Local Plan Pre-Submission Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report

Updated October 2013

1. Introduction

1.1 In January 2008 East Staffordshire Borough Council completed a screening exercise to fulfil the requirements of the Habitats Directive to determine whether or not significant effects were likely as a result of implementing the new Local Plan (at the time of publication the Local Plan was referred to as The Core Strategy). The screening exercise concluded that further work and information was required to enable a more thorough assessment of whether the Core Strategy is likely to have a significant effect on Natura 2000 sites.

1.2 Since completion of the earlier screening exercise, work progressed on the Core Strategy (now Local Plan) with the publication of the Strategic Options in August 2011 and the publication of Preferred Option Local Plan in October 2012.

1.3 The Preferred Options document included the consideration of high-level Spatial Options, more specific Preferred Spatial Options, Strategic Sites and policies.

1.4 The Screening Report 2012 concluded that:

- *No further work as part of the requirement to comply with the Habitats Regulations is required for Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites referred to as part of this assessment.*
- *The principle potential effects identified and reviewed are related to additional households and employment development and how this may increase traffic within close proximity to European Sites or result in additional recreational pressure. More specifically the potential for an impact on air quality from industrial and manufacturing processes has also been considered. It has been concluded that the Local Plan Preferred Option would not result in any significant effects to the qualifying ecological features of interest of the Natura 2000 or Ramsar sites referred to.*

1.5 The Screening Report 2012 provided recommendations on the following:

- It is however acknowledged that the Plan may have a minor impact on cumulative effects to the Cannock Chase SAC, as a result of an increase in recreational pressure in combination with neighbouring plans. Albeit, it is considered that the East Staffordshire Plan with have a lesser impact on Cannock Chase than other neighbouring authorities and growth proposals nearer to the Cannock Chase SAC. It is therefore concluded that the East Staffordshire Local Plan would not be likely to have a significant cumulative impact. Nevertheless and in line with the precautionary approach it is

recommended that Strategic Policy 23 is included within the East Staffordshire Local Plan to afford appropriate mitigation.

Updated Screening Report September 2013

1.6 This report summarises the findings of the screening exercise carried out in August 2013 which aimed to determine whether the finalised Development Strategy, associated policies and site allocations as set out in the Pre-Submission consultation document is likely to trigger the need for a full HRA, in compliance with the EC Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora).

1.7 The HRA Screening exercise and this update have been undertaken in conjunction with the Sustainability Appraisal, and both have informed and assessed the Plan's final strategy and policies as set out in the Pre-Submission Local Plan.

Structure of this Report

1.8 This Screening Report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 - The Need and Process for an Appropriate Assessment
- Section 3 – Screening Methodology and Appraisal Framework
- Section 4 – The Screening Assessment Baseline Evidence
- Section 5 – Updated Screening Appraisal and Cumulative Effects
- Section 6 – Conclusions and Recommendations
- Appendix 1 – Plans and Programmes, review of potential cumulative effects
- Appendix 2 – Maps
- Appendix 3.– Screening of Pre-Submission Policies
- Appendix 4 – Strategic Sites Screening Matrix

Description of the Local Plan Pre-Submission

1.9 The East Staffordshire Local Plan is the planning policy framework for delivering growth and managing change within the Borough. The Local Plan contains a set of overarching strategic policies that set out broad principles for guiding development supplemented and supported by detailed policies which will address specific development issues. In order to deliver the Plan strategic development site allocations are made in the Local Plan supported by policies which will bring forward other development sites.

1.10 This updated Screening report includes the screening of all policies and sites set out in the Pre-Submission Local Plan consultation document.

1.11 The screening process has been an iterative process resulting in recommended changes to improve the Plan and the re-screening of amended elements of the plan since the Preferred Options document July 2012.

