed growth within the study area until 2035”. This is confirmed in the Emerging Water Cycle Strategy addendum (January 2011)

In addition, as a precautionary measure the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy has adopted the mitigation measures suggested in the AA of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy. This includes the requirement within Policy S10 to maximise water efficiency and for all development (unless it can be demonstrated that it would not be viable) to achieve as a minimum standard code for sustainable homes level 4.

Therefore no adverse effect on integrity of the pSPA and pRamsar site has been identified due to the reduction in growth in housing and the mitigation measures included.

**Water quality**

The AA of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy originally identified that the plan could have an adverse effect on the pSPA and pRamsar site due to an increase in polluted surface water run-off relating to both an increase in hard standing area from growth in West Northamptonshire (in combination with plans for major development and growth in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands area) and the new link road between the A45 and the M1.

This is no longer considered to be an issue as new development associated with the Northampton South East Sustainable Urban Extension preferred option, and the new road associated with the transport connection to the south east of the town is not included in the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy. In addition the Emerging West Northamptonshire Water Cycle Study states that no deterioration of water quality would occur downstream as a result of the growth proposed in the town and associated increase in capacity at Great Billing WwTW. “water quality environmental capacity and WFD compliance should not be a constraint to growth at Northampton and Great Billing WwTW”. The Emerging Water Cycle Strategy (2011) confirms that water quality environmental capacity should not be a constraint to growth in Northampton. The Environment Agency licence and control all discharges and abstractions. They have responsibilities to ensure no deterioration of water quality under the Water Framework Directive. Natural England are confident there are no plans, proposals or projects identified that would interfere which the achievement of the Environment Agencies’ objectives for the Nene.

Therefore no adverse effect on integrity of the pSPA and pRamsar site has been identified due to the link road and the South East Sustainable Urban Extension not being included in the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy and the provision of additional information on water quality environmental capacity.
Disturbance

The non-inclusion of the South East Sustainable Urban Extension and new transport corridor in the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy has greatly reduced the potential for increased disturbance associated with the plan. There is still the potential for an increase in the number of visitors from the urban extensions planned for the South, North and West of Northampton. However, this increase is expected to be minor in comparison to potential increase that was associated with the proposed development of new homes adjacent or in easy walking distance from the site.

Policies N3 – N6 require the inclusion of structural greenspace and wildlife corridors. This ties in with Natural England’s advice to provide suitable accessible natural green space (SANGS) as a part of urban extensions in order to meet the recreation needs of new residents and reduce the attractiveness of travelling to the European site for recreation.

Policy BN4 requires that all new development will need to demonstrate that the impact of any increased recreational activity (indirect or direct) on the Nene valley pSPA will not have a detrimental impact and that adequate mitigation will be incorporated. This should support the identification and delivery of SANGS where necessary as well as providing an opportunity to provide funding for the management of the pSPA.

The proposed new link between the Grand Union Canal and River Ouse, although not located within the Joint Core Strategy area could also cause disturbance of waterfowl and possibly roosting and feeding Golden Plover and Lapwing in winter through increasing boating traffic. However survey work identified that activities outside of the basin rarely resulted in disturbance to the birds. Therefore, unless the additional boating traffic resulted in an increase in people entering the basin it is unlikely that this would lead to a significant increase in disturbance.

The non-inclusion of the Northampton South East Sustainable Urban Extension and measures to incorporate natural open space with natural and semi natural areas in all new residential development as well as policy BN4 which requires all new development to demonstrate through the development management process that there will be no significant adverse impacts, will remove the risk of adverse effects with regards to disturbance.

However, there is still a potential issue with the need to maintain an unobstructed line of sight for the Golden Plover for predator detection which is important while feeding, resting and roosting. Development close to habitat used by Golden Plover can reduce sight-lines and therefore the habitat’s suitability for feeding and roosting. Where there is existing development any new development will need to reflect the height of the existing buildings.

