

East Cambridgeshire District Council

Local Development Framework

**Habitats Directive Assessment  
Screening Document**

**Submission Draft Local Plan**

August 2014  
(Second revision)

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This report is a Stage 1 (Screening) of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the emerging East Cambridgeshire Local Plan Development Plan Document (DPD). This HRA Screening Report sets out the findings of the Screening stage to determine whether the Local Plan, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant adverse effect on a Natura 2000 site, and thus whether full Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2 of HRA) is required.

The document has been prepared by East Cambridgeshire District Council as the relevant competent authority. The document is an update of previous screening reports prepared in November 2012 (on the emerging draft Local Plan), February 2013 (alongside publication of the pre-submission draft Local Plan), July 2013 (to accompany the submission of the Local Plan), September 2013 (alongside publication of pre-hearing proposed modifications to the draft Local Plan) and April 2014 (alongside publication of post-hearing modifications).

## Habitats Directive and Natura 2000 sites

It must be demonstrated that the implementation of a development plan would not adversely affect the integrity of Natura 2000 sites. Natura 2000 is a Europe-wide network of sites of international importance for nature conservation established under the European Council Directive 'on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora' (92/43/EEC; 'Habitats Directive').

The network comprises Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). SPAs are classified under the European Council Directive 'on the conservation of wild birds' (79/409/EEC; 'Birds Directive') for the protection of wild birds and their habitats (including particularly rare and vulnerable species listed in Annex 1 of the Birds Directive, and migratory species). SACs are designated under the Habitats Directive and target particular habitats (Annex 1) and/or species (Annex II) identified as being of European importance.

The Government also expects candidate SACs (cSACs), potential SPAs (pSPAs), and Ramsar sites to be included within the HRA. Ramsar sites support internationally important wetland habitats and are listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention, 1971). This report treats all sites named above as being of equal status for the purpose of this Screening report. In subsequent sections of this report, the terms 'Natura 2000' and 'N2K' are used to refer to this collection of sites.

## Stages of assessment

The HRA process is divided into 4 stages:

### Stage 1 - Screening

The process identifies whether a plan, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 site. European Commission (2001) guidance recommends that the screening stage should comprise the following elements:

- Determining whether the plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site – if it is then no further assessment is necessary
- Describing the plan and other plans and projects that, 'in combination', have the potential to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site
- Identifying the potential effects on the site
- Assessing the significance of any effects

If the screening stage concludes that there are likely to be no significant impacts on European sites then there will be no need to progress to Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment.

## **Stage 2 - Appropriate Assessment**

The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the site(s), either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts should be provided.

## **Stage 3 - Assessment of alternative solutions**

The process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites.

## **Stage 4 - Compensatory measures**

An assessment of the compensatory measures where, in light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest, it is deemed that the plan should proceed.

## **Precautionary principle**

The stages described above must be undertaken with the rigorous application of the precautionary principle. This requires those undertaking the exercise to be confident that the plan will not have a significant impact on relevant conservation objectives. Where uncertainty or doubt remains, an adverse impact should be assumed.

### *The Precautionary Principle*

*Prudent action that avoids the possibility of irreversible environmental damage in situations where the scientific evidence is inconclusive but the potential damage could be significant.*

## **Consultation with Natural England**

Natural England (NE) is the statutory nature conservation body who will assist in obtaining the necessary information, help agree the process, and work with the competent authority on agreeing the outcomes and mitigation proposals. Plan-making authorities are required to consult the appropriate nature conservation body regarding the assessment 'within such reasonable time as the plan-making authority may specify'.

The Council contacted Natural England in September 2007 regarding the identification of Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites which would need to be taken into consideration in Screening Assessments. Natural England confirmed the comprehensive list in an email dated 24<sup>th</sup> September 2007.

The Screening Assessment for the Local Plan was sent to Natural England and the RSPB in November 2012 for an opinion as to whether a formal Habitat Regulations Assessment would be required. A full Appropriate Assessment was not required, however further detail was included in January 2013 in response to comments provided.

The revised Screening Report was sent to Natural England in January 2013 to obtain their formal response on whether the Stage 1 report was undertaken appropriately and whether a Stage 2 'Appropriate Assessment' was required. Natural England agreed that a Stage 2 'Appropriate Assessment' was not required.

However Natural England highlighted the need for employment sites at Fordham (policies FRD 5 and 6) which are located close to the Fenland Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and

Chippenham Fen Ramsar to be appropriately assessed as well as the proposed housing sites. Therefore the Screening Report was updated in August 2013 to include an assessment of these employment allocations. A number of other minor word changes were made to take on board comments from Natural England.

The report was then subsequently updated to take account of the proposed modifications to the draft Local Plan published in October 2013. Natural England confirmed that the amendments which have been made relating to Fordham satisfactorily address their previous comments on the Screening Report. They also confirmed that the proposed changes relating to the proposed modifications to the Local Plan were unlikely to affect the conclusions of the screening report.

The Screening Report was also updated to take account of the post-hearing proposed modifications to the draft Local Plan, as published in April 2014. Natural England has confirmed that the amendments relating to growth levels are unlikely to affect the conclusions of this report.

The Screening Report has now been updated to take account of the further proposed modifications to the draft Local Plan, as published in September 2014. Natural England has confirmed that the amendments relating to the inclusion of additional housing allocations at Soham are unlikely to affect the conclusions of this report [to be confirmed].

## 2. SCREENING METHODOLOGY

The following tasks are involved in the screening process. This Screening Report takes each of those tasks in turn, and explains briefly the methodology undertaken in each case.

**Task 1** - Identify sites and their characteristics

**Task 2** - Identify the vulnerabilities of the qualifying features of identified sites

**Task 3** - Identify key components of the emerging East Cambridgeshire Local Plan

**Task 4** - Determine whether any of the key components of the Local Plan have the potential for adverse effects on the qualifying features of identified sites

**Task 5** - Consider whether other plans or projects, in conjunction with the Local Plan, would have the potential for adverse effects on the qualifying features of identified sites

**Task 6** - Conclude whether there are 'no likely effects', 'likely effects' or 'unknown effects'

### TASK 1: Evidence Gathering

The N2K sites within or adjacent to East Cambridgeshire with the potential to be affected by the Local Plan are identified below. In line with the precautionary principle, N2K sites lying wholly, partially or within 15km of the district are included to reflect the fact that the Local Plan may affect sites outside the plan area.

Site	Location	SAC	SPA	Ramsar
Fenland (Wicken Fen, Woodwalton Fen, Chippenham Fen)	Within (or partially within) the district	✓		✓
Ouse Washes	Within (or partially within) the district	✓	✓	✓
Devil's Dyke	Within (or partially within) the district	✓		
Breckland	Outside the district, but within 15km (Forest Heath)	✓	✓	

### Baseline Information

To enable a screening to be undertaken, details of each site have been collated\* and presented in Appendix 1. This information has been used to determine whether the policies and proposals of the Local Plan will lead to deterioration, disturbance or other negative impact on the designated features of those sites. A map of the designated sites located within East Cambridgeshire is provided overleaf.

## **TASK 2: Vulnerabilities of qualifying features**

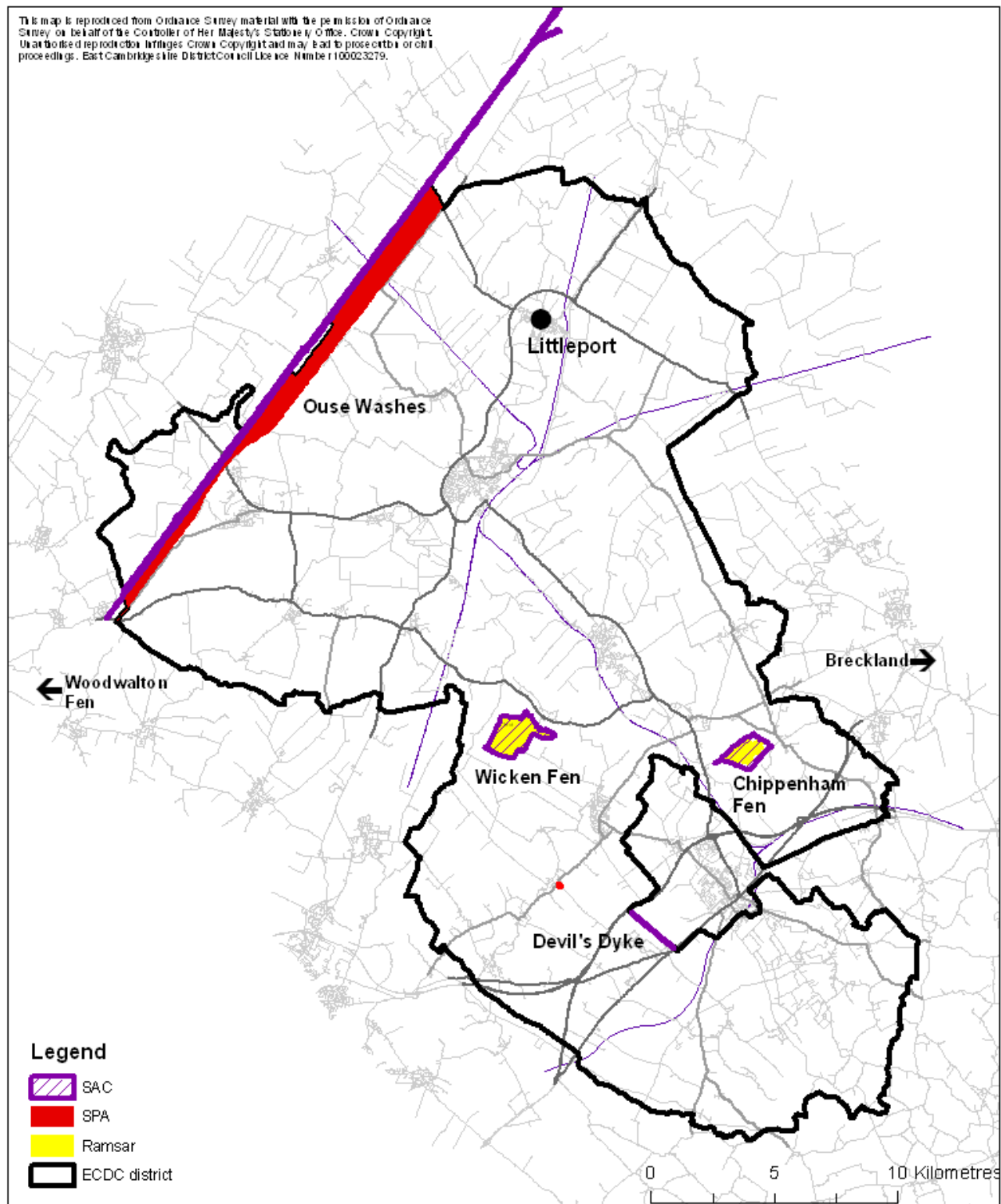
The following generic vulnerabilities categories have been used to assess the likely effects of the Local Plan:

- Physical Habitat Loss – land take by developments
- Physical Damage – from on-site or off-site activities e.g. change in land management, natural erosion, water abstraction, recreational pressure
- Disturbance – e.g. noise from recreation, industry or transport
- Water Quantity – changes in water quantity due to abstraction
- Contamination / Pollution – water pollution, air pollution, water quality

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\* Source: Natural England and Joint Nature Conservation Committee website, plus previously undertaken HRA work by this Council and neighbouring local authorities.

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**SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites**



**East Cambridgeshire District Council**  
November 2012

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1:200,000

Map 1. Location of Natura 2000 sites

## Sites and their vulnerability

Site	Vulnerability					Summary of threats
	Physical habitat loss	Physical damage	Disturbance	Water quantity	Contamination / pollution	
Devil's Dyke	x	x	✓	x	✓	This species rich calcareous grassland is vulnerable to vegetation succession by rank grasses and requires active management by grazing.
Wicken Fen	✓	✓	x	✓	x	This site is vulnerable to vegetation succession and requires management to retain fen characteristics. Hydrological changes associated with off-site agricultural drainage and land reclaim threatens the sites designated features. In addition nutrification from agricultural run-off and abstraction from the underlying aquifer.
Chippenham Fen	✓	✓	x	✓	x	There is considerable pressure in the region from the water abstraction that may affect the local springs and aquifer. The habitats within the site are highly sensitive to inorganic fertilisers and pesticides, applications of which should be avoided both within the site itself and in adjacent surrounding areas. Also inappropriate scrub control and cutting/mowing in some areas.
Woodwalton Fen	✓	x	x	✓	✓	The quality of the water from the agricultural run-off needs to be monitored.
Ouse Washes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	The Ouse Washes are extremely vulnerable to changes in hydrology and the site is currently suffering from nutrification and changes in water quality as a result of agricultural run-off and the input of water with high nutrient levels from sewage treatment works. Off-site changes in hydrology have the potential to affect the site's integrity. Over the past 25yrs it has also been noted that there has been an increase in summer flooding as well as high water levels in winter. This has adversely affected both the breeding birds and the traditional washland management regime. It also results in Glyceria grass (sweet rush) competing with the other grasses and herbs, which may affect food availability for wintering waterfowl. High winter water levels also reduce grazing area for wigeon.