1.12 The Local Plan includes the following policies:

Strategic Policies

1. East Staffordshire approach to sustainable development
2. A strong network of settlements
3. Provision of Homes and Jobs
4. Distribution of Housing Growth
5. Distribution of Employment growth
6. Managing the Release of Housing and Employment land
7. Sustainable urban extensions
8. Development outside development boundaries
9. Infrastructure Delivery and Implementation
10. Education Bargates/Molson Coors site
11. Derby Road Regeneration Area
12. Burton and Uttoxeter Employment Policy
13. Rural Economy
14. Tourism, culture and leisure development
15. Meeting Housing Needs
16. Affordable housing
17. Housing Development on Exception sites
18. Gypsy, travellers and travelling Show people pitches
19. Town and Local Centres
20. Managing Town and Local Centres
21. Supporting Local Communities
22. High quality design
23. Green Infrastructure
24. Historic Environment
25. National forest
26. Climate change, water management and flooding
27. Renewable and low carbon energy generation
28. Biodiversity and geodiversity
29. Locally significant landscape and views
30. Green Belt and Strategic Green Gaps
31. Open Space and outdoor sports
32. Indoor sports
33. Health and wellbeing
34. Accessibility and sustainable transport

Detailed Policies

1. Design of new development
2. Designing in sustainable construction
3. Design of new residential development, extensions and curtilage buildings

4. Replacement dwellings in the countryside
5. Protecting the historic environment – All heritage Assets, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas
6. Protecting the historic environment – Other Heritage Assets
7. Pollution
8. Tree Protection
9. Advertisements
10. Water recreation and blue infrastructure
11. European Sites
12. St Georges

1.13 The wording of Detailed Policy 11 is set out below:

European Sites

The Borough Council will resist any proposed development that could have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site alone or in combination with other plans or projects unless it can be demonstrated that the legislative provisions to protect such sites can be fully met.

Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that it will not be likely to lead directly or indirectly to an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

All development that results in a net increase in dwellings within 15km of Cannock Chase SAC is likely to have an adverse impact upon the SAC and therefore suitable mitigation proportionate to the significance of the effect will be required in line with ongoing work by partner authorities to develop a Mitigation and Implementation Strategy SPD.

The effective avoidance and/or mitigation of any identified adverse effects much be demonstrated and secured prior to approval of the development. Development proposals further than 15km may be required to demonstrate that they will have no adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC.

1.14 The Local Plan identifies strategic site allocations which are illustrated in Figure 1 and 2, with the key below.

Greenfield housing or employment allocation

Brownfield housing allocation

Greenfield mixed use allocation

Figure 1 – Strategic Site Allocations at Burton upon Trent, Barton under Needwood, Rolleston and Tutbury