The use of developer contributions to better manage the site and potentially increase capacity of recreation is recommended in section 4.4. The survey work identified that education of visitors with regards to the site’s ornithological importance, as well as exclusion of visitors and dogs from the washlands basin could result in a reduction in the current pressures on qualifying bird species and therefore the site might be able to accommodate an increase in visitors. The recommendations in section 4.4 should help ensure that the plan not only avoids an adverse effect but enables the site to become more resilient to accommodate disturbance.
Pet Predation

No policies are considered likely to significantly increase pet predation.

The Northampton South East extension option and rejected option 3 which were located close to the boundary of the pSPA have not been included within the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy. In addition mitigation has been added in line with the AA recommendations.

Therefore no adverse effect on integrity of the pSPA and pRamsar site has been identified due to appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures included within the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy.

4.4 Recommendations

The previous issues regarding loss of supporting habitat, fragmentation, water quality, disturbance and pet predation resulting from the Emergent Joint Core Strategy were largely due to the development of the south east extension and supporting habitat. This option has not been included in the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy and so reducing the risk of impact.

With relation to the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy:

The Southern Extensions (Policies N5 and N6) could lead to loss of “sub optimal” or “optimal” supporting habitat and so further ground-truthing and site survey will be needed. Policy BN4 provides for this but it is recommended that Policy BN4 should also be amended to include “where there are existing buildings, development should reflect surrounding building heights” to address comments received from Natural England.

The reduction in quantum of development, additional information from the emerging water cycle strategy and the wording of Policy S10 “to maximise water efficiency, and for all development (unless it can be demonstrated that it would not be viable) to achieve as a minimum standard code for sustainable homes level 4” has removed the adverse effects associated with reduction in water levels at the site.

The non-inclusion of the SE extension and transport corridor and measures to incorporate natural open space in all urban extensions, as well as the inclusion of Policy BN4 which requires all new development to demonstrate through the development management process that there will be no significant adverse impacts, allows a conclusion of no adverse effect on integrity from the plan with regards to increase in disturbance. However as survey work has identified that the site is currently significantly affected by disturbance from visitors and dog walkers, it is recommended that the plan seeks to improve rather than simply mitigate the situation. Reduction in current pressures may allow the site to accommodate an increase in visitors. To provide a mechanism for the facilitation of any developer contributions towards site management it is recommended that an addition to the supporting text of Policy BN4 is made to encourage dialogue between developers, Natural England, wildlife trusts, the pSPA landowners and Northampton District Council in order to establish a suitable site management plan and access management plan. Funds allocated for management could potentially be coordinated through the River Nene Regional Park.
Table 4.1: Summary of potential effects on the integrity of the Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component of Emergent Joint Core Strategy</th>
<th>Effect on site integrity</th>
<th>Further Avoidance Measure/s required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy N5 – Northampton South Sustainable Urban Extension, Policy N6 – Northampton South of Brackmills Sustainable Urban Extension, Policy BN4 (and BN2)</td>
<td>The development of Policy N5 – Northampton South Sustainable Urban Extension and Policy N6 – Northampton South of Brackmills Sustainable Urban Extension have the potential to remove areas of land which are currently performing a supportive function to the pSPA. Policy BN4 (and BN2) requires that all new development needs to demonstrate that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the pSPA. Additional surveys will be needed to demonstrate this.</td>
<td>Policy BN4 should also be amended to include “where there are existing buildings, development should reflect surrounding building heights” to address comments received from Natural England.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Northampton sustainable urban extension options Policy BN4</td>
<td>Increased disturbance from increased recreation in combination with proposed housing growth in neighbouring areas and the potential for increased boating traffic as a result of the proposed new link between the Grand Union Canal and Great Ouse. This could affect all of the birds that the site is designated for, in particular roosting and feeding Golden Plover and Lapwing in winter. Measures to protect and make adequate provision for public open space with natural and semi natural areas in all new residential development as well as policy BN4 which requires all new development to demonstrate through the development management process that there will be no significant adverse impacts, allows a conclusion of no adverse effect on integrity from the plan with regards to increase in disturbance.</td>
<td>It is recommended (but not required to confirm no adverse effect on site integrity) that the supporting text of Policy BN4 should encourage dialogue between developers, Natural England, wildlife trusts, the pSPA landowners and Northampton Borough Council in order to establish a suitable site management plan and access management plan. These funds allocated for management could be coordinated through the River Nene Regional Park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Conclusions of the AA of the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy

The issues highlighted in previous AA reports regarding loss of supporting habitat, fragmentation, water quality, disturbance and pet predation resulting from the Emergent Joint Core Strategy were largely due to the development of the south east extension and supporting habitat. This option has not been included in the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy and so reducing the risk of impact.