Site	Vulnerability					Summary of threats
	Physical habitat loss	Physical damage	Disturbance	Water quantity	Contamination / pollution	
Breckland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Grazing by sheep/cattle is essential to the maintenance of habitats. Problems include nutrient deposition from the atmosphere and adjacent arable land, invasion by self-sown trees/shrubs, and uncontrolled and inappropriate recreational activities e.g. dog walking. Local groundwater abstraction can negatively impact on the Breckland meres.

### TASK 3: Key components of the emerging Local Plan

Whilst the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan is not yet finalised, it is at a sufficiently advanced stage to determine the likelihood of adverse effects arising based on the draft policies it is currently promoting. The following section describes the emerging proposals, which will subsequently be considered against the vulnerabilities of the sites identified in the previous sections.

#### Background information

A focused review of the Core Strategy began in September 2010, to enable the Masterplan work (Ely, Soham, Littleport and Burwell) to be integrated into the statutory development plan, facilitate the development of Masterplans/Visions for other settlements, and allow an open debate on the future levels of growth in the district. Many of the strategic/development control policies remain essentially unchanged, with only minor amendments as required by the National Planning Policy Framework.

#### Key components of the Local Plan

The plan will set out the strategy for development in the whole of East Cambridgeshire to 2031, and will contain several key elements:

- An overall **spatial vision** setting out how the district is likely to change up to 2031
- A set of **spatial objectives** setting out the main policy directions that need to be pursued if the vision is achieved
- A series of **strategic and development management policies** to guide the assessment of planning applications
- Individual **visions for every settlement** within the district
- A series of **site-specific policies with the town/village visions** to guide the assessment of planning applications for particular sites
- **Monitoring indicators and targets** for implementation.

The Local Plan focuses growth on the district's market towns of Ely, Littleport and Soham.

The main policy elements contained in the Local Plan are summarised in Table 3 and the proposed site allocations are summarised in Table 4.

Table 3: Summary of strategic and development control policies

	Policy	Summary
Overarching strategy & targets	GROWTH 1: Levels of housing, employment & retail growth	Sets the growth targets to 2031: 11,500 new homes required in relation to the Memorandum of Co-operation, 9,200 additional jobs (181 ha of employment land) and 3,011m2 of convenience and 10,064m2 of comparison retail floorspace.
	GROWTH 2: Locational strategy	Directs the majority of development to the Market Towns. More limited development allowed in villages to support local needs and local services. Development in the countryside strictly controlled.
	GROWTH 3: Infrastructure requirements	Requires new and improved infrastructure to support the level of growth outlined in Policy GROWTH 1.
	GROWTH 4: Delivery of growth	Summarises the quantum of development provided through site allocations (5,998 new homes, about 139ha of employment land and at least 13,652m2 of comparison retail floorspace) and broad locations (2,300 new homes), plus associated infrastructure.
	GROWTH 5: Presumption in favour of sustainable development	Supports sustainable developments in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.
	GROWTH 6: Community-led development	Sets out criteria to determine appropriate community-led affordable housing schemes.
Housing	HOU 1: Housing Mix	Requires housing developments of 10+ dwellings to provide a mix of dwellings to meet local housing need. Housing developments of 50+ dwellings are required to provide a proportion of dwellings for the elderly. Housing developments of 100+ are required to provide 5% self build properties.
	HOU 2: Housing Density	Appropriate density to be judged on a site-by-site basis taking account of local character, residential amenity, accessibility and need to accommodate other uses.
	HOU 3: Affordable Housing Provision	Sets affordable housing policy and minimum targets for all development schemes of 5 or more units (40% in the south of the district; 30% in the north).
	HOU 4: Affordable Housing Exception sites	Allows schemes for affordable housing outside settlement boundaries which meet a range of criteria.
	HOU 5: Dwellings for Rural Workers	Allows schemes for permanent dwellings in the countryside for full-time rural workers which meet a range of criteria.
	HOU 6: Residential Care Accommodation	Supports residential care accommodation within settlements that offer a range of services and facilities. Proposals outside settlement boundaries must meet a range of criteria.
	HOU 7: Mobile Homes & Residential Caravan Parks	Resists the loss of mobile homes and caravan parks. Allows new developments in locations where general market housing would be appropriate.
	HOU 8: Extension or Replacement of Dwellings in the Countryside	Allows the extension or replacement of an existing dwelling in the countryside where proposals meet a range of criteria.
	HOU 9: Gypsies, Travellers & Travelling Showpeople sites	Makes provision for 38 permanent gypsy and traveller pitches between 2011-2031 and 4 plots for travelling showpeople between 2011-2016. Windfall proposals must meet a range of criteria.
Employment	EMP 1: Retention of existing employment sites & allocations	Supports the retention of employment land/premises. Mixed-use redevelopments may be allowed in certain circumstances.
	EMP 2: Extensions to existing businesses in the countryside	Allows the expansion of existing businesses in the countryside which meet a range of criteria.
	EMP 3: New employment buildings in the countryside	Supports new small-scale business development on the edge of settlements.
	EMP 4: Re-use & replacement of existing buildings in the countryside	Allows the re-use or replacement of existing buildings in the countryside for business, tourist or community-related uses where proposals meet a range of criteria.
	EMP 5: New horse racing & equestrian development	Allows new developments related to horse racing or other equestrian activities where they meet a range of criteria.

	Policy	Summary
Employment	EMP 6: Development affecting the horse racing industry	Resists developments that would have an adverse impact on the horse racing industry.
	EMP 7: Tourist facilities & visitor attractions	Supports new or extended tourist facilities and visitor attractions in the countryside which meet a range of criteria.
	EMP 8: Tourist accommodation	Supports new tourist accommodation and resists the loss of existing tourist accommodation.
	EMP 9: Holiday & seasonal occupancy conditions	States that holiday occupancy conditions will be placed on new unserviced holiday accommodation.
Environment	ENV 1: Landscape & settlement character	Ensures all development proposals are sympathetic to the surrounding landscape and townscape.
	ENV 2: Design	Ensures all development proposals are of high quality with criteria covering matters such as heritage, key views, biodiversity, local character, sustainable construction, waste collection, amenity issues, parking, accessibility and crime.
	ENV 3: Shop fronts & advertisements	States that proposals for works to shop fronts and signage should be sympathetic to the building and surrounding environment and contribute to the vitality of shopping areas.
	ENV 4: Energy efficiency & renewable energy in construction	Seeks a high standard of sustainability. Most proposals should aim for zero carbon development and meet all aspects of the current level of the Code for Sustainable Homes.
	ENV 5: Carbon offsetting	Proposals will be expected to meet the required reduction of carbon emissions onsite. Where this is not possible a financial contribution to a Community Energy Fund will be required.
	ENV 6: Renewable energy developments	Proposals for renewable energy schemes will generally be supported.
	ENV 7: Biodiversity & geology	All proposals must protect biodiversity and geological value.
	ENV 8: Flood risk	The sequential test and exception test will be strictly applied. New development should normally be located in Flood Zone 1.
	ENV 9: Pollution	All developments should minimise and preferably reduce all emissions and other forms of pollution
	ENV 10: Green Belt	Seeks to protect the greenbelt from inappropriate development.
	ENV 11: Conservation Areas	Sets out more stringent requirements for schemes within or affecting a Conservation Area.
	ENV 12: Listed Buildings	Seeks to protect listed buildings and their settings.
	ENV 13: Locally Listed Buildings	Seeks to protect locally listed buildings.
	ENV 14: Sites of Archaeological Interest	Sets out requirements for proposals affecting sites of archaeological interest.
	ENV 15: Historic Parks & Gardens	Seeks to protect historic parks and gardens.
	ENV 16: Enabling Development	Allows enabling developments to secure the long-term future of a heritage asset under exceptional circumstances.
Community facilities & infrastructure	COM 1: Location of retail & town centre uses	Directs new retail growth to market town centres. Proposals outside town centres and in the countryside must meet a range of criteria.
	COM 2: Retail uses in town centres	Sets out specific guidance relating to windfall retail proposals within the market town centres.
	COM 3: Retaining community facilities	Supports the retention of community facilities.
	COM 4: New Community facilities	Supports the development of new community facilities to meet local needs.
	COM 5: Green Infrastructure	Protects existing green infrastructure and requires new proposals to provide onsite green spaces.
	COM 6: Telecommunications	Seeks to permit the development of new telecommunications infrastructure.
	COM 7: Transport impact	All developments should prioritise sustainable forms of transport and not have a detrimental impact on the highway network.
	COM 8: Parking provision	Adequate levels of car and cycle parking must be provided in all schemes.

Table 4: Summary of site-specific policies

	Location	Summary of new development proposed within site allocations <sup>†</sup>
Large-scale development (>300 homes)	Ely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELY 1: Sustainable urban extension – 3,000 dwellings, 2 primary schools and pre-schools, at least 2.8ha of employment B1/B2/B8 land and associated retail and community facilities</li> <li>• ELY 2: 4,200m<sup>2</sup> comparison retail floorspace, 50 dwellings/office space</li> <li>• ELY 3: mixed use scheme comprising residential, community uses and car parking</li> <li>• ELY 4: mixed use scheme comprising retail, residential and car parking</li> <li>• ELY 5: residential scheme (potential for perhaps 30 dwellings)</li> <li>• ELY 7: 12.3ha mixed use scheme comprising 400-630 dwellings, employment land equivalent to 3.8ha, retail up to 1078m<sup>2</sup> and a transport interchange.</li> <li>• ELY 8: as above</li> <li>• ELY 9: 16ha of employment and retail development</li> <li>• ELY 10: 7ha sports and leisure</li> <li>• ELY 11: 40.5 ha of employment land</li> <li>• ELY 12: 12 ha of employment land</li> </ul>
	Soham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SOH 1: 400 dwellings</li> <li>• SOH 2: 90 dwellings, station building, 0.5ha employment</li> <li>• SOH 3: 600 dwellings, 0.5ha employment (B1/B2), 3ha garden centre/employment land, other community uses</li> <li>• SOH 4: 90 dwellings</li> <li>• SOH 5: 160 dwellings</li> <li>• SOH 6: 100 dwellings</li> <li>• SOH 7: 115 dwellings</li> <li>• SOH 8: 45 dwellings</li> <li>• SOH 9: 5ha employment (B1/B2/B8)</li> <li>• SOH 10: 2ha employment (B1/B2/B8)</li> <li>• SOH 11: 11ha employment (B1/B2/B8)</li> <li>• SOH 12: 0.55ha town centre opportunity site for retail</li> <li>• SOH 13: 0.4ha town centre opportunity site for retail led/mixed use development</li> <li>• SOH 14: 0.3ha town centre opportunity site for retail led/mixed use development</li> </ul>
	Littleport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LIT 1: 250 dwellings, 7ha employment (B1/B2/B8)</li> <li>• LIT 2: 300 dwellings</li> <li>• LIT 3: 1.6ha employment (B1/B2)</li> <li>• LIT 4: 4.8ha employment (B1/B2/B8)</li> <li>• LIT 6: secondary, primary, special area and pre-school</li> </ul>
	Burwell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BUR 1: 350 dwellings</li> <li>• BUR 2: 2.5ha employment (B1/B2)</li> <li>• BUR 3: 3ha employment (B1/B2/B8)</li> </ul>
Medium-scale development (20-300 homes)	Bottisham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BOT 1: 50 dwellings</li> <li>• BOT 2: 1ha employment (B1/B2)</li> </ul>
	Cheveley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CHE 1: 2 dwellings</li> <li>• CHE 2: 18 dwellings</li> </ul>
	Isleham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISL 1: 15 dwellings</li> <li>• ISL 2: 10 dwellings</li> <li>• ISL 3: 12 dwellings</li> <li>• ISL 4: 3 dwellings</li> <li>• ISL 5: 5 dwellings</li> <li>• ISL 6: 1ha employment (B1/B2/B8)</li> </ul>
	Little Downham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LTD 1: 25 dwellings</li> </ul>
	Sutton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SUT 1: 50 dwellings</li> </ul>
	Swaffham Prior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWP 1: 20 dwellings</li> <li>• SWP 2: 1ha employment (B1/B2/B8)</li> </ul>
	Barway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BAR 1: 5 dwellings</li> <li>• BAR 2: 5 dwellings</li> </ul>
development	Prickwillow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PRI 1: 10 dwellings</li> </ul>

<sup>†</sup> Non site-specific and 'vision' policies have not been included

	Location	Summary of new development proposed within site allocations <sup>†</sup>
	Pymoor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PYM 1: 10 dwellings</li> </ul>
	Wentworth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WEN 1: 2 dwellings</li> <li>• WEN 2: 2 dwellings</li> </ul>
	Wicken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WIC 1: 5 dwellings</li> <li>• WIC 2: 5 dwellings</li> </ul>

#### **TASK 4: Assessment of the key components of the emerging Local Plan**

An assessment has been undertaken to identify the likely significant effects of the emerging Local Plan on the integrity of the identified N2K sites. Table 5 sets out the likely effects from the strategic and development control policies and Table 6 sets out the likely effects from the proposed site allocations policies.