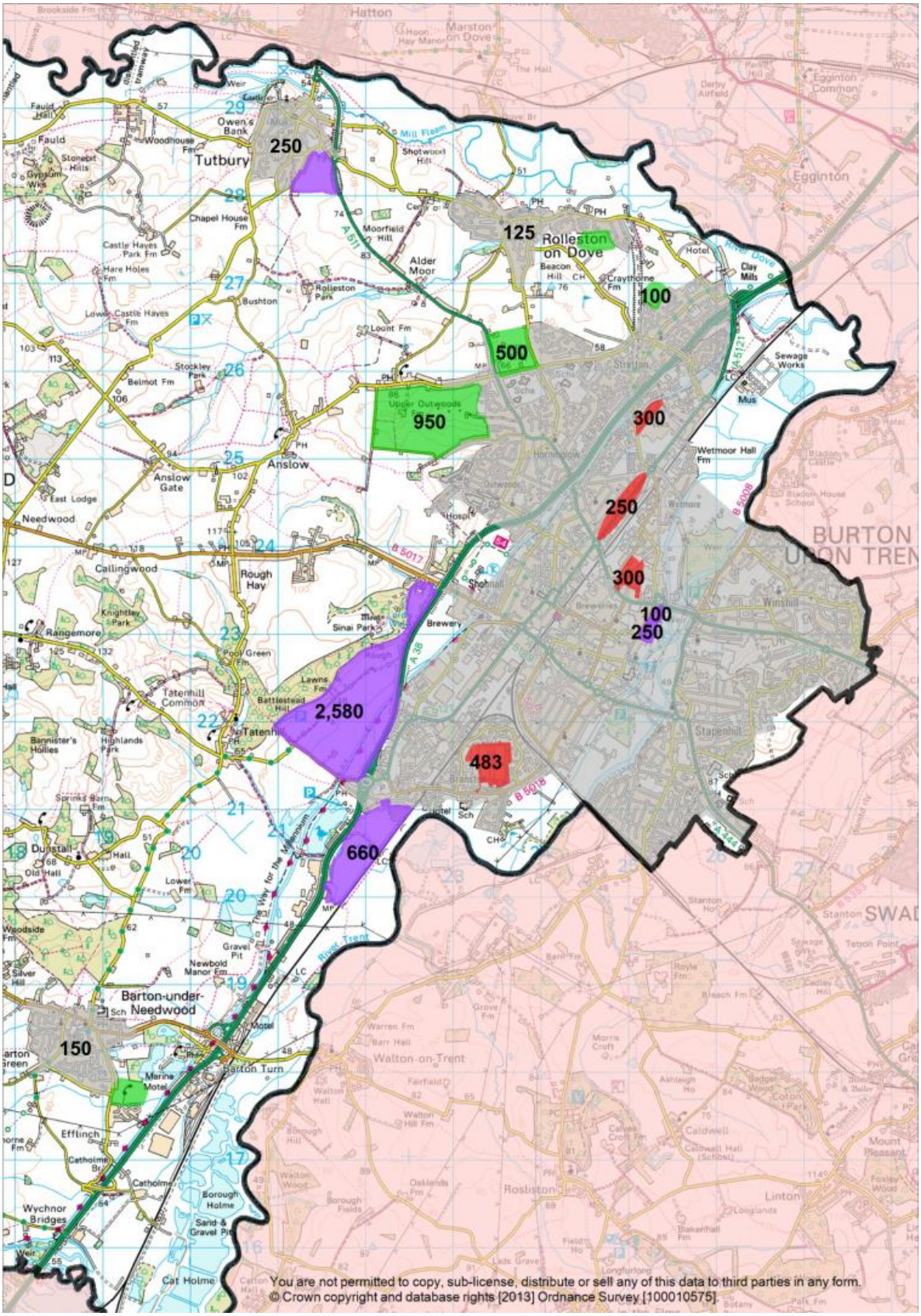
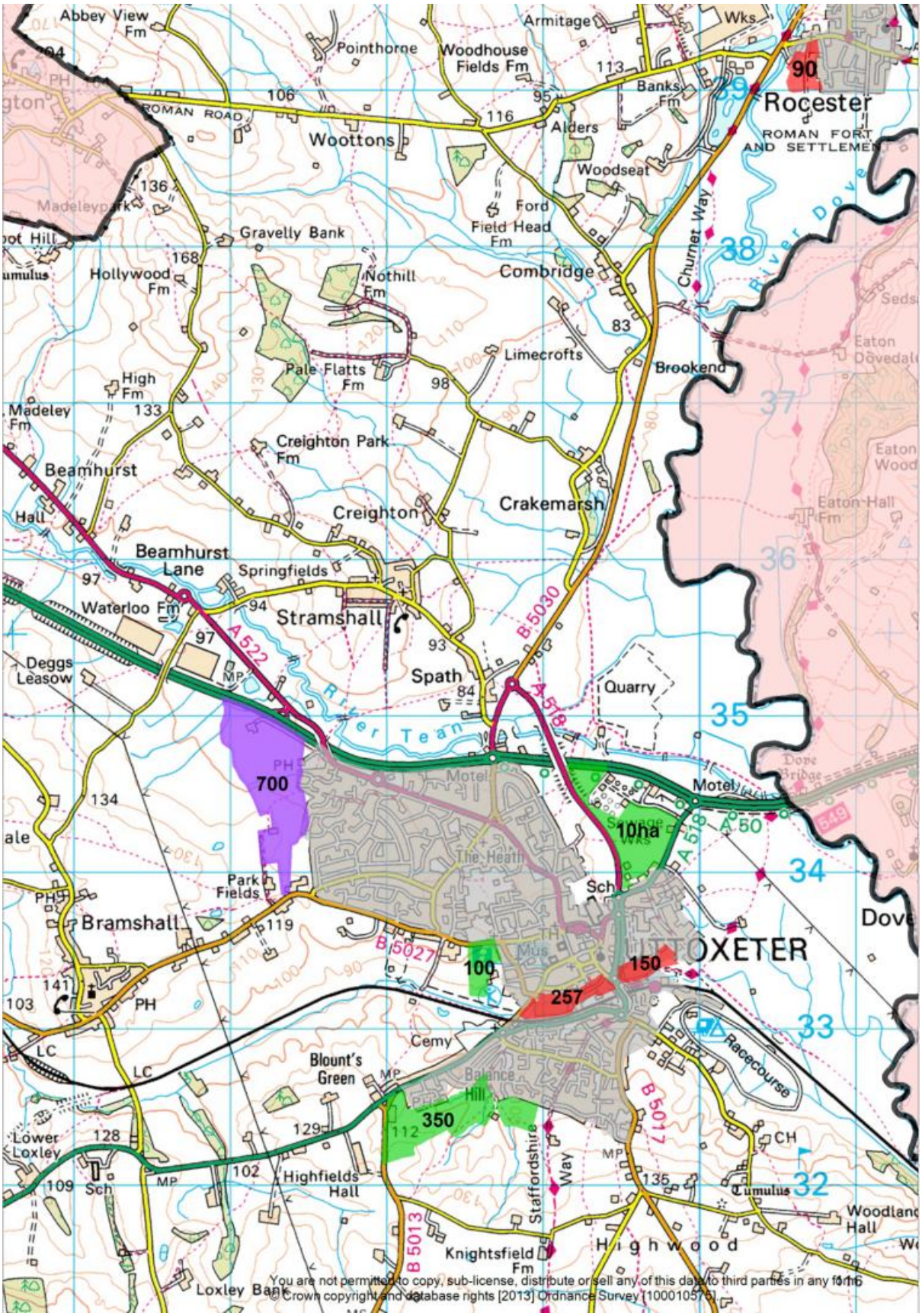