Other changes to the plan and adjacent plans such as the reduction in proposed housing numbers have also meant that the concerns related to water supply capacity and water quality are no longer considered an issue within the period of this plan. Additional measures to reduce future water use and run off, and to provide new alternative areas of open space for new residential areas provide sustainable long term mitigation into the future.

Policy BN4 should be amended to include “where there are existing buildings, development should reflect surrounding building heights” to address comments received from Natural England.

With this in place it will be possible to conclude that there will be no adverse effect on site integrity from the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy.

To help improve the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar and to increase its resilience which allow Northamptonshire to grow into the future the following is recommended:

The supporting text of the plan should encourage dialogue between developers Natural England, wildlife trusts, the pSPA landowners and Northampton Borough Council in order to establish a suitable site management plan and access management plan. These funds allocated for management could be coordinated through the River Nene Regional Park.
Annex A: Screening Table
### West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Pre-Submission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policies (by section)</th>
<th>Ensor's Pool SAC</th>
<th>Oxford Meadows SAC</th>
<th>Portholme SAC</th>
<th>Rutland Water SPA and Ramsar</th>
<th>Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Spatial Strategy and Key Diagram</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy S1 – The Distribution of Development</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy S2 - Hierarchy of Centres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy S3 - Scale and Distribution of Housing Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy S4 - Northampton Related Development Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy S5 - Sustainable Urban Extensions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy S6 – Phasing of Housing Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy S7 - Provision of Jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy S8 - Distribution of Jobs</td>
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<td>Policy S9 - Distribution of Retail Development</td>
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<td>Policy S10 - Sustainable Development Principles</td>
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<td>Policy S11-Renewable Energy</td>
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<td>6. Connections</td>
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<td>Policy C1 - Changing Behaviour and Achieving Modal Shift</td>
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<td>Policy C2 - New Developments</td>
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<td>Policy C3 - Strategic Connections</td>
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<td>Policy C4 - Connecting Urban Areas</td>
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<td>Policy C5 - Enhancing Local and Neighbourhood Connections</td>
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<td>Policy C6 - High Speed Rail 2</td>
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<td>7. Regenerating and Developing Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy RC1 - Delivering Community Regeneration</td>
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<td>Policy RC2 - Community Needs</td>
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<td>8. Economic Advantage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy E1 - Existing Employment Areas</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policies (by section)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensor's Pool SAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy E2 - New Office Floorspace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy E3 - Technology Realm, Northampton North</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy E4 – DIRFT</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy E5 - Silverstone Circuit</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy E6 - Education, Skills and Training</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy E7 - Tourism, Visitor and Cultural Industries</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. Housing</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy H1 – Housing Density and Mix and Type of Dwellings</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy H2 – Affordable Housing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy H3 - Rural Exception Sites</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy H4 - Specialised Accommodation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy H5 - Sustainable Housing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy H6 - Managing the Existing Housing Stock</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy H7 - Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. Built and Natural Environment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy BN1 – Green Infrastructure Connections</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy BN2 – Biodiversity</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy BN3 – Woodland Enhancement and Creation</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy BN4 – Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Potential Special Protection Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy BN5 – The Historic Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy BN6 – Weedon Depot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy BN7 - Flood Risk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy BN8 – The River Nene Strategic River Corridor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy BN9 - Planning for Pollution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy BN10 - Ground Instability</td>
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</table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensor’s Pool SAC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 11. Infrastructure and Delivery

| Policy INF1 – Approach to Infrastructure Delivery | X | X | X | X | ✔ |
| Policy INF2 – Contributions to Infrastructure Requirements | X | X | X | X | X |