The potential for other plans or projects to produce in-combination effects with those described in the Screening Matrix is discussed in the next section.

Table 5: Screening Assessment of strategic and development control policies

	Policy	Screening Assessment
Overarching strategy & targets	GROWTH 1: Levels of housing, employment & retail growth	<p>This policy sets the overall growth targets to 2031. This document was subject to extensive Appropriate Assessment and found there to be no harm to protected sites as a result of growth. There is no evidence to suggest that the targets should be subject to further testing. The main issues to consider are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development could have an impact on water quantity, through run off from the sites, via main drainage systems or water use. It could also have an impact on water quality, through additional waste products produced. A major part of East Cambridgeshire District drains into the River Great Ouse catchment. The Ouse Washes (SAC, SPA and Ramsar) form part of this river system. However, River Great Ouse joins the Ouse Washes site at Denver Sluice, downstream of the Washes so development within East Cambridgeshire should not be a factor to consider. Policy ENV 8: Flood Risk identifies the need for and methods to reduce increase of water quantity in to river systems through use of SuDS. The Design Guide SPD (2012) also identifies the need for sustainable construction, including storage and recycling of water.</li> <li>• Increased dwelling stock may increase pressure of recreational activity on Natura 2000 sites where public access is seen as a vulnerability (Wicken Fen, Chippenham Fen, Ouse Washes and Breckland). However the pressure should be alleviated on sensitive sites through other recreational opportunities proposed in the Local Plan such as Ely Country Park and green corridors. The importance of green infrastructure policies are discussed under GROWTH 3 and COM 5. The delivery of sufficient and quality green infrastructure and open space provision is allocated within each major housing development policy, most significantly in major housing schemes such as ELY 1, LIT 1 and 2, and SOH 1 and 3.</li> <li>• On managed sites such as Wicken Fen and Ouse Washes, increased numbers to the site are not considered a vulnerability and public access is encouraged. National Trust manage Wicken Fen, which is controlled by permit, and visitors are managed by 'zoning' parts of the Fen near the entrance, leaving the more remote parts of the site relatively undisturbed. On other sites, such as Chippenham Fen and Woodwalton Fen, access away from Public Rights of Way are by permit only and are only applied for by very few amounts of people so will be unlikely to be significantly affected.</li> <li>• The level of development proposed could result in increased levels of atmospheric pollution, through the emissions created by development, or from the car journeys generated. However, through reducing car borne trips and out commuting (Policy COM 7), increasing the provision of employment areas, improving public transport and cycle links, enhancing rail network facilities, and the creation of a station interchange (in Ely), together will help reduce car borne trips and encourage a modal shift away from use of the car, therefore should see no significant effect on N2K sites.</li> </ul> <p>Significant additional growth above these levels would need to be located outside of settlement boundaries and would not be in accordance with the Local Plan.</p>
	GROWTH 2: Locational strategy	<p>The majority of growth is directed to the market towns (Ely, Soham, Littleport). These settlements have gone through an extensive masterplanning process which identified specific allocations which are discussed in more detail under the site specific policies (Table 6). Development will be focussed in market towns as the most sustainable locations and will also be complemented by employment allocations to reduce the need to commute by private car. It is therefore identified that this policy should have a positive effect on air quality.</p>

	Policy	Screening Assessment
	GROWTH 3: Infrastructure requirements	<p>This policy confirms the need for infrastructure to be provided alongside development including necessary water/sewerage infrastructure. The requirements for new or improved facilities are outlined in the East Cambridgeshire Water Cycle Study (2011) as summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New or improvements to existing Wastewater Treatment Works would be required to cover growth in Ely, Littleport and Soham.</li> <li>• More advanced improvements will be required in Burwell to improve water quality, and it is recommended housing growth should be phased in Burwell to cope with this (now completed so no longer needs to be phased).</li> </ul> <p>Environment Agency and Anglian Water confirm that there will unlikely be an effect on Wicken Fen and Ouse Washes (and ditches) through increased discharges in catchment areas, or through possible backflow at Burwell. Any further investigation will be undertaken if an application for increased consent is required. Improvements to Burwell WWTW have been completed (Oct 2012). It was concluded that no significant effects would be caused from improvements required. The Cambridge Water Resource Management Plan anticipates sufficient supply beyond 2030, including taking account the growth of the district. WRMP indicates that abstractions within the Water Resource Zone that supply the study area are not likely to lead to a significant effect on European sites. However, the report indicates that a full HRA will need to be undertaken on WwWT improvements before work starts to ensure there will be no significant effects on N2K sites and any mitigation measures that may need to be implemented. This will ensure no harm to N2K sites through matters such as water related issues.</p> <p>This policy also identifies strategic green infrastructure improvements to be developed alongside growth as outlined in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, including the provision of Ely Country Park, improvements to Soham Town Commons and the Wicken Fen Vision. The policy also identifies the need for improvement to open space and play area provision throughout the district. This will alleviate the recreational pressure put on vulnerable N2K sites as a result of growth. The importance of green infrastructure policies is discussed under GROWTH 3 and COM 5. The delivery of sufficient and quality green infrastructure and open space provision is allocated within each major housing development policy, most significantly in major housing schemes such as ELY 1, LIT 1 and 2, and SOH 1 and 3. Play space provision is also identified within the Infrastructure section of each Village Vision where a need has been identified.</p> <p>Evidence shows that the infrastructure required to accommodate development will not significantly effect N2K sites.</p>
	GROWTH 4: Delivery of growth	This policy summarises the quantum of proposed site allocations, broad locations for additional housing and reiterates the need to locate development in sustainable locations as detailed in Policy GROWTH 2 and GROWTH 3 and issues discussed further in Table 6. The level and distribution of growth is discussed under these policies, and is not considered to impact on N2K sites.
	GROWTH 5: Presumption in favour of sustainable development	This policy has no direct impact on N2K sites. Indirectly it has the potential for positive effects on the wider environment.
	GROWTH 6: Community-led development	This policy is non-site specific, and deals with generic and detailed rural issues.
Housing	HOU 1: Housing Mix	This policy is, from a habitat and biodiversity perspective, negligible because it relates to the type of housing, not how much or where housing should go.
	HOU 2: Housing Density	This policy requires the density of a scheme to take into account matters such as landscape character, biodiversity and need for open space. Therefore indirectly it has the potential for positive effects on the wider environment.
	HOU 3: Affordable Housing Provision	This policy is, from a habitat and biodiversity perspective, negligible because it relates to the type of housing, not how much or where housing should go.
	HOU 4: Affordable Housing Exception sites	This policy is non-site specific, and deals with generic and detailed rural issues.



	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Screening Assessment</b>
	HOU 5: Dwellings for Rural Workers	This policy is non-site specific, and deals with generic and detailed rural issues.
	HOU 6: Residential Care Accommodation	This policy is non-site specific, and deals with generic and detailed rural issues.
	HOU 7: Mobile Homes & Residential Caravan Parks	This policy is non-site specific, and deals with generic and detailed rural issues.
	HOU 8: Extension or Replacement of Dwellings in the Countryside	This policy is non-site specific, and deals with generic and detailed rural issues.
	HOU 9: Gypsies, Travellers & Travelling Showpeople sites	This policy sets out where gypsy and traveller sites are to be allocated to meet need. All proposed sites are small-scale and states "the site would not lead to the loss or adverse impact on important historic and natural environment assets as defined in Policies ENV 7 and ENV 11-15" and therefore not considered to impact N2K sites.
<b>Employment</b>	EMP 1: Retention of existing employment sites & allocations	This policy does not relate to new development and therefore does not impact on N2K sites.
	EMP 2: Extensions to existing businesses in the countryside	This policy is non-site specific, and deals with generic and detailed rural issues.
	EMP 3: New employment buildings in the countryside	This policy is non-site specific, and deals with generic and detailed rural issues.
	EMP 4: Re-use & replacement of existing buildings in the countryside	This policy is non-site specific, and deals with generic and detailed rural issues.
	EMP 5: New horse racing & equestrian development	This policy is non-site specific, and deals with generic and detailed rural issues.
	EMP 6: Development affecting the horse racing industry	This policy is non-site specific, and deals with generic and detailed rural issues.
	EMP 7: Tourist facilities & visitor attractions	This policy only allows schemes with no significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area or on nature and wildlife habitats, therefore any planning application would have to show that N2K sites will not be adversely affected. Wicken Fen is identified as a tourist attraction in the district. Extension and improvements to Wicken Fen have already been identified in the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011) through the Wicken Fen Vision that aims to create a new nature reserve between the existing site and Cambridge. This project will not only improve the site as a visitor attraction but will also create significant positive effects on the ecology of the site.
	EMP 8: Tourist accommodation	This policy only allows schemes within or close to an existing development boundary and where there will be no significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area or on nature and wildlife habitats. Accommodation in the countryside will only be allowed where it involves the re-use of an existing building, for a maximum of 2 dwellings so will be unlikely to have a significant effect on N2K sites.
	EMP 9: Holiday & seasonal occupancy conditions	This policy is non-site specific and has no direct impact on N2K sites.
<b>Environment</b>	ENV 1: Landscape & settlement character	This policy has no direct impact on N2K sites. Indirectly it has the potential for positive effects on the wider environment.
	ENV 2: Design	This policy specifies good design for the new built environment. This is not relevant to N2K sites.
	ENV 3: Shop fronts & advertisements	This policy specifies good design for the new built environment. This is not relevant to N2K sites.

	Policy	Screening Assessment
	ENV 4: Energy efficiency & renewable energy in construction	This policy has no direct impact on N2K sites. Indirectly it has the potential for positive effects on the wider environment through striving for all new development of 5 or more dwellings to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 and all non-domestic developments of 1000m <sup>2</sup> or more to meet BREEAM Very Good or equivalent.
	ENV 5: Carbon offsetting	This policy has no direct impact on N2K sites. Indirectly it has the potential for positive effects on the wider environment.
	ENV 6: Renewable energy developments	This policy only supports proposals where there will be no irremediable adverse affect on protected species and the wider environment, therefore has no direct impact on N2K sites. Indirectly it has the potential for positive effects on the wider environment.
	ENV 7: Biodiversity & geology	This policy has no direct impact on N2K sites. Indirectly it has the potential for positive effects on the wider environment by requiring an assessment by the applicant of the effects of a proposal on the biodiversity and geology of the site to protect and enhance habitats on or off site.
	ENV 8: Flood risk	<p>This policy identifies how development could potentially impact on N2K sites through increased surface water run-off which can carry pollutants in to water systems. Water levels can also be increased due to development and use of tradition drainage systems and faster surface water run-off. This policy identifies the need for and methods to reduce increases in water quantity in to river systems through use of SuDS, which also improves water quality. The Design Guide SPD (2012) also identifies the need for sustainable construction, including storage and recycling of water to reduce the effect of development. The Ouse Washes has experienced unseasonal flooding which has raised water levels at different times of year over the past 25 years. A major part of East Cambridgeshire District drains into the River Great Ouse catchment. The Ouse Washes (SAC, SPA and Ramsar) form part of this river system. However, River Great Ouse joins the Ouse Washes site at Denver Sluice, downstream of the Washes so development within East Cambridgeshire should not be a major factor to consider. However, main drainage systems, for example to the west of Ely, direct water to pumping stations along the Hundred Foot River and water is abstracted from the Hundred Foot River to replenish the internal ditch system within the Ouse Washes. There is therefore hydrological connectivity between the catchment and the washes. Current evidence does not indicate that existing phosphate discharges from the WwTWs in East Cambridgeshire are likely to be having an adverse effect upon the Ouse Washes SAC/SPA or SSSI. However, the District Council is committed to the use of sustainable drainage systems to reduce any possible future influence from new development.</p> <p>The policy requires the application of the sequential test in determining proposals and proposals will not be supported where it will intensify the risk of flooding, and proposals will need to demonstrate the use of appropriate surface water drainage arrangements. The use of SuDS should be used in development in the south of the district; however strategic surface water attenuation features would be more appropriate in Soham and Ely as part of an enhanced green corridor. The Ouse Washes Habitat Creation Project by the Environment Agency proposes for creation of around 500 hectares of new wet grassland habitat to replace habitat deteriorated by increased flooding of the Ouse Washes and to provide for the species once supported by this habitat. This project, in combination with a strong emphasis on climate change mitigation efforts required in the Local Plan, will reduce the risk of flooding and will also indirectly have the potential for positive effects on the wider environment. The project should coincide with the delivery of development within Ely and Littleport which is phased over a long delivery period and will be supported by a strong network of green spaces and use of SuDS to help improve water quality as well as construction materials and techniques which will help reduce the effects of climate change.</p>