Figure 2: Strategic Site Allocations at Uttoxeter and Rocester



2. The Need and Process for Habitat Directive Assessment

2.1 The need for and process of undertaking the Habitat Directive Screening Assessment is guided by the legal framework and relevant best practice guidance as outlined below.

2.1 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

Habitats Directive

2.2 The Habitats Directive, more formally known as the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora[1], is the means by which the European Union meets its obligations under the Bern Convention. The Directive applies to the UK.

2.3 The main aim of the Directive is to promote the maintenance of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species listed on the Annexes to the Directive at a favourable conservation status, introducing protection for those habitats and species of European importance. In applying these measures Members States are required to take account of economic, social and cultural requirements, as well as regional and local characteristics.

2.4 The provisions of the Directive require Member States to introduce a range of measures, including:

1. Maintain or restore European protected habitats and species listed in the Annexes at a favourable conservation status as defined in Articles 1 and 2;
2. Contribute to a coherent European ecological network of protected sites by designating Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for habitats listed on Annex I and for species listed on Annex II. These measures are also to be applied to Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under Article 4 of the Birds Directive. Together SACs and SPAs make up the Natura 2000 network (Article 3);
3. Ensure conservation measures are in place to appropriately manage SACs and ensure appropriate assessment of plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of an SAC. Projects may still be permitted if there are no alternatives, and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In such cases compensatory measures are necessary to ensure the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network (Article 6);

[1] The Directive was amended in 1997 by a technical adaptation Directive. The annexes were further amended by the Environment Chapter of the Treaty of Association 2003 and in 2007 when Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU.

4. Member States shall also endeavour to encourage the management of features of the landscape that support the Natura 2000 network (Articles 3 and10);
5. Undertake surveillance of habitats and species (Article 11);
6 Ensure strict protection of species listed on Annex IV (Article 12 for animals and Article 13 for plants); and
7 Report on the implementation of the Directive every six years (Article 17), including assessment of the conservation status of species and habitats listed on the Annexes to the Directive.