#### 12. Northampton

| Policy N1 – The Regeneration of Northampton | X | X | X | X | X |
| Policy N2 – Northampton Central Area | X | X | X | X | X |
| Policy N3 – Northampton North Sustainable Urban Extension | X | X | X | X | ✔ |
| Policy N4 – Northampton West Sustainable Urban Extension | X | X | X | X | ✔ |
| Policy N5 – Northampton South Sustainable Urban Extension | X | X | X | X | ✔ |
| Policy N6 – Northampton South of Brackmills Sustainable Urban Extension | X | X | X | X | ✔ |
| Policy N7 - Northampton Kings Heath S.U.E. | X | X | X | X | ✔ |
| Policy N8 - Northampton North of Whitehills S.U.E. | X | X | X | X | ✔ |
| Policy N9 - Northampton Upton Park S.U.E. | X | X | X | X | X |
| Policy N10 – Shopping Needs Outside Northampton Town Centre | X | X | X | X | X |
| Policy N11 – Supporting Areas of Community Regeneration | X | X | X | X | X |
| Policy N12 - Northampton’s Transport Network Improvements | X | X | X | X | X |

#### 13. Daventry

| Policy D1 – The Regeneration of Daventry Town; | X | X | X | X | X |
| Policy D2 – Daventry Town Centre; | X | X | X | X | X |
| Policy D3 – Daventry North East Sustainable Urban Extension; | X | X | X | X | X |
## West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Pre-Submission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy D4 – Supporting Areas of Community Regeneration: Southbrook; and</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy D5 - Daventry’s Transport Network Improvements</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 14. Towcester

- **Policy T1** – Spatial Strategy for Towcester;                                  | X                | X                  | X            | X                           | X                                             |
- **Policy T2** – The Town Centre and Moat Lane Regeneration Area;                   | X                | X                  | X            | X                           | X                                             |
- **Policy T3** – Towcester South Sustainable Urban Extension;                      | X                | X                  | X            | X                           | X                                             |
- **Policy T4** – Transport Strategy for Towcester; and                              | X                | X                  | X            | X                           | X                                             |
- **Policy T5** – Towcester Racecourse.                                             | X                | X                  | X            | X                           | X                                             |

### 15. Brackley

- **Policy B1** – Spatial Strategy for Brackley;                                    | X                | X                  | X            | X                           | X                                             |
- **Policy B2** – Brackley East Sustainable Urban Extension;                        | X                | X                  | X            | X                           | X                                             |
- **Policy B3** – Brackley North Sustainable Urban Extension;                       | X                | X                  | X            | X                           | X                                             |
- **Policy B4** – Transport Improvements for Brackley.                               | X                | X                  | X            | X                           | X                                             |

### 16. Rural Areas

- **Policy R1** – Spatial Strategy for the                                           | X                | X                  | X            | X                           | X                                             |
### West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Pre-Submission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policies (by section)</th>
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<th>Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Areas</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy R2 – Rural Economy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex B: Assessment Tables
# UPPER NENE VALLEY GRAVEL PITS pSPA and proposed RAMSAR SITE

| Name and location | Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits pSPA SP 966717  
| Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits pRamsar site SP 966717 |
|---|---|
| Distance from plan area | Within area |
| Reason(s) for designation (pSPA) | Wintering populations of Annex I bird species:  
Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*: 2% of GB population (5 year peak mean1999/2000-2003/04)  
Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*: 2.3% of GB population (5 year peak mean1999/2000-2003/04)  
Important populations of migratory species:  
Gadwall *Anas strepera*: 2% of NW European breeding population (5 year peak mean1999/2000-2003/04)  
Assemblage of international importance (non breeding):  
| Reason(s) for designation (pRamsar) | Criterion 1 – Water bird assemblage of international importance (23,821 waterfowl)  
Criterion 6 - Supports nationally important numbers of Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* (629 individuals, representing an average of 1.7% of the GB population) and Gadwall *Anas strepera* (773 individuals, representing an average of 2% of the NW European population) |
| Conservation objectives | To maintain in a favourable condition the populations of species for which this site is designated of European importance. |
### Requirements to maintain favourable condition status of site