	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Screening Assessment</b>
	ENV 9: Pollution	This policy has no direct impact on N2K sites, but highlights the importance of reducing surface water run-off and effluent discharge as a result of development. Policy ENV 8 aims to strictly control flood risk through requiring use of appropriate surface water drainage systems, especially important in developments within the catchment area of the Ouse Washes which could be affected by eutrophication and shows that adequate controls are in place to ensure there will be no significant effect on N2K sites as a result of pollution through surface water run-off. Policy GROWTH 3 shows that sewage effluent discharge as a result of required improvements to infrastructure will not have a significant effect on N2K sites. Indirectly the policy has the potential for positive effects on the wider environment.
	ENV 10: Green Belt	This policy has no direct impact on N2K sites. Indirectly it has the potential for positive effects on the wider environment by resisting further growth in to the wider countryside.
	ENV 11: Conservation Areas	This policy is non-site specific and has no direct or indirect impact on N2K sites as open spaces within the boundary will be protected against inappropriate development and will be continuously maintained to protect its quality and appearance to enhance the area.
	ENV 12: Listed Buildings	This policy is non-site specific and has no direct impact on N2K sites. Indirectly it will protect any surround land that can accompany many listed buildings from inappropriate development, including surrounding land through buffer zones.
	ENV 13: Locally Listed Buildings	This policy is non-site specific and has no direct or indirect impact on N2K sites as it poses greater protection and enhancement of significant buildings that do not have a national designation. Indirectly this can have a positive effect on the wider environment where a listing will preserve views and the setting of a countryside/green open space location.
	ENV 14: Sites of Archaeological Interest	This policy is non-site specific and has no direct or indirect impact on N2K sites as development will not be permitted where there would be an adverse effect on new or unknown nationally important sites and their settings.
	ENV 15: Historic Parks & Gardens	This policy is non-site specific and has no direct or indirect impact on N2K sites as open spaces will be protected against inappropriate development and will be continuously maintained to protect its quality and appearance to enhance the area.
	ENV 16: Enabling Development	This policy is non-site specific and has no direct or indirect impact on N2K sites, and states that any development should not affect any sites of biodiversity or conservation importance as explained in ENV7.

	Policy	Screening Assessment
Community facilities & infrastructure	COM 1: Location of retail & town centre uses	This policy seeks to focus growth in existing town centres so has no impact on N2K sites.
	COM 2: Retail uses in town centres	This policy seeks to focus growth in existing town centres so has no impact on N2K sites.
	COM 3: Retaining community facilities	This policy does not relate to new development and therefore does not impact on N2K sites.
	COM 4: New Community facilities	This policy is non-site specific and has no direct impact on N2K sites.
	COM 5: Green Infrastructure	<p>This policy has the potential for positive effects on N2K sites as a result of the positive aspects implementing such a policy will have on the wider environment. These benefits are twofold, firstly, direct benefits to the individual sites through creation and protection of biodiversity; but also indirectly through increased opportunities for recreation through extensive walking, cycling and other forms of recreation which can help mitigate the effects of climate change and alleviate the recreational pressure on other N2K sites.</p> <p>The Local Plan has committed to a network of green open spaces and green corridors as well as policies to improve existing sites. All provision will need to take place alongside development and would be in place before the final occupation and end of construction. In the case of Ely Country Park, Phase 1 and 2 have already been completed and has consequently created a more accessible and higher quality recreational experience as well as having a conservation and biodiversity focus, enhancing the wetlands, meadows and woodland of the Ely Pits and Meadows SSSI. Phase 3 will commence alongside the North Ely development and will have a more recreational focus whilst protecting the impact on the conservation achievements of Phase 1 and 2 on the SSSI.</p> <p>The policy aims to meet Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt), with emphasis on providing quality GI, as well as criteria for monitoring the effectiveness of provision away from sensitive sites.</p>
	COM 6: Telecommunications	This policy is non-site specific and has no direct impact on N2K sites.
	COM 7: Transport impact	This policy has no direct impact on N2K sites. However, indirectly, its implementation may help N2K sites which are prone to transport related pollutants as a result of its promotion of a more sustainable transport network.
	COM 8: Parking provision	This policy has no direct impact on N2K sites.

Table 6: Screening Assessment of site-specific policies

Location	Screening Assessment
Ely	<p>Ely proposes the most significant level of housing development in the Local Plan. The main issues to consider in assessing the possible effects on N2K sites are summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p><b>Recreational pressure:</b> The population increase in Ely as a result of the North Ely proposal may create extra recreational pressure in the district. However, as identified in the HRA for the Ely Masterplan, due to the distance to N2K sites and proposed green infrastructure (including Ely Country Park), there will unlikely be significant effects on N2K sites. Along with the extension of Ely Country Park as part of the North Ely development, ELY 1 has a commitment to providing an array of public open green space which will “permeate through development”. This will include a green buffer between development and the village of Chettisham; a minimum of 30% of total gross site area as green infrastructure/public open space. This will include allotments, small irregular green spaces and small-scale features such as green roofs. ELY 7 and 8 also designate area for greenspace.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Impact on protected species:</b> The expanse of development at North Ely could have an impact on migratory (wintering) birds that use the currently agricultural areas for rest and grazing outside of the Ouse Washes during the winter season due to the historical loss of foraging areas. A map produced by Lucking et al (2004) illustrated the areas of sensitive bird populations in relation to wind turbine development. The map (see Appendix 3) does not indicate Ely as an area of high or low risk. Advice from RSPB also indicates from available data from surveys for Bewick’s and whooper swans outside of the Ouse Washes (with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust), the most frequent counts of swans did not coincide with areas proposed for significant development. However, as at this stage there is some uncertainty as to whether the proposals, either in isolation or in combination with other development, will have a significant effect on biodiversity, the proposal will require detailed assessment at project stage, including, where necessary, the submission of sufficient information from the applicant to enable the Council to complete, in consultation with Natural England, a project level Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulation Assessment process.</p> </li> <li> <p>The Ouse Washes are important for roosting and foraging ground for a number of bird species which may be affected by development in the north of the district, especially North Ely. However, the North Ely Development Framework identifies vast areas for potential green corridors and woodland as well as a buffer zone protecting sprawl to Chettisham, and the development of North Ely will be phased. It was determined that as the destination for migratory birds is less than 8km away they should reach their destination. Even so, Policy ELY 1 includes criteria for a project level survey/assessment to be carried out and considered at application stage to ensure no adverse effects on the Ouse Washes will result from development.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Water quality and quantity:</b> Development could have an impact on water quantity through abstraction, or water use that may affect the local springs and aquifer. Development could have an impact on water quantity, through run off from the sites, via main drainage systems or water use. It could also have an impact on water quality, through additional waste products produced. A major part of East Cambridgeshire drains into the River Great Ouse catchment. The Ouse Washes (SAC, SPA and Ramsar) form part of this river system. However, River Great Ouse joins the Ouse Washes site at Denver Sluice, downstream of the Washes so development within East Cambridgeshire should not be a major factor to consider. Current evidence does not indicate that existing phosphate discharges from the WwTWs in East Cambridgeshire are likely to be having an adverse effect upon the Ouse Washes SAC/SPA or SSSI. However, main drainage systems to the west of Ely direct water to pumping stations along the Hundred Foot River and water is abstracted from the Hundred Foot River to replenish the internal ditch system within the Ouse Washes. There is therefore hydrological connectivity between the catchment and the washes. Policy ENV 8: Flood Risk identifies methods to reduce increase of water quantity in to river systems through use of SuDS and includes criterion to avoid adverse impact on sensitive sites through surface water runoff. The Design Guide SPD (2012) also identifies the need for sustainable construction, including storage and recycling of water.</p> </li> <li> <p>The East Cambridgeshire Water Cycle Study (2011) identifies that water supply in the district is sufficient for growth. Anglian Water has confirmed that a new Waste Water Treatment facility is no longer required to the north of Ely. Ely is located on an ‘island’ of high ground above the flood plain so should not be affected by flood risk. However, increased run-off as a result of development should be restricted through surface attenuation. Proposals should use eco-friendly construction methods in accordance to the Design Guide SPD (2012) which requires the consideration of storage and recycling of water and use of SuDS.</p> </li> </ul> <p>Considering the above issues and evidence it can be concluded that policies relating to Ely will have no significant effect on N2K sites.</p>

Soham	<p>Soham is approximately 3km from Wicken Fen and over 5km from Chippenham Fen. The main issues to consider in assessing the possible effects on N2K sites are summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Recreational Pressure:</u> Wicken Fen is a managed site and increased visitor numbers to the site is not considered to be a vulnerability and public access is encouraged as conditions are continuously observed by the National Trust. On other sites, such as Chippenham Fen, access away from Public Rights of Way are by permit only and are only applied for by very few amounts of people so will be unlikely to be significantly affected by an increase in population in Soham. Policy COM 5 identifies Soham Town Commons as an important green infrastructure asset and it provides important local recreational space for the town. The commons are protected against development in Policy SOH 16. Policies SOH 1, 3 4, 5, 6 7 and 8 require the provision of additional public open space on site. A total of 19.5ha is to be provided across these sites including the area given over to common land as part of the Eastern Gateway (SOH 3).</li> <li>• In combination with district wide projects as identified within the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (as discussed in ELY above) there are many alternative sites for recreational activity that should alleviate pressure off N2K sites and should therefore have no significant effect.</li> <li>• <u>Water quality and quantity:</u> Development could have an impact on water quantity through abstraction, or water use that may affect the local springs and aquifer. It could also have an impact on water quality, through additional waste products produced and surface run off. The East Cambridgeshire Water Cycle Study (2011) identifies that water supply in the district is sufficient for growth; however an improved wastewater treatment plant in Soham is required to cope with proposed growth. The improvements required at the Soham plant are achievable over the plan period within the limits of conventionally applied technology, however, initial development may need to be restricted whilst improvements are implemented. The study also concluded that increased effluent discharges in the Soham plant would not increase the risk of flooding. However, increased water run-off as a result of development should be restricted through surface attenuation as part of the green corridor. Proposals should use eco-friendly construction methods in accordance to the Design Guide SPD (2012) which requires the consideration of storage and recycling of water and use of SuDS.</li> <li>• Considering the above issues and evidence and the scale of development proposed, and the expected effect of other proposed policies, it is not considered that there is likely to be any significant impact on nature conservation objectives.</li> </ul>
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Littleport	<p>Littleport is approximately 5km from the Ouse Washes. The main issues to consider in assessing the possible effects on N2K sites are summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Impact on protected species:</b> Development in Littleport could have an impact on migratory birds that use the currently agricultural land in Littleport for temporary rest and grazing, prior to reaching their destination at the Ouse Washes. The Ouse Washes are important for roosting and foraging ground for a number of bird species which may be affected by development in Littleport. A map produced by Lucking et al (2004) illustrated the areas of sensitive bird populations in relation to wind turbine development. The map (see Appendix 3) indicates Littleport falls in an area of high sensitive bird populations; however advice from RSPB also indicates from available data from surveys for Bewick's and whooper swans outside of the Ouse Washes (with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust), the most frequent counts of swans did not coincide with areas proposed for significant development. However, as at this stage there is some uncertainty as to whether the proposals, either in isolation or in combination with other development, will have a significant effect on biodiversity, the proposal will require detailed assessment at project stage, including, where necessary, the submission of sufficient information from the applicant to enable the Council to complete, in consultation with Natural England, a project level Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulation Assessment process. The vision for Littleport identifies a network of greenspaces/links between Littleport and the River Ouse and the wider countryside, and all development will be phased. It was determined that as the destination for migratory birds is less than 5km away they should reach their destination, the designation of which is based on its water resources. It is therefore concluded, that in accordance with the findings of the Habitats Directive Assessment Screening Document undertaken for the Littleport Masterplan and subsequent evidence from RSPB that the proposed growth would be unlikely to affect the Ouse Washes (or other N2K sites). Even so, Policies LIT 1 and 2 includes criteria for a project level survey/assessment to be carried out and considered at application stage to ensure no adverse effects on the Ouse Washes will result from development. </li> <li> <b>Water quality and quantity:</b> Development could have an impact on water quantity through abstraction, or water use that may affect the local springs and aquifer. It could also have an impact on water quality, through additional waste products produced and surface run off. A major part of East Cambridgeshire District drains into the River Great Ouse catchment. The Ouse Washes (SAC, SPA and Ramsar) form part of this river system. However, River Great Ouse joins the Ouse Washes site at Denver Sluice, downstream of the Washes so development within East Cambridgeshire should not be a major factor to consider. Current evidence does not indicate that existing phosphate discharges from the WwTWs in East Cambridgeshire are likely to be having an adverse effect upon the Ouse Washes SAC/SPA or SSSI. However, main drainage systems to the west of Ely direct water to pumping stations along the Hundred Foot River and water is abstracted from the Hundred Foot River to replenish the internal ditch system within the Ouse Washes. There is therefore hydrological connectivity between the catchment and the washes. Policy ENV 8: Flood Risk identifies methods to reduce increase of water quantity in to river systems through use of SuDS and includes criterion to avoid adverse impact on sensitive sites through surface water runoff. The Design Guide SPD (2012) also identifies the need for sustainable construction, including storage and recycling of water. </li> <li> The East Cambridgeshire Water Cycle Study (2011) identifies that water supply in the district is sufficient for growth; however an improved wastewater treatment plant in Littleport is required to cope with proposed growth. The improvements required at the Littleport plant are achievable over the plan period within the limits of conventionally applied technology. The study also concluded that increased effluent discharges in the Littleport plant would not increase the risk of flooding nor will it impact on the quality of the Hundred Foot River. However, increased water run-off as a result of development should be restricted through surface attenuation as part of the green corridor. Policies in the Local Plan promote the use eco-friendly construction methods in accordance to the Design Guide SPD (2012) which requires the consideration of storage and recycling of water and use of SuDS. </li> <li> <b>Recreational Pressure:</b> It is not considered that the level of public use of the Ouse Washes will increase greatly as a result of the Littleport Masterplan. Notwithstanding the above, the impact of public access is not listed in the vulnerabilities relating to the site. It should also be noted that other recreational opportunities are proposed in the Littleport Masterplan such as the development of green fingers, which will allow access to the countryside. The Masterplan also includes a proposed cycle link to Ely, linking new development into the wider countryside area. </li> </ul>
Burwell	<p>Burwell is approximately 3km from Wicken Fen and within 5km of the Devil's Dyke, however, given the scale of development proposed, and the expected effect of other proposed policies, it is not considered that there is likely to be any significant impact on nature conservation objectives.</p>