Article 6 sets the requirement for an appropriate assessment, paragraph 3 states:

(3)"*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 plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public...*

(4) *If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted."*

Natura 2000 Sites

2.5 Natura 2000 sites provide ecological infrastructure for the protection of sites which are of exceptional importance in respect of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species within the European Community. The sites which are also referred to as European Sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Offshore Marine Site (OMS).

European Guidance on Provisions of the Habitats Directive[2]

2.6 In 2006 the European Union published guidance on the approach to appropriate assessments required by the provision of Article 6 of the Directive. The guidance provides non-mandatory methodological assistance to carry out the assessments. The guidance has been used to inform a best practice approach to this screening assessment, as set out in Chapter 3.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010

2.7 The Habitats Regulations apply specific provisions of the 1992 Habitats Directive to candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Special Areas of Conservation and

[2] European Commission, 2007. Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites. Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/ECC

Special Protection Areas which require special considerations to be taken in respect of such sites. The Regulations transpose the provisions of the Habitats Directive into national law.

2.8 On 6th April 2010, the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 1994 and its amendments were consolidated into the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and were subject to subsequent Amendment in 2011. The new regulations replaced the 1994 Regulations, although did not make any substantive changes to existing policies and procedures other than the establishment of the Marine Management Organisation (MMO).

2.9 A significant change to the regulations is the extension to the list of sites. The 2010 Regulations extended their application to potential European sites, including those sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on European sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites. Regulation 8 of the 2010 Regulations sets out the extended list of sites covered by the term "European site":

- (a)a special area of conservation;
- (b)a site of Community importance which has been placed on the list referred to in the third sub-paragraph of Article 4(2) of the Habitats Directive;
- (c)a site hosting a priority natural habitat type or priority species protected in accordance with Article 5(4) of the Habitats Directive (a site in respect of which consultation has been initiated under Article 5(1) of that Directive, during the consultation period or pending a decision of the Council under Article 5(3));
- (d)an area classified pursuant to Article 4(1) or (2) of the old Wild Birds Directive or the new Wild Birds Directive; or
- (e)a site which has been proposed to the European Commission under regulation 10 (selection of sites eligible for identification as of Community importance), until such time as—
    - (i)the site is placed on the list of sites of Community importance referred to in the third sub-paragraph of Article 4(2) of the Habitats Directive, or
    - (ii) Agreement is reached or a decision is taken pursuant to Article 4(2) of that Directive not to place the site on that list.

National Planning Policy Framework

2.10 The National Planning Policy Framework, adopted in March 2012, makes the following reference to the requirement for Habitats Regulations Assessments:

"*Local Plans may require a variety of other environmental assessments, including under the Habitats Regulations where there is a likely significant effect on a European wildlife site (which may not necessarily be within the same local authority*

area), Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and assessments of the physical constraints on land use. Wherever possible, assessments should share the same evidence base and be conducted over similar timescales, but local authorities should take care to ensure that the purposes and statutory requirements of different assessment processes are respected." (Paragraph 166)

2.2 The HRA Process

2.11 Government guidance[3] summarises the HRA process prescribed by Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive into three main tasks:

3. Likely significant effects (AA task 1);

4. Appropriate assessment and ascertaining the effect on site integrity (AA task 2); and

5. Mitigation and alternative solutions (AA task 3).

2.2 Consultation Requirements

2.12 As set out by Regulation 102 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, land use plans which are;

"(a) Likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and
(b) Not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site,

Must, as part of the appropriate assessment, be consulted on with the appropriate nature conservation body[4] and have regard to any representations made by that body within such reasonable time as the authority specify. It is at the discretion of the plan-making authority whether the opinion of the general public is sought and taken into account. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, and subject to regulation 103 (considerations of overriding public interest), the plan-making authority must give effect to the land use plan only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site or the European offshore marine site (as the case may be)."

2.13 Natural England was consulted on the Screening Opinion alongside the Preferred Options Local Plan consultations in October 2012. Natural England made the following representation:

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[3] Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006. Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment.