| Extensive reed bed with wet base and open channels, suitable for Bittern | Maintain structure and function of the wet floodplain woodland, including natural regeneration, retaining standing and fallen dead wood, floral diversity and structure |
| Maintained high water table in winter | Maintain variety of wetland types, including reedbed, wet marginal vegetation, shallow and deep water areas suitable for wintering wildfowl |
| Maintenance of a variety of topographical features and water levels, continued variety of vegetation structure and diversity and abundant prey species | Maintain water quality and supply |
| | No stocking with non-native species, limits on stocking and planting with native species? |
| | Maintaining open ground suitable for breeding Common Terns |
| | Maintain suitable undisturbed areas for breeding Grey Heron, and for roosting and feeding Golden Plover in winter |

### Assessment of significance of effects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of potential effect</th>
<th>Effect on site integrity from the West Northamptonshire Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy</th>
<th>Measures included within the Joint Core Strategy to Avoid This Effect Occurring?</th>
<th>Conclusion – could an adverse effect occur?</th>
<th>In combination effects with other plans and policies</th>
<th>Further Avoidance Measure/s required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of supporting habitat</td>
<td>The development of Policy N5 – Northampton South Sustainable Urban Extension and Policy N6 – Northampton South of Brackmills Sustainable Urban Extension have the potential to remove areas of land which are currently performing a supportive function to the pSPA.</td>
<td>Policy BN4 (and BN2) requires that all new development needs to demonstrate that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the pSPA. Additional surveys will be needed to demonstrate this.</td>
<td>No adverse effect on integrity – it is considered that the additional safeguards in the plan are sufficient although recommendations to ensure BN4 addresses this issue are</td>
<td>No additional plans or projects have been identified that threatened supporting habitat in the area. This was discussed with Natural England.</td>
<td>No additional measures required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of potential effect</td>
<td>Effect on site integrity from the West Northamptonshire Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy</td>
<td>Measures included within the Joint Core Strategy to Avoid This Effect Occurring?</td>
<td>Conclusion – could an adverse effect occur?</td>
<td>In combination effects with other plans and policies</td>
<td>Further Avoidance Measure/s required</td>
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<td>Additional survey work has been carried out to attempt to identify the potential for golden plover to use fields to the South East of Northampton. This work concluded that the vast majority of the study area is considered to be either possibly suitable or entirely suitable for usage by both golden plover and lapwing. This applies to the fields which would be developed under Policy N5 and N6. It was important to undertake this work to understand the potential of the large area and to put in context extension proposals. However there were many limitations listed in the study and the study must be seen in the context of a wider area used by the birds. With such a mobile species it is difficult to understand what the % loss of the supporting habitat the development of Policy N5 and N6 represents. Natural England are aware of the</td>
<td>suggested.</td>
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## Assessment of significance of effects:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Nature of potential effect</th>
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<td><strong>Fragmentation</strong></td>
<td>The concern regarding fragmentation in the emergent strategy related to the building of the new travel connection to the south east of Northampton and the south east extension itself. These have not been included within the Pre Submission Joint Core and no other policies were identified as likely to cause fragmentation of the pSPA with the surrounding supporting habitat due to the content of the policies and the inclusion of policy BN4.</td>
<td>No further measures needed.</td>
<td>No adverse effect on integrity due to the non-inclusion of the link road and the south east urban extension.</td>
<td>No in combination effects.</td>
<td>No additional measures required.</td>
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<td><strong>Water supply and water level management</strong></td>
<td>The AA of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy originally identified that the plan could have an adverse effect on the SPA and Ramsar site due to an increase in water demand from growth in</td>
<td>The level of housing now provided for in the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy for the same period has decreased by 23.9% n comparison to the figures in</td>
<td>No adverse effect on integrity due to the reduction in growth in housing and the mitigation measures included.</td>
<td>No in combination effects. Housing number for adjacent districts have either reduced or remained the same since the</td>
<td>No additional measures required.</td>
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|                          | West Northamptonshire (in combination with plans for major development and growth in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands area. Changes in the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy have removed the adverse effects associated with this. | the Emergent Strategy  
The West Northamptonshire emerging water cycle strategy which has been published since the AA of the Emergent strategy concludes that “AWS’s strategic infrastructure and resource strategic planning within the Ruthamford Water Resource Zone will support the proposed growth within the study area until 2035”. The West Northamptonshire emerging water cycle strategy is based upon the original housing figures and since these have been lowered this suggests the amount of available headroom will increase.  
The Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy has adopted the mitigation measures suggested in the AA of the Emergent Core Strategy. This includes the requirement within Policy S10 to maximise water | assessment of the emergent strategy Joint Core Strategy. | |
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<td>Water quality</td>