Bottisham	Unlikely to effect N2K sites. The level of growth proposed at Bottisham has not changed from the adopted Core Strategy, which was subject to Appropriate Assessment.
Haddenham	Unlikely to effect N2K sites due to the location and scale of development proposed.
Isleham	Unlikely to effect N2K sites due to the location and scale of development proposed.
Little Downham	Unlikely to effect N2K sites due to the location and scale of development proposed.
Cheveley	Unlikely to effect N2K sites due to the location and scale of development proposed.
Sutton	Unlikely to effect N2K sites due to the location and scale of development proposed.
Swaffham Prior	Unlikely to effect N2K sites due to the location and scale of development proposed.
Fordham	<p>The quantity of housing development proposed is small-scale (&lt;20 dwellings) and therefore unlikely to effect N2K sites. The employment allocation sites are however within 200m from the Fenland Special Area of Conservation and Chippenham Fen Ramsar at its closest point. At this stage there is some uncertainty as to whether the proposals, either in isolation or in combination with other development, will have a significant effect on biodiversity, the proposal will require detailed assessment at project stage, including, where necessary, the submission of sufficient information from the applicant to enable the Council to complete, in consultation with Natural England, a project level Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulation Assessment process.</p> <p>It is proposed that policies FRD 5 and FRD 6 should include criteria for a project level survey/assessment to be carried out and considered at application stage to ensure no adverse effects on the Fenland Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Chippenham Fen Ramsar will result from development.</p>
Prickwillow	The quantity of development proposed is small-scale (<20 dwellings) and therefore unlikely to effect N2K sites.
Pymoor	The quantity of development proposed is small-scale (<20 dwellings) and therefore unlikely to effect N2K sites.
Barway	The quantity of development proposed is small-scale (<20 dwellings) and therefore unlikely to effect N2K sites.
Wentworth	The quantity of development proposed is small-scale (<20 dwellings) and therefore unlikely to effect N2K sites.
Wicken	The quantity of development proposed is small-scale (<20 dwellings) and therefore unlikely to effect N2K sites.



## TASK 5: Other relevant plans and strategies

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an Appropriate Assessment of ‘Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plan or projects’. Other plans that could lead to potentially significant ‘in-combination’ effects when implemented together with the Local Plan have been reviewed.

The guidance states that only those documents that are considered most relevant should be considered for the ‘in combination’ test, as an exhaustive list could render the assessment exercise unworkable. The HRA of the East of England Plan (2001-2021) concluded that the East of England Plan *alone* will have no effect on the integrity of European or Ramsar sites. Surrounding districts are proposing growth in line with this plan. Fenland Communities Development Plan does not propose significant development close to Ouse Washes, Chatteris being over 5km away from the site and includes strong emphasis on public open space within its vision and did not require Appropriate Assessment, however did suggest consideration of renewable energy development across administrative boundaries. Furthermore, adjacent districts have undertaken considerable HRA work as part of their Core Strategy/Local Plan preparation and identified no significant effects on N2K sites:

*Table 7: HRA work completed by neighbouring districts*

District	LDF document	Status	Details of HRA work completed
Fenland	Fenland Core Strategy	Adopted	Screening Report – further assessment not required
King’s Lynn and West Norfolk	Core Strategy	Adopted	Appropriate Assessment
Forest Heath	Core Strategy	Adopted	Appropriate Assessment
St Edmundsbury	Core Strategy	Adopted	Screening Report – further assessment not required
South Cambridgeshire	Pre-submission Draft Local Plan	Draft Local Plan submitted March 2014	Screening Report – further assessment not required
Huntingdonshire	Core Strategy	Adopted	Screening Report – further assessment not required
Huntingdonshire	Draft Local Plan	Public consultation	Screening Report to be prepared for Pre-submission stage

## **Task 6: Conclusions**

It is the opinion of the Local Planning Authority that the Local Plan, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is unlikely to have any significant effects on any of the Natura 2000 or Ramsar Sites.

A full explanation of the designation, qualifying features, characteristics and vulnerabilities of the sites follows in Appendix 1. A summary of the sites, and their vulnerability to the potential impacts of the Local Plan, is contained in Appendix 2.

## Appendix 1: Details of the Natura 2000 sites

### DEVIL'S DYKE

*Designation and Code:* Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – UK0030037

*Location:* East Cambridgeshire and Forest Heath in Suffolk

*Area:* 8.02 ha

*Primary reason for selection of the site:* Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco- Brometalia*) (important orchid sites)

*Conservation Objective:* To maintain in favourable condition unimproved calcareous grassland with particular reference to semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (CG3 and CG5 grassland) and *Himantoglossum hircinum* lizard orchid.

*General site characteristics:*

Dry grassland. Steppes (100%)

Soil and geology – Basic, Limestone.

Geomorphology and landscape – Lowland

Species: CG3 *Bromus erectus*, CG5 *Bromus erectus* – *Brachypodium pinnatum* calcareous grasslands , *Himantoglossum hircinum* – lizard orchid, *Pulsatilla vulgaris* - Pasque flower

*Site Description:*

- This section is the most species rich of the Devil's Dyke which as a whole stretches from the Fen Edge at Reach ending at Ditton Green. The section that is identified as a SAC is adjacent to Newmarket Heath. Devil's Dyke consists of a mosaic of CG3 *Bromus erectus* and CG5 *Bromus erectus* – *Brachypodium pinnatum* calcareous grasslands.
- It is the only known UK semi-natural dry grassland site for lizard orchid *Himantoglossum hircinum*. Lizard orchid is nationally rare (i.e. occurring in 15 or fewer 10x10 km squares) and is vulnerable in Great Britain. It is restricted to calcareous grasslands and dunes in southern England.
- The dyke is in private ownership. There is a Devil's Dyke Restoration Project set up which is a partnership scheme involving Natural England, English Heritage, Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust and the Cambridgeshire County Council working with landowners and managers and local people. The aim of the project is to restore the dyke and there is an agreed management plan. The species rich calcareous grassland requires active management without which it rapidly becomes dominated by rank grasses which leads to the encroachment of scrub over time. Traditional management is by grazing.
- The Pasque flower is a speciality of the dyke and a Local Species Action Plan has been produced for this plant.

*Access:* There is a public right of way running along the dyke. Parking is available at the July Race course, Newmarket. As grazing declined in the early part of the twentieth century, scrub has encroached onto many areas of the dyke. In the SAC area there had been some scrub encroachment on the southern part of the site and some clearance work has been undertaken. A survey carried out by Natural England in September 2007 assessed this section of the dyke as being in favourable condition. The site is meeting 100% of its PSA targets.

*Vulnerability:* Although clearance work has been undertaken there will need to be control over any re-growth of scrub and any weediness of this section.

## FENLAND

*Designation and Code:* Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – UK 0014782

There are three fens together that make up the Fenland SAC: Wicken Fen, Chippenham Fen, Woodwalton Fen. Each is also a Ramsar Site: Wicken Fen – UK 11077, Chippenham Fen – UK 11014, Woodwalton Fen – UK 11078

*Location:* Wicken Fen and Chippenham Fen are in East Cambridgeshire; Woodwalton Fen is in Huntingdonshire.

*Area:* 618.64 ha

*Primary reasons for the selection of the site for SAC:* *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*), calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae*

*Other qualifying features:* *Cobitis taenia*, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence. *Triturus cristatus*, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.

*Conservation objective:* To maintain in favourable condition: *Molina* meadows on chalk and clay (Eu – *Molinion* community), calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* (great fen sedge) and species of the *Caricion davallianae* vegetation community.

### *General Site characteristics:*

Bog Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens. (70%)

Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (20%)

Inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (5%)

Other arable land (5%)

### *Site Description:*

Fenland contains, particularly at Chippenham Fen, one of the most extensive examples of the tall herb-rich East Anglian type of M24 *Molinia caerulea* – *Cirsium dissectum* fen meadow. It is important for the conservation of the geographical and ecological range of the habitat type, as this type of fen-meadow is rare and ecologically distinctive in East Anglia.

The individual sites within Fenland hold large areas of calcareous fens with a long and well-documented history of regular management. There is a full range from species poor *Cladium*-dominated fen to species rich fen with a lower proportion of *Cladium* and containing such species as black dog-rush *Schoenus nigricans*, tormentil *Potentilla eetcta* and meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*. There are good transitions to purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and rush pastures, all set within a mosaic of reedbeds and wet pastures. Considered to be rare as its total extent in the UK is estimated to be less than 1,000ha.

### *Vulnerability:*

The fenland grasslands are dependent on traditional management practices of cutting and grazing by livestock. In recent decades scrub and woodland have spread at the expense of fen vegetation. The three constituent sites are all National Nature Reserves and the site management plans include actions to address this problem.

Chippenham Fen has suffered from a changed hydrological regime due to abstraction from the underlying chalk aquifer. This problem is being addressed through the supply of supplementary water together with a programme of vegetation and invertebrate population monitoring. This project is being taken forward by English Nature, the Environment Agency and Anglian Water Services plc.

## DESCRIPTION OF EACH SITE THAT TOGETHER FORMS THE FENLAND SAC

### WICKEN FEN

*Location:* East Cambridgeshire

*Area:* 254 ha

*Reason for Ramsar allocation:*

- Criterion 1: One of the most outstanding remnants of East Anglian peat fens. The area is one of the few, which has not been drained. Traditional management has created a mosaic of habitats from open water to sedge and litter fields.
- Criterion 2: The site supports one species of British Red Data Book plant fen violet *Viola persicifolia* which survives at only two other sites in Britain. It contains eight nationally scarce plants and 121 British Red Data invertebrates.

*Site description:*

- This site is a marginal remnant of the original peat fenland of the East Anglian basin. It has been preserved as a flood catchment area, and its water level is controlled by sluice gates.
- The original peat fen lies to the north of Wicken Lodge. The site here supports fern communities of carr and sedge. The carr scrub is largely of alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus*, buckthorn *Rhamnus catharticus* and willow over a sparse vegetation of fen plants and including marsh fen *Thelypteris palustris*. The more open areas of sedge fen are typically of tall grasses, saw sedge *Cladium mariscus*, purple moor grass *Molina caerulea*, sedges *Carex* spp and rushes *Juncus* spp. Nationally important higher plants include *Viola persicifolia*, *Lathyrus palustris*, *Myriophyllum verticillatum*, *Oenanthe fluviatilis* and milk parsley *Peucedanum palustre*.
- To the south of the Wicken Lode, the area is of rough pasture land, reedbed and pools which are attractive to breeding wetland birds and to wintering wildfowl, the area being subjected to winter flooding.
- The dykes, abandoned claypits and other watercourses carry a great wealth of aquatic plants. Many, such as greater spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* and lesser water-plaintain *Baldellia ranunculoides* are now uncommon elsewhere.