[4] Regulation 5 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 states that; "In regulations 48 (surveillance of conservation status of habitats and species), 50 (monitoring of incidental capture and killing) and Part 6 (assessment of plans and projects)—
(a) "nature conservation body" means Natural England, the Countryside Council for Wales or the Joint Nature Conservation Committee
(b) In relation to a European offshore marine site, "the appropriate nature conservation body" means the Joint Nature Conservation Committee."

"The HRA report concludes that there will be a minor impact of cumulative effects on the Cannock Chase SAC as a result of increase in recreational pressure in combination with neighbouring plans. Policy SP23 is proposed as a means of mitigating some of the impacts of the proposed development. Natural England is satisfied with the principle of this approach. However, detailed discussions are underway between NE, Footprint Ecology and those LPA which are within the zone of influence, including yourselves, and we are unable to comment further until these discussions have progressed. We look forward to discussing these issues in the next Cannock Chase partnership meeting which East Staffordshire would be welcome to attend."

3. Screening Methodology and Appraisal Framework

3.1 The screening appraisal is required to both inform and assess each stage of the Plan process. The following stages of the Local Plan have therefore been screened: the five Spatial Options; four Preferred Spatial Strategy Options; Strategic Sites, strategic policies, detailed policies and the final development strategy.

Habitat Regulations Assessment Methodology

3.2 Guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)[5] identifies three stages involved in the completion of Habitat Regulations Assessments. These are as follows:

Stage 1: Evidence Gathering and Screening (the test to identify whether a plan option is 'likely to have a significant effect' using the precautionary principle).

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment and ascertaining the effect on site integrity (necessary if there are found to be likely significant effects).

Stage 3: Mitigation measures and alternative solutions (required where an option has been found to have adverse effects on the integrity of the European Site, these effects should be mitigated).

Stage 4: Assessment where no alternative solutions remain and where adverse impacts remain (the IROPI test and compensatory measures).

3.3 Whilst this is an updated screening report, it still represents the first stage of the Habitat Regulations Assessment process. The aim is to determine whether the Local Plan, either alone or in combination with other relevant plans and projects, is likely to result in any likely significant adverse effect upon the integrity of any European site. The likely significance effect 'test' serves to identify any plans or projects which can be 'screened out', based on the conclusion that they will be unlikely to result in any significant effects on qualifying features. Where this is the case, no further appropriate assessment work is required.

3.4 It should be noted that Local Plan adoption can only proceed where it does not affect the integrity of any European sites. If Stage 1 concludes that the Plan would have no likely significant effect, the need for Stage 2 is redundant. Alternatively, if the likely effects are deemed worthy of an Appropriate Assessment, Stage 3 can be used to identify suitable mitigation, often through adaptation of elements of the Local Plan. In the exceptional event where a plan which is deemed to have a negative effect is progressed, it must be demonstrated that this is for 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest'.

[5] DCLG (2006) *Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment*

3.2 Screening Approach

3.5 European Commission guidance[6] recommends that the screening stage should comprise the following elements:

1. 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;
2. Describing the plan and other plans and projects that, 'in combination', have the potential to have significant effects on a European site;
3. Identifying the potential effects on the European site; and
4. Assessing the significance of any effects on the European site.

3.6 The effects of a development plan document are not restricted to the plan area boundaries. Therefore, as recommended by the precautionary principle, any European sites located partially or wholly within 15km of the East Staffordshire boundary were included in the screening process. The individual elements of the Plan have been assessed in terms of their potential effect on these sites.

3.3 Methodology

Identification of relevant European sites

3.7 The first task of the screening assessment was the identification of European sites within or adjacent to East Staffordshire with the potential to be affected by the Local Plan. Whilst there are no European sites within the boundaries of East Staffordshire, there are 11 sites within 15km of the Borough boundary, as set out in the maps in Appendix 2. These are outlined below.