<td>This is no longer considered an issue as new development associated with the Northampton South East extension preferred option, rejected option 3 and the new roads associated with the new transport connection to the south east of the town has not been included within the Pre Submission Joint Core. In addition the West Northamptonshire emerging water cycle strategy states that no deterioration of water quality would occur downstream as a result of the growth proposed in the town and associated increase in capacity at Great Billing WwTW. “water quality environmental capacity and WFD compliance should not be a constraint to growth at Northampton and Great Billing WwTW”.</td>
<td>No further measures needed.</td>
<td>No adverse effect on integrity due to the non-inclusion of the link road and the south east urban extension.</td>
<td>The Environment Agency licence and control all discharges and abstractions. They have responsibilities to ensure no deterioration of water quality under the WFD. Natural England are confident there are no plans, proposals or projects identified that would interfere which the achievement of the EA’s objectives for the Nene.</td>
<td>No additional measures needed.</td>
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<td>Disturbance</td>
<td>The non-inclusion of the SE extension and new transport corridor has greatly reduced the potential for increased disturbance associated with the plan. There is still the potential for an increase in the number of visitors from the urban extensions planned for the South, North and West of Northamptonshire but this is expected to be minor in comparison to development of new homes adjacent or in easy walking distance from the site. However, as the field surveys (Element 1 and Element 2) identified that Golden Plovers and Wigeon are already subject to a significant level of disturbance at the Clifford Hill Washlands, and that an increase in the frequency of disturbance would have an adverse effect measures should be included in the plan to avoid future increases and reduce the current pressures. This is needed to ensure no adverse effect on</td>
<td>The non-inclusion of the SE extension has substantially reduced the concern that the plan will lead to an increase in visitors at the site. The non-inclusion of the transport corridor has avoided the concerns related to traffic noise, activity and lighting. Policy N3 – N6 require the inclusion of structural greenspace and wildlife corridors. This ties in with Natural England’s advice to provide suitable accessible natural green space (SANGS) as a part of the urban extension in order to meet the recreation needs of new residents and reduce the attractiveness of going to the European site for recreation. The inclusion of policy BN4 requires that all new development will need to demonstrate that the impact of</td>
<td>The non-inclusion of the SE extension and transport corridor and measures to incorporate natural open space in all open space, as well as policy BN4 which requires all new development to demonstrate through the development management process that there will be no significant adverse impacts allows an conclusion of no adverse effect on integrity from the plan.</td>
<td>The proposed new link between the Grand Union Canal and River Ouse could also cause disturbance of all designated species and for roosting and feeding Golden Plover and Lapwing in winter through increased boating traffic although field surveys suggest that birds would not be disturbed at the Clifford Hill Washlands unless people stopped and entered the washland basin. Development in the areas of Wellingborough, Higham Ferrers and Rushden could increase traffic on the A45 which lies immediately adjacent to the pSPA. No information is available</td>
<td>Policy BN4 should be amended to include “where there are existing buildings, development should reflect surrounding building heights” to address comments received from Natural England. It is recommended (but not required) that The supporting text of the plan should encourage dialogue between developers Natural England, wildlife trusts, the pSPA landowners and Northampton District Council in order to establish a suitable site management plan and access management plan.</td>
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<td>Integrity.</td>
<td>There is a potential issue with the need to maintain an unobstructed line of sight for the Golden Plover for predator detection which is important while feeding, resting and roosting. Development close to habitat used by Golden Plover can reduce sight-lines and therefore the habitat’s suitability for feeding and roosting. Where there is existing development any new development will need to be the same height as the existing buildings.</td>
<td>any increased recreational activity (indirect or direct) on the Nene valley pSPA will not have a detrimental impact and that adequate mitigation will be incorporated. This should support the identification and delivery of SANGS where necessary as well as providing an opportunity to provide funding for the management of the pSPA. Survey work on recreational activities and associated disturbance identified that education of visitors with regards to the site’s ornithological importance, as well as exclusion of visitors and dogs from the washlands basin could result in a reduction in the current pressures on qualifying bird species and accommodate an increase in visitors using the embankment.</td>
<td>on the percentage increase in traffic that would result in a significant adverse impact on the integrity of the site. However, the increase in such external pressures emphasises the need for the plan to not only avoid an adverse effect but become more resilient to accommodate disturbance.</td>
<td>These funds allocated for management could be coordinated through the River Nene Regional Park.</td>
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<td>Pet predation</td>
<td>No policies are considered likely to significantly increase pet predation. The Northampton South East extension option and rejected option 3 which were located close to the boundary of the pSPA have not been included within the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy. In addition mitigation has been added in line with the AA recommendations.</td>
<td>The South East Extension has not been included within the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy and policy BN4 has been added which states “no new development (resulting in a net gain of units) will be permitted within 900m of the potential special protection area boundary”</td>
<td>No adverse effect on integrity of the site. Appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures have been added to the plan.</td>
<td>It is not considered likely that any other plans or policies could lead to pet predation on the pSPA.</td>
<td>No additional measures needed.</td>
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**Summary**