*Management and ownership:*

The site is owned by the National Trust and managed by a local management committee, which reports to the East Anglian Regional Office of the National Trust. The continuation of the historic systems of management and the effective monitoring and maintenance of water levels underlies the Fen's ecology and are crucial for the success of all other management practices. The Fen is artificially protected from drying out by a water-retaining membrane.

*Access:* There is a visitor centre and shop, nature trails, three hides and 16km of walking routes. Entry is by permit only to help control visitor numbers. Visitors are also managed by 'zoning' parts of the Fen near the entrance, leaving the more remote parts of the site relatively undisturbed. The Fen is open throughout the year from dawn to dusk.

*Current conditions:* Natural England has produced a report about the condition of the SSSI (September 2007). Only 36% of the site is meeting PSA targets. 53% is unfavourably declining. 11% is unfavourable but no change since the last survey in December 2006.

*Vulnerability:* The reason for the adverse conditions is related to inappropriate water levels in the fen, marsh and swamp areas. Work carried out in the nearby river system to prevent flooding in the 1960s means that the site no longer receives the amount of winter water as it did in the past. This has brought about a lowering of the water table over the past 40 years (Ramsar Report 5.5.06).

## CHIPPENHAM FEN

*Location:* East Cambridgeshire

*Area:* 112 ha

*Reason for Ramsar allocation:*

- Criterion 1: A spring-fed calcareous basin mire with a long history of management which is partly reflected in the diversity of the present-day vegetation.
- Criterion 2: The invertebrate fauna is very rich partly due to its transitional position between Fenland and Breckland. The species list is very long, including many rare and scarce invertebrates, characteristics of ancient fenland sites in GB.
- Criterion 3: the site supports diverse vegetation types, rare and scarce plants. The site is the stronghold of Cambridge milk parsley *Selinum carvifolia*

*Site description:*

- The site comprises areas of tall and often rich fen, fen grassland and basic flush that have developed over shallow peat soils. The site also contains calcareous grassland, neutral grassland, woodland, mixed scrub and open water.
- The site is in a shallow peat-filled depression underlain by a thick layer of marl which rises to the surface in places. The fen is fed by rainfall and springs from the chalk aquifer. There are several ponds on the site and a system of dykes take water from the springs, in the south of the reserve, to the Chippenham River, near its northern boundary.
- The areas of tall fen are dominated by a mosaic of saw sedge *Cladium mariscus* and reed *Phragmites australis* are present with abundant purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea*. A rich fen has developed in mown areas supporting the nationally rare *Selinum carvifolia*. In one area this merges into a species rich basic flush where black bog rush *Schoenus nigricans* becomes abundant. Dense and scattered scrub has developed. There are areas of chalk grassland that grade into the fen grassland. The damp neutral grassland meadows are developing a fen meadow flora. The ditches support a rich aquatic flora.
- The water level is controlled within a series of ditches.
- Because the fen contains such a wide range of habitats it supports a wide variety of breeding bird species, including hobby, short-eared owl, nightingale and several species of warbler. It also forms the winter roosting for hen harriers.

*Management and ownership:* Both the site and surrounding areas are privately owned. Part of the site is under unspecified tenure. The site is mainly used for nature conservation. The site is actively managed by Natural England through regular cutting and grazing with cattle. Encroaching scrub is being removed to restore fen where appropriate. A water compensation scheme has been instituted to ameliorate the effects of water abstraction. The Environment Agency monitors groundwater changes in the aquifer.

*Access:* There are rights of way across the site. Access away from the paths is by permit only. The nearest car parking is in the villages of Fordham or Chippenham. There is a low level of usage by local inhabitants using the rights of way through the middle of the site according to the Ramsar information sheet. Few people apply for permits for recreational purposes, they are mainly requested by naturalists.

*Current conditions:* For reporting purposes the SSSI is divided into 17 units. 85 % of the area is meeting the PSA target (September 2007). Chippenham Fen has suffered from a changed hydrological regime due to abstraction from the underlying chalk aquifer. This problem is being addressed through supply of supplementary water together with a programme of vegetation and invertebrate population monitoring. Natural England, the Environment Agency and Anglian Water Group are taking this project forward.

*Vulnerability:* There is considerable pressure in the region from the water abstraction that may affect the local springs and aquifer. Persistent drought is a potential threat as 7 of 9 years in the recent past have received well below average rainfall for the regions (Report dated 2002). The habitats within the site are highly sensitive to inorganic fertilisers and pesticides, applications of which should be avoided both within the site itself and in adjacent surrounding areas.

## WOODWALTON FEN

*Location:* Huntingdonshire

*Area:* 229.7 ha

*Reason for Ramsar allocation:*

- Criterion 1: The site is within one of the remaining parts of East Anglia which has not been drained.
- Criterion 2: The site supports 2 species of British Red Data Book plants, fen violet and fen wood rush.

*Site description:*

- This fen holds a range of wetland plant communities once characteristic of large areas of the East Anglian fens. The site was once a raised bog associated with the former Whittlesey Mere and was dug for peat in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when most of the acidic peat was removed, exposing the underlying fen peat. The vegetation of the area today largely reflects this historical use of the site. The open fen and swamp communities represented are of several types. A relict of the acid peat holds stands of purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* with ling *Calluna vulgaris*, bog myrtle *Myrica gale*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and the saw sedge *Cladium mariscus*. A further swamp community is dominated by purple small-reed *Calamagrostis epigejos*. Mixed fen covers a significant part of the site. This vegetation community is floristically rich and contains species such as meadow rue *Thalictrum flavum*, yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus*, swamp meadow-grass *Poa palustris* and great water dock *Rumex hydrolapathum*. Rare fen plants such as the fen wood-rush *Luzula pallescens* and fen violet *Viola persicifolia* occur.
- Of particular note is the network of ditches on the site and these hold many water plants which are now relatively uncommon in Britain including bladderwort *Utricularia vulgaris* and water violet *Hottonia palustris*. In addition, two meres have been dug in order to increase the area of standing water on the site and these have proved valuable for aquatic plant and animal communities. Further habitats of significance on the site include marshy grassland, birch and alder woodland and fen carr. The carr is varied in composition and contains willow *Salix* spp., blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, birch *Betula* spp and guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*.
- The whole site is a patchwork of wetland communities, providing a habitat for many uncommon plant and insect species-a number of which are confined to East Anglia.

*Management and ownership:*

- The site was purchased by Hon Charles Rothschild in 1910 and donated to the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves (now the Royal Society for Nature Conservation) in 1919. Since the 1950s the pro-active management of the site has sought to reverse the drying out process and conserve this crucial fenland habitat. The site is leased from the Wildlife Trust to Natural England.
- The effective monitoring and maintenance of water levels underlies the Fen ecology and is crucial for the success of all other management practises. A Water Level Management Plan has been implemented and the site is flooded in winter in time of high water flows thus protecting low-lying farmland. However as a consequence nutrient levels in the water can be high due to agricultural runoff. Water inflows and outflows are strictly controlled. In the 1980s clay sealed banks were constructed around the perimeter of the reserve, this isolated water levels on the fen from that of the surrounding area. The Great Fen project aims to link this nature reserve with Holme Fen.

*Access:* Parking is limited at this site, some being available alongside the Great Raveley Drain. There are three marked trails around the fen following the rides. There are no public rights of way across the reserve but visitors are allowed access to the site. There is restricted access to some areas of the site and no dogs are allowed onto any part of the site.

*Current condition:* Woodwalton Fen takes water in the summer months from the surrounding drains. In the winter the fen is designed to be used as a flood storage area, although this occurs infrequently. In both these circumstances the water entering the Fen is high in nutrients from agricultural run-off. It is intended to undertake research to investigate what effects the flooding may be having on the site. Considerable work has been undertaken to help progress the reed beds towards favourable conditions including annual cutting and installation of windpump to control water levels. Further scrub removal is programmed.

*Vulnerability:* The area is meeting 100% of the PSA target (September 2007). The quality of the water from the agricultural run-off needs to be monitored.

## OUSE WASHES

**Designation and Code:** Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site – UK0013011. The boundaries of the Ramsar site as extended are coincident with those of the Ouse Washes SSSI.

**Location:** East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and West Norfolk

**Area:** 2,403 ha (Ramsar site and SSSI site), 311.35 ha (SAC site)

**Primary reason for selection of this site as SAC:** Spined loach *Cobitis taenia* – This site is only one of four known outstanding localities in the UK.

**Conservation objective:** To maintain, in favourable condition, the habitats for the populations of *Annexe 1* species (Bewick's swan, whooper swan, hen harrier, spotted crake, and ruff) migratory species of European importance (widgeon, gadwall, pintail, shoveler, pochard and black-tailed Godwit) and wintering waterfowl assemblage of European importance, with particular reference to grassland / marshy grassland with ditches and open water.

Also to maintain in favourable condition the habitat for spined loach.

**General site characteristics:**

Inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (50%)

Bogs Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (20%)

Improved grassland (30%)

**Site Description:**

- The Ouse Washes represent spined loach populations within the River Ouse catchment. The Counter Drain with its clear water and abundant macrophytes is particularly important and a healthy population of spined loach is known to occur.
- The site is an area of seasonally flooded washlands habitat managed in a traditional agricultural manner. The washlands support nationally and internationally important numbers of wintering waterfowl and nationally important numbers of breeding waterfowl. The site is also of note for the large area of unimproved neutral grassland communities, which it holds, and for the richness of the aquatic flora within the associated watercourses.

**Reasons for identification as a Ramsar Site:**

- Ramsar Criterion 1a: The site qualifies by being a particularly good representative example of a natural or near-natural wetland characteristic of its biogeographical region. It is one of the most extensive areas of seasonally flooding washland of its type in Britain, and the wetland has high conservation value for many plant and animal groups.
- Ramsar Criterion 2a: The site qualifies by supporting a number of rare species of plants and animals. The site holds several nationally scarce plants, including the whorled water-milfoil *Myriophyllum verticillatum*, greater water parsnip *Sium latifolium*, river water-dropwort *Oenanthe fluviatilis*, fringed water-lily *Nymphoides peltata*, long stalked pondweed *Potamogeton praelongus*, hair-like pondweed *Potamogeton trichoides*, grass-wrack pondweed *Potamogeton compressus*, tasteless water-pepper *Polygonum mite*, small water-pepper *Polygonum minus* and marsh dock *Rumex palustris*. Invertebrate records indicate that the site holds a good relict fenland fauna for several groups, reflecting the diversity of wetland habitats. Two rare Red Data Book insects have been recorded, the large darter dragonfly *Libellula fulva* and the riffle beetle *Oulimnius major*.
- Ramsar Criterion 2a - The Ouse Washes also qualifies by supporting a diverse assemblage of rare breeding waterfowl associated with seasonally flooding wet grassland. This includes breeding migratory waders of lowland wet grassland: oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, ruff *Phodomachus pugnax*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, and black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa*, and a diverse assemblage of breeding wildfowl with mute swan *Cygnus olor*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, gadwall *Anas strepera*, teal *A. crecca*, mallard *A. platyrhynchos*, pintail *A. acuta*, garganey *Anas. querquedula* shoveler *A. clypeata*, pochard *Aythya ferina*, tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* and coot *Fulica atra* occurring regularly. Many of these species are rare and much restricted in Britain and the European Community owing to habitat loss and degradation. The site thus has an important role in maintaining the ranges of several of these species, which have been affected by changes in habitat elsewhere in Britain. Breeding gadwall, mallard, garganey *Anas. querquedula*, shoveler and bar-tailed godwit are all present in nationally important numbers.



- Ramsar Criterion 5 - The Ouse Washes qualifies as a wetland of international importance by virtue of regularly supporting over 20,000 waterfowl, with an average peak count of 60,950 birds recorded in the five winter periods 1986/7 to 1990/91.
- Ramsar Criterion 6 - The Ouse Washes also qualifies by supporting, in winter, internationally important populations of the following species (figures given are average peak counts for the five winter period 1986/87 - 1990/91): 4,980 Bewick's swan *Cygnus columbarius bewickii* (29% of the north-west European wintering population); 590 whooper swans *Cygnus Cygnus* (3% of the international population); 38,000 wigeon *Anas penelope* (5% of the north-west European population); 4,100 teal *A. crecca* (1% of NW European); 1,450 pintail *Anas acuta* (2% NW European); and 750 shoveler *Anas clypeata* (2% of NW European). Also notable are the following nationally important wintering populations: 270 cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* (2% of the British wintering population); 490 mute swan *Cygnus olor* (3% of British); 320 gadwall *Anas strepera* (5% of British); 2,100 pochard *Aythya ferina* (4% of British); 860 tufted duck *Aythya fuligula* (1 % of British); and 2,320 coot *Fulica atra*.