RAMSAR:

- Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 1

SPAs:

- Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1)

SACs:

- South Pennine Moors
- Cannock Chase
- Cannock Extension Canal
- Pasturefields Salt Marsh
- Peak District Dales
- River Mease

[6] European Commission (2001) *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites*

- West Midlands Mosses Chartley Moss
- Gang Mine
- Bees Nest and Green Clay Pits

3.8 As outlined by Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, the significance of the Plan's effects on a European site depends on whether the site's "integrity" is affected. The European Commission[7] defines integrity as relating to the reasons for the site's designation:

"The integrity of a site is the coherence of the site's ecological structure and function, across its whole area, or the habitats, complex of habitats and / or populations of species for which the site is or will be classified' (Sec. 4.6.3)

3.9 Section 3.4 therefore details the characteristics of these sites, as well as their reasons for designation, vulnerabilities and conservation objectives. The information on these sites was gathered from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and relevant Natura 2000 Data Forms.

Identification of relevant plans and projects

3.10 There may be certain aspects of the Local Plan that, in isolation, would have no likely significant effect on European sites. However, when considered in combination with other plans and projects, these issues could have a more significant effect. Regulation 102 of the Amended Habitats Regulations 2010 requires an Appropriate Assessment where "*a land use plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site*".

3.11 Due to the large number of potentially relevant plans and projects, a focus was held on those likely to lead to spatial growth or change within the neighbouring areas. The relevant plans and projects considered as part of the screening report are outlined in Appendix 1.

3.12 It is a requirement of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive that appropriate assessment work examines the potential for plans and programmes to have a significant effect either individually or 'in combination' with other plans and programmes. This must therefore be considered as part of the screening process.

3.13 Undertaking a screening approach that includes an assessment of other plans and programmes requires a pragmatic approach in light of the significant range of plans, programmes and projects locally and in the wider area. Of relevance, Government guidance states that "*the assessment of significant effects of a given option needs to take account of the option's impact in combination with other plans and projects. Only other key plans and*

[7] European Commission (2000) *Managing Natura 2000 Sites*

projects which the LPA consider most relevant should be collected for the 'in combination' test. An exhaustive list could render the assessment exercise unworkable.[8]*"*

3.14 In line with the guidance cited above, the approach taken to the screening assessment focused on those plans that could lead to significant development and change that may relate to the Local Plan either geographically or more strategically and provide sufficient information to help consider potential environmental impacts. We have therefore identified plans and programmes within the Borough and the neighbouring local authority areas, which includes: South Derbyshire, Derbyshire Dales, Lichfield, Staffordshire Moorlands, Cannock Chase, South Staffordshire, and Stafford Borough. These plans are listed below and a review of the potential cumulative effects of each plan is provided in Appendix 1.

South Derbyshire

- Adopted Local Plan 1998
- Core Strategy – 'Preferred Growth Strategy'
- South Derbyshire Draft Local Plan – September 2013

Derbyshire Dales

- Adopted Local Plan 2005
- Derbyshire Dales and High Peak Joint Draft Core Strategy 2010
- Derbyshire Dales Pre-Submission Consultation 2013
- Landscape Character and Design SPD
- Peak Sub Region Employment Land Review

Lichfield

- Lichfield Local Plan 1998
- Core Strategy 'Shaping our District' Submission 2013

Cannock Chase

- Core Strategy Submission document 2013
- Local Plan 1997

South Staffordshire

- Adopted Core Strategy December 2012

Staffordshire Moorlands

- Revised Submission Core Strategy 2011

[8] Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006. Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment.

Stafford Borough

- Stafford Borough Local Plan Submission August 2013

Appropriate Assessment screening matrix

3.15 A screening matrix (Table 1) was adopted to enable the recording of the screening assessments of each element of the Local Plan against the conservation objectives of each relevant European Site. The assessment places particular importance on features contributing to the integrity of European sites, including water quality, pollution and habitat loss and fragmentation.

3.16 The draft policies and amended policies set out in the Pre-Submission Local Plan were considered against each of the European Sites identified. In the case of the Strategic Sites, these were screened against only those European Sites within 15km of the site boundary. However, with regard to sites at particular risk of recreational pressures and associated impacts, this was screened for sites at a greater distance, in light of the larger catchment areas of visitors.