The previous issues regarding loss of supporting habitat, fragmentation, water quality, disturbance and pet predation resulting from the Emergent Joint Core Strategy were largely due to the development of the SE extension and supporting habitat. This option has been dropped from the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy and so reducing the risk of impact. With regards the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy:

The Southern Extensions (Policy N5 and N6) could lead to loss of “sub optimal” or “optimal” supporting habitat and so further ground truthing and site survey will be needed. Policy BN4 provides for this but it is recommended that Policy BN4 should also be amended to include “where there are existing buildings, development should reflect surrounding building heights” to address comments received from Natural England.

The reduction in quantum of development, additional information from the recent emerging water cycle strategy and additional of Policy S10 “to maximise water efficiency and for all development to achieve as a minimum standard code for sustainable homes level 4” has removed the adverse effects associated with
reduction in water levels at the site.

The non-inclusion of the SE extension and transport corridor and measures to incorporate natural open space in all open space, as well as policy BN4 which requires all new development to demonstrate through the development management process that there will be no significant adverse impacts, allows a conclusion of no adverse effect on integrity from the plan with regards to increase in disturbance. However as Survey work has identified that the site is currently significantly affected by disturbance from visitors and dog walkers, it is recommended that the plan seeks to improve rather than simply mitigate the situation. Reduction in current pressures may allow the site to accommodate an increase in visitors. To provide a mechanism for the facilitation of any developer contributions towards site management it is recommended that an addition to the supporting text of BN4 is made to encourage dialogue between developers Natural England, wildlife trusts, the pSPA landowners and Northampton District Council in order to establish a suitable site management plan and access management plan. Funds allocated for management could potentially be coordinated through the River Nene Regional Park.

Following the addition of text within policy BN4 on limiting building height as requested by Natural England it will be possible to conclude that there will be no adverse effect on site integrity from the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy.
Annex C: Location Maps for Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA and pRamsar
Figure C1 Location of Upper Nene Valley pSPA within Northampton centre

(Source: Images © MAGIC)
Figure C2 Location of Upper Nene Gravel Pits pSPA (please note Northamptonshire/Bedfordshire county boundary indicated by red line)

(Source: Images © MAGIC)
Figure C3 Location of Upper Nene Gravel Pits pRamsar site within Northampton centre

(Source: Images © MAGIC)
Figure C4 Location of Upper Nene Gravel Pits Ramsar site (please note Northamptonshire/Bedfordshire county boundary indicated by red line)

(Source: Images © MAGIC)