During severe winter weather elsewhere, the Ouse Washes can assume even greater national and international importance as wildfowl and waders from many other areas arrive, attracted by the relatively mild climate, compared with continental European areas, and the abundant food resources available. The continued international importance of this site is dependant on the maintenance of a winter flooding regime and a high, but controlled summer water table. Over the past 25yrs it has also been noted that there has been an increase in summer flooding as well as high water levels in winter. This has adversely affected both the breeding birds and the traditional washland management regime. It also results in *Glyceria* grass (sweet rush) competing with the other grasses and herbs, which may affect food availability for wintering waterfowl. Persistence of high water levels in the winter also reduces available area of grazing for species such as wigeon.

#### *Reasons for identification as a Special Protection Area:*

- The Ouse Washes Ramsar site and the Special Protection Area is a wetland of major international importance comprising seasonally flooded wash lands, which are agriculturally managed in a traditional manner. It provides breeding and winter habitats for important assemblages of wetland bird species, particularly wildfowl and waders.
- The boundaries of the Special Protection Area are coincident with those of the Ouse Washes SSSI, apart from the exclusion of a section of the Old Bedford River in the north of the SSSI.
- The Ouse Washes qualifies under Article 4.1 of the EC Birds Directive by supporting, in summer, a nationally important breeding population of ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, an Annex 1 species. In recent years an average of 57 individuals have been recorded, a significant proportion of the British population.
- The site also qualifies under Article 4.1 by regularly supporting internationally or nationally important wintering populations of three Annex 1 species. During the five year period 1986/87 to 1990/91, the following average peak counts were recorded: 4,980 Bewick's swan *Cygnus columbarius bewickii* (29% of the north-west European wintering population, 70% of the British wintering population), and 590 whooper swans *Cygnus Cygnus* (3% of the international population, 10% of British). In addition, between 1982-87 an average of 12 wintering hen harrier *Circus cyaneus* was recorded, representing 2% of the British wintering population.
- The site further qualifies under Article 4.2 as a wetland of international importance by virtue of regularly supporting over 20,000 waterfowl, with an average peak count of 60,950 birds recorded in the five winter period 1986/7 to 1990/91. This total included-internationally or nationally important wintering populations of the following migratory waterfowl (figures given are average peak counts for the five winter period 1986/87 - 1990/91): 270 cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* (2% of the British wintering population); 490 mute swan *Cygnus olor* (3% of British); 38,000 wigeon *Anas penelope* (5% of the north-west European population, 15% of British); 320 gadwall *Anas strepera* (5% of British); 4,100 teal *A. crecca* (1% of NW European, 4% of British); 1,450 pintail *Anas acuta* (2% NW European, 6% of British); 750 shoveler *Anas clypeata* (2% of NW European, 8% of British); 2,100 pochard *Aythya ferina* (4% of British); 860 tufted duck *Aythya fuligula* (1% of British); and 2,320 coot *Fulica atra* (1 % of British).
- The site also qualifies under Article 4.2 by virtue of regularly supporting, in summer, a diverse assemblage of the breeding migratory waders of lowland wet grassland including: oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, and black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa*; and a diverse assemblage of breeding wildfowl with mute swan *Cygnus olor*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, gadwall *Anas strepera*, teal *A. crecca*, mallard *A. platyrhynchos*, pintail *A. acuta*, garganey *Anas querquedula*, shoveler *A. clypeata*, pochard *Aythya farina*, tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* and coot *Fulica atra* occurring regularly. Many of these species are rare and

much restricted in Britain and the European Community owing to habitat loss and degradation. The site thus has an important role in maintaining the ranges of several of these species, which have been affected by changes in habitat elsewhere in Britain.

*Management and ownership:* Given the extent of the Ouse Washes there are a number of management techniques that need to be carried out in the washes. Wetland grassland requires active management if it is to retain its conservation interest. This has traditionally been done by grazing. Partial winter flooding is required to maintain suitable habitat conditions for wintering birds. A mosaic of winter flooded grassland and permanently un-flooded grassland is desirable. Ditches are artificial habitats created by land drainage – if left unmanaged silt accumulates in the bottom of the ditches leading to the loss the range of aquatic plants and animals colonising the ditches. There needs to be a rotation undertaken on ditch management. Also the level of water in the ditches and its quality needs to be regulated to maintain the optimum level for the plant and animal community. All the habitats are highly sensitive to inorganic fertilisers and pesticides.

*Access:* There is a network of public rights of way in the Washes. The RSPB manage a nature reserve at Welches Dam where there is a visitor centre and a number of bird hides. The WWT manage a nature reserve at Welney, Norfolk also with a centre and hides.

*Current condition:* Assessment work was carried out in 2003 and at this time many of the units that comprise the Washes were in an unfavourable state. Only 13% of the site meets the PSA target. 87% is in an unfavourable condition as surveyed in September 2007 but this had not changed from the previous survey in August 2003. The water quality regularly fails to meet total Phosphorus target of 0.1mg/l. Until this can be remedied the site will continue to remain unfavourable.

*Vulnerability:*

- Two independent and parallel rivers comprise the SAC. The Counter Drain / Old Bedford (known also as the outer river) drains adjacent farmland. The New Bedford / Delph (known also as the inner river) is sourced by the River Great Ouse. During the winter and increasingly during the spring and summer months as well, the inner river takes flood-water from the Great Ouse, and therefore has an important flood defence function. Issues of concern relate to water quantity, water quality, salinity, turbidity and sediment.
- The need to ensure there is sufficient water for the rivers is addressed through the Water Level Management Plan agreed by the Environment Agency and partner organisations. The outer river is also a source of water for nearby arable land forming spray irrigation, but this abstraction is unmetered for the most part. Abstraction of water from the Great Ouse system to Essex via the Ely-Ouse Transfer Scheme is monitored through the Denver License Variation. Other proposals for water abstraction, e.g. to Rutland Water by Anglia Water, have been the subject of assessment, but there are no current proposals.
- Water quality is a major issue of concern. Increases in two plant nutrients - nitrogen and particularly phosphorus (thought to be derived from sewage treatment works) - are leading to changes in the macrophyte communities, shown by a decline in species diversity and the loss of species together with an increase in species tolerant of eutrophic conditions. This is particularly apparent in the inner river. There is evidence that agricultural inputs are a minor component. In addition, blanket-weed (aquatic algae) poses problems to navigation and angling, leading to issues of timing and frequency of aquatic weed-cutting. Water quality issues are currently the subject of debate between the Environment Agency and Natural England. Three sewage treatment works in the Great Ouse will be covered by the Urban Waste Water Directive, but there remain more than 90 smaller works. These will be subject to the Review of Consents to be undertaken by the Environment Agency within the next four years. A case could be prepared and submitted to OFWAT and the Water Industries AMP 4 Programme commencing 2005, in order to strip phosphates from all relevant sewage treatment works in the system.
- In addition, floodwater draining off the adjacent Ouse Washes into the inner river can be of a very poor quality (particularly in warm weather) leading to problems of deoxygenation with resultant fish-kills. The frequency of increased spring and summer flooding on the Ouse Washes is currently being studied to ascertain ways of ameliorating its effects.
- Saline intrusion through the northernmost tidal lock gate may be contributing to an increase in salinity levels of the outer river.
- Conditions must be applied to planning permissions for gravel extraction from quarries near to the SAC, to ensure that drainage water from de-watering and washings does not affect the turbidity and sediment levels in the outer river.

## BRECKLAND

**Designation and Code:** Special Protection Area (SPA) – UK9009201, Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – UK0019865

**Location:** Forest Heath and Kings Lynn and West Norfolk

**Area:** Although covering much of the same land, the boundary of the SAC is not contiguous with that of the SPA. SPA – 39433.65ha, SAC – 7543.64ha

**Primary reasons for the selection of the site for SAC:** Inland dunes with open *Corynephorus* and *Agrostis* grasslands. Natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition*-type vegetation. European dry heaths. Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*).

**Other qualifying features:** Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*). The area is considered to support a significant presence. *Triturus cristatus* - the area is considered to support a significant presence.

### General Site Characteristics:

Inland water bodies (0.5%)  
Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (1%)  
Dry grassland (59.4%)  
Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. *Phygrana* (20%)  
Improved grassland (0.2%)  
Other arable land (0.1%)  
Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (9%)  
Coniferous woodland (4%)  
Inland rocks. Screes. Sands. Permanent snow and ice (0.5%)  
Other land (0.3%)

### Site Description:

- Wangford Warren and adjoining parts of RAF Lakenheath are included in the Breckland site as the only occurrence of this habitat type in the UK. The site has one of the best-preserved systems of active inland sand dunes in the UK. The habitat type, which is in part characterised by the nationally rare grey hair-grass *Corynephorus canescens* occurring here at its only inland station, is associated with open conditions with active sand movement. The site shows the colonisation sequence from open sand to acidic grass-heath
- The Breckland meres in Norfolk represent natural eutrophic lakes in the east of England. They are examples of hollows within glacial outwash deposits and are fed by water from the underlying chalk aquifer. Natural fluctuations in groundwater tables mean that these lakes occasionally dry out. The flora is dominated by stonewort – pondweed *Characeae* – *Potamogetonaceae* associations.
- The dry heaths of Breckland are representative of European dry heaths in East Anglia, in eastern England, developed under a semi-continental climate. Breckland has an average annual precipitation of only 600mm, relatively hot summers and cool winters. Frosts can occur in any month of the year. The dry acidic heath of Breckland represents H1 *Calluna vulgaris* – *Festuca ovina* heath in the SAC series. The sand sedge dominated *Carex arenaria* sub-community (H1d) is typical of areas of blown sand – a very unusual feature of this location.
- The highly variable soils of Breckland, with underlying chalk being largely covered with wind-blown sands, have resulted in mosaics of heather-dominated heathland, acidic grassland and calcareous grassland that are unlike those of any other site. In many places there is a linear or patterned distribution of heath and grassland, arising from fossilised soil patterns that formed under peri-glacial conditions. Breckland is important for rare plants, such as perennial knawel *Scleranthus perennis* ssp. *Prostrates*, and rare invertebrates.
- Breckland in East Anglia is the most extensive surviving area of the rare grassland type CG7 *Festuca ovina* – *Hieracium pilosella* – *Thymus praecox* grassland. The grassland is rich in rare species typical of dry, winter-cold, continental areas, and approaches the features of grassland types in central Europe more than almost any other semi-dry grassland found in the UK. The terrain is relatively flat, with few physical variations, but there are mosaics of calcareous grassland and heath/acid grassland, giving rise to patterns of structural variation.

**Current Condition:** In recent decades, scrub and woodland have spread at the expense of the heathland and chalk grassland vegetation due to the cessation of traditional cutting and grazing management. Management

agreements and particularly Environmentally Sensitive Area payments go part of the way towards re-introducing this largely uneconomical traditional management, and controlling the scrub. Strong populations of rabbits are important in maintaining the Breckland swards.

*Vulnerability:* Grazing by sheep/cattle is essential to the maintenance of habitats. Problems include nutrient deposition from the atmosphere and adjacent arable land, invasion by self-sown trees/shrubs, and uncontrolled and inappropriate recreational activities. Local ground water abstraction has a deleterious impact on the natural eutrophic lakes, the Breckland meres, and is the subject of active liaison between English Nature and the Environment Agency.

*Reasons for identification as a Special Protection Area:* During the breeding season the area regularly supports: *Burhinus oedicnemus* (Western Europe - breeding)- 60.1% of the GB breeding population, *Caprimulgus europaeus* - 12.2% of the GB breeding population, *Lullula arborea* - 28.7% of the GB breeding population

*General Site Characteristics:*

Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (0.9%)

Dry Grassland. Steppes (19.7)

Humid grassland. Mesophile Grassland (1.3%)

Improved grassland (0.3%)

Other arable land (31.5%)

Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (1.4%)

Coniferous woodland (44.7%)

*Vulnerability:*

- Stone-Curlew are largely reliant on arable land for nesting and are thus vulnerable to disturbance and nest destruction from agricultural operations. A recovery project operates to find nests, advise landowners on their operations which might affect stone-curlews, and to ring chicks. Management agreements are in place to provide nest plots and thus safeguard the population. Agreements have been extended to cover the coming two breeding seasons, after which it is hoped that Higher Level Scheme agreements will be in place.
- Stone-Curlew, Nightjar and Woodlark are vulnerable to predation from corvids and foxes and to disturbance caused by human activity, including dog-walking. In 2005, new public access was introduced on heaths by legislation. Safeguards to protect stone-curlew have been included but the situation will require monitoring to determine how successful restrictions have been in preventing additional disturbance.
- Breckland heathlands and acid grasslands supporting stone-curlew, nightjar and woodlark are fragile in terms of the high background levels of air pollution in the area, particularly high nitrogen loads causing undesirable habitat changes. Research on this topic is ongoing, and measures to export the nutrients off heaths (such as night time sheep folding or topsoil stripping) to counter the effects of pollution are potential management options. There are development pressures on the area, particularly for infrastructure, which requires substantial discussion and mitigation in some cases. This is achieved through Natural England commenting on planning applications and providing input to structural and local plans.
- Woodlark and nightjar benefit from clear-fell forestry rotational management. The appropriate management is currently taking place in the forests.
- Collecting of eggs of stone-curlew, and to some extent nightjar and woodlark, is believed to be a serious threat to individual birds and to population size. The loss of eggs to this illegal activity is unknown. There is a police-based alert system in place in Breckland to try and reduce this type of crime, and landowners are vigilant.

## **Appendix 2: Impact of the Local Plan on Natura 2000 Sites**

### **Devils Dyke SAC**

The Devils Dyke SAC is an area of semi-natural dry grassland on chalk substrates. The area is species rich and is an important orchid site, particularly for the Lizard Orchid, which is nationally rare. The habitat requires active management to prevent the encroachment of other coarse dense grasses and scrubland. The encroachment of scrub is identified as the key vulnerability for the area.

The main potential impact of the Local Plan on the SAC is considered to be increased recreation pressure in association with new housing development as a Public Right of Way runs along the dyke. However, given the scale of the proposed housing allocations in the vicinity, and the inclusion within the Local Plan of policies to enhance and protect biodiversity, and avoid pollution, it is not felt that recreational pressure will be increased to an extent that there will be significant adverse effect on the SAC.

**It is the opinion of the Local Planning Authority that the Local Plan, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is unlikely to have any significant effects on the site.**

### **Ouse Washes SAC, SPA and RAMSAR**

The Ouse Washes is an area of seasonally flooded washlands habitat managed in a traditional agricultural manner. The site is primarily designated as a SAC as it is one of only four outstanding localities in the United Kingdom for the Spined Loach (a small bottom-living fish that has a restricted microhabitat associated with a specialised feeding mechanism) and supports nationally and internationally important numbers of wintering and breeding waterfowl. The breeding and wintering habitats for important wetland bird species means the site is also designated as a SPA. The site is a particularly good example of a natural or near-natural wetland, characteristic of its biogeographical region, and is also designated as a RAMSAR.

Two independent and parallel rivers comprise the site: The Counter Drain / Old Bedford (known as the outer river) and The New Bedford / Delph (known as the inner river) which is sourced by the River Great Ouse which runs through East Cambridgeshire.

Particular vulnerabilities relate to water quantity, water quality, salinity, turbidity and sediment. Water quality is a major issue of concern particularly in relation to increases in two plant nutrients: nitrogen and phosphorus. In addition, flood water draining into the inner river can be very poor quality. The management of the drainage ditches is also important in maintaining conservation interest.

The need to ensure there is sufficient water for the rivers is addressed through the Water Level Management Plan agreed by the Environment Agency and Partner organisations.

The main potential impacts of the Local Plan on the SAC, SPA and RAMSAR are changes in water quality as a result of development, through flooding, increased sediment or increased levels of phosphorus (thought to be derived from sewage treatment plants). A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been undertaken to ensure that development is directed away from areas at risk of flooding. Additionally, all development proposals are assessed in accordance with PPS 25 and the advice of the Environment Agency is sought in relevant cases to ensure that inappropriate development is not allowed in flood sensitive areas.

There is a restriction on sewerage capacity in certain parts of the district and it has been identified that certain developments may need to be phased to ensure upgrading of sewerage treatment

plants in tandem with new development. This will ensure there are no adverse effects on water quality from increased levels of phosphorus due to new development.

There is no major development proposed near to the Great River Ouse and as the River joins the Natura 2000 site at Denver Sluice, adverse effects would be minimal. Furthermore, floodwater going into the Great Ouse is at Earith which is up-river from East Cambridgeshire District and therefore out of the control of policies in the Local Plan.

**It is the opinion of the Local Planning Authority that the Local Plan, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is unlikely to have any significant effects on the site.**

### **Fenland SAC and RAMSAR**

Three fens make up the Fenland SAC: Wicken Fen, Chippenham Fen and Woodwalton Fen. Each of these is also a Ramsar site. Fenland contains, particularly at Chippenham Fen, a type of fen-meadow, which is rare and ecologically distinctive in East Anglia.

### **Wicken Fen**

Wicken Fen is located in East Cambridgeshire and is an East Anglian peat fen, which has not been drained. It is made up of a mosaic of habitats from open water to sedge and litter fields and the site contains a number of nationally scarce plants. The continuation of historic systems of management and the effective monitoring and maintenance of water levels is vital to the conservation area of the site. It is considered that as proposed major development is some distance from Wicken Fen and development proposals in the Burwell area will be subject to flood risk and water pollution policies in the Development Plan Document, these issues would not be in any way affected by the policies contained within the Local Plan.

The site is open to the public throughout the year so potential impact could arise from increased recreational pressure from new housing developments, and associated increases in pollution. However, entry to the site is by permit only to help control visitor numbers and recreational pressure is not identified as a particular vulnerability of the site. Additionally policies in the Local Plan to enhance and protect biodiversity, and avoid pollution.

**It is the opinion of the Local Planning Authority that the Local Plan (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) is unlikely to have any significant effects on the site.**

### **Chippenham Fen**

Chippenham Fen is located in East Cambridgeshire and comprises areas of tall and often rich fen, fen grassland and basic flush that have developed over shallow peat soils. The water level is controlled within a series of ditches and the site is privately owned and actively managed by Natural England.

Chippenham Fen has been under pressure from water abstraction that may affect the local springs and aquifer and the site has suffered from a changed hydrological regime due to abstraction from the underlying chalk aquifer. This is being addressed through supply of supplementary water together with a programme of vegetation and invertebrate population monitoring. Persistent drought is another potential threat as seven of nine years in the recent past have received well below average rainfall. Habitats within the site are also highly sensitive to inorganic fertilisers and pesticides.

It is considered that the policies within Local Plan would have no impact on the levels of inorganic fertilisers and pesticides within the site, as these arise from farming practices.

The chalk aquifer, of which Chippenham Fen is part, is a major source of water supply for the area including East Cambridgeshire. *Pressure on supplies may be an issue in the future, due to increased demand from new residential development, but East Cambridgeshire District Council have been advised by Anglian Water Authority that there are no immediate problems in supply and water is proposed to be brought in to the area from the north in the near future.*

**It is the opinion of the Local Planning Authority that the Local Plan (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) is unlikely to have any significant effects on the site.**

### **Woodwalton Fen**

Woodwalton Fen is located in Huntingdonshire and the site is a patchwork of wetland communities, providing habitat for many uncommon plant and insect species, a number of which are confined to East Anglia. The effective monitoring and maintenance of water levels underlies the Fen ecology and is crucial for the success of all other management practices.

The site is located outside of the district, the closest major development being 30 kms away, and the area is meeting 100% of the Public Service Agreement target.

**It is the opinion of the Local Planning Authority that the Local Plan (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) is unlikely to have any significant effects on the site.**

### **Breckland SPA and SAC**

Breckland is located in Forest Heath and Kings Lynn and West Norfolk and although covering much of the same land, the boundary of the SAC is not contiguous with that of the SPA.

The area includes inland dunes, natural eutrophic (nutrient rich) lakes, dry heath and semi-natural dry chalk grassland. In the breeding season the area regularly supports Stone Curlews, Nightjars, and Woodlarks.

Grazing by sheep/cattle is essential to the maintenance of the habitats and in recent decades scrub and woodland have spread at the expense of the heathland and chalk grassland vegetation. The policies contained within the Local Plan are not considered to have direct impact on the management of the site.

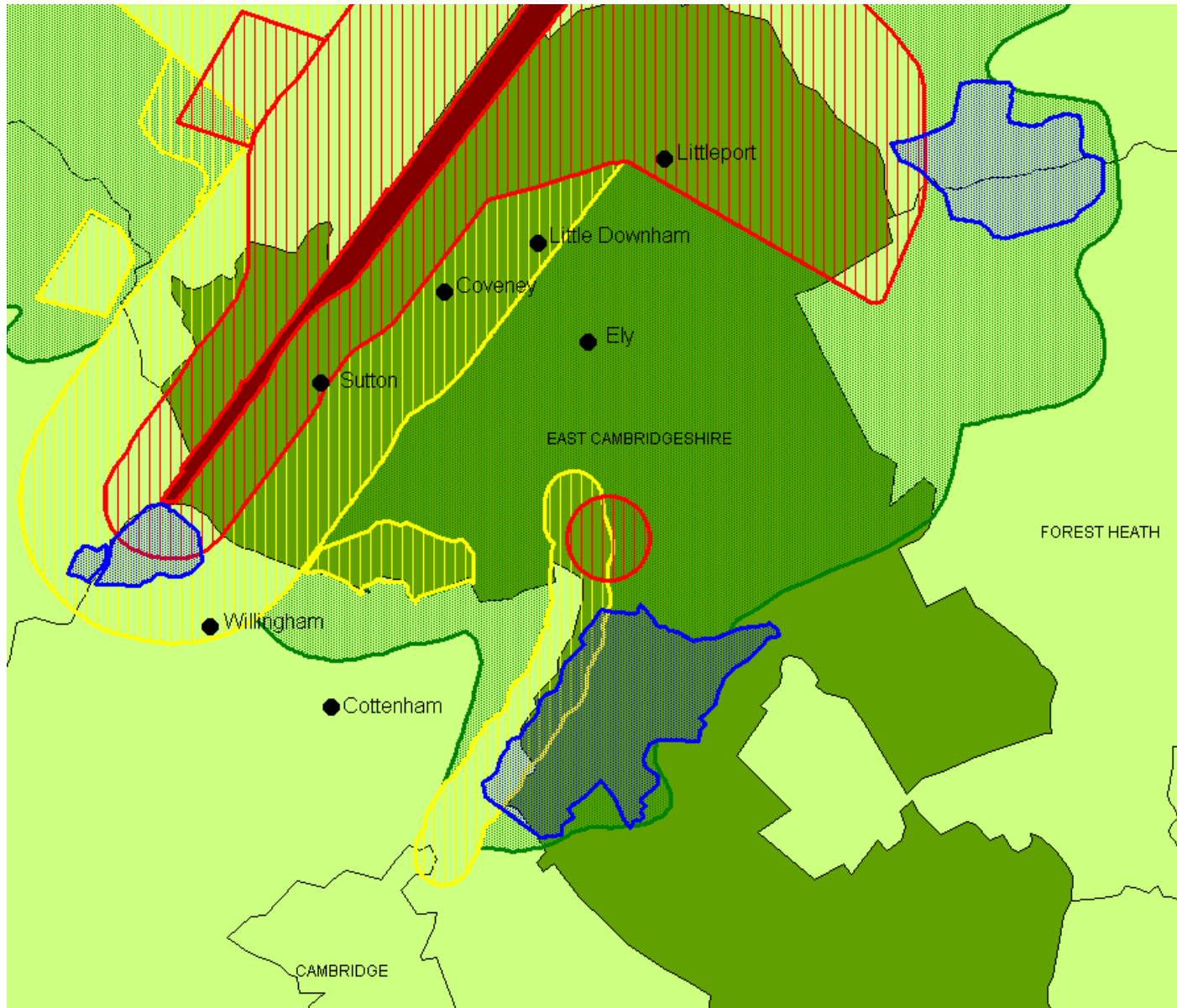
The site is vulnerable to deposition from the atmosphere and adjacent land. Potential adverse effects could result from chemicals from farming practices or high background air pollution levels (particularly high nitrogen loads), for example from emissions from increased vehicular traffic. Given the location of the site in relation to the proposed areas of search for development allocations in the Local Plan (5+kms) and the position of the major transport routes in East Cambridgeshire, it is considered that there would be no adverse affect on the site from increased air pollution arising from development in East Cambridgeshire.

Stone-Curlew, Nightjar and Woodlark are vulnerable to disturbance caused by human activity, including dog-walking. Safeguards to protect Stone-Curlew in the light of legislation allowing new public access have been introduced and the situation will require monitoring. Given the location of the site in relation to new housing allocations in the Local Plan it is considered that adverse affects from increased recreational pressure are unlikely.

**It is the opinion of the Local Planning Authority that the Local Plan (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) is unlikely to have any significant effects on the site.**

## Appendix 3: Core areas of sensitive bird populations

Extract from Lucking et al (2004) Wind Turbines and Sensitive Bird Populations: Spatial Planning for Wind Turbines in the Fens Natural Area:



### Legend

Areas hatched red indicate areas where there is a high likelihood of significant effect on an SPA, or in an area functionally linked to an SPA, or due to the presence of internationally important bird populations considered sensitive to turbine development.

Areas hatched amber indicate those zones where either:

- Sensitive bird populations are present but further assessment may reveal a very low risk or detailed layout planning or mitigation may remove any threat
- Sensitive bird populations are expected to be present but further monitoring is required to establish their presence and quantify the likely risk

Areas hatched in green are zones where to the best of our knowledge, there are no significant populations of bird species vulnerable to wind turbine development.

Areas hatched in **blue** represent areas of search for wetland and washland creation projects. For the most part, these ideas are conceptual and work on the ground has not started.