3.17 As part of the methodology, a set of screening criteria was adopted, as shown in Table 4 below, to provide a consistent guide to the determination of the nature of the effect within the following categories:

Category A: No negative effect
Category B: No significant effect
Category C: Likely significant effect alone
Category D: Likely cumulative significant effect

3.18 Within this, each categorisation is divided down to provide a more specific assessment. In addition, Table 2 was prepared to provide a guide to potential impacts and their indicators. This Screening Report relates only to the assessment of policies in the Pre-Submission Local Plan. For assessments of previous versions of the plan please refer to the 2008 and 2012 Screening Reports.

Table 1: Screening Matrix

Preferred Option Policy	Relevant European Sites	Assessment Category	Potential Impact		Comment	Likely Significant Impact on a European site (s)		Policy change recommended to enable screen out	Requirement for AA
			Impact	Indicator		Alone	In combination		

Table 2: Potential Impacts

Potential Impact	Indicators
Water Quantity	Water abstraction, change in drainage, availability
Water Quality	Water pollution: - Agricultural run off - Domestic - Industrial
Recreational Pressure and	Increase population Distance from site
Non physical Disturbance	Noise and/or visual presence: Recreational, Industrial, Transport and Light spillage
Physical loss or fragmentation	Percentage loss
Impact on Protected Species within or surrounding European Site	Evidence of protected species, proximity to the site
Air quality	Traffic, proximity to the site, likelihood of light spillage, likelihood of noise impact
Risk of invasive/non native species	Likelihood of new species within proximity to the site

Table 3: Significance Key

Key		
Unlikely significant effect	-	No Further Appropriate Assessment work required
Significant Effect Uncertain	?	Precautionary approach to be taken and mitigation, further research or appropriate assessment work required
Likely Significant Effect	✖	Precautionary approach to be taken and mitigation, further research or appropriate assessment work required

Table 4: Screening Criteria

Category	Sub Category	Rationale
Category A: No negative effect	A1	Policies that will not themselves lead to development e.g. because they relate to design or other qualitative criteria for development, or they are not a land use planning policy.
	A2	Policies intend to protect the natural environment, including biodiversity.
	A3	Policies intend to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on a European site.
	A4	Policies that positively steer development away from European sites.
Category B: No significant effect	B1	Effects are trivial or 'de minimis', even if combined with other effects.
Category C: Likely significant effect alone	C1	The policy could **directly affect** a European site because it provides for, or steers, a quantity or type of development adjacent to a European site.
	C2	The policy could **indirectly affect** a European site e.g. because it provides for, or steers, a quantity or type of development that may be very close to it, or ecologically, hydrologically or physically connected to it or it may increase disturbance as a result of increased recreational pressures.
	C3	Proposals for a **magnitude of development** that, no matter where it was located, the development would be likely to have a significant effect on a European site.
	C4	Policies for developments or infrastructure projects that could **block options or alternatives** for the provision of other development or projects in the future, which will be required in the public interest, that may lead to adverse effects on European sites, which would otherwise be avoided.
	C5	Any other policies that would be **vulnerable to failure** under the Habitats Regulations at project assessment stage; to include them in the plan would be regarded by the EC as 'faulty planning'.
	C6	Any other proposal that may have an adverse effect on a European site, which might try to pass the tests of the Habitats Regulations at project assessment stage by arguing that the **plan provides the imperative reasons** of overriding public interest to justify its consent despite a negative assessment.
Category D: Likely cumulative significant effect	D1	The policy alone would not be likely to have significant effects but if its effects are combined with effects of other policies or proposals **provided for or coordinated** by the LDD (internally) the **cumulative** effects would be likely to be significant.
	D2	Policies that alone would not be likely to have significant effects but if their effects are **combined with the effects of other plans or projects**, and possibly the effects of other developments provided for in the LDD as well, the combined effects would be likely to be significant.
	D3	Proposals that are, or could be, part of a **programme or sequence of development** delivered over a period, where the implementation of the early stages would not have a significant effect on European sites, but which would dictate the nature, scale, duration, location, timing of the whole project, the later stages of which could have an adverse effect on such sites.

4. The Screening Assessment Baseline Evidence

4.1 Information was collated (from the Natura 2000 and Ramsar forms from the JNCC website) for each designated site concerning the rationale for EC conservation designation. Additional information, in the form of Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) condition reviews, were also collected to help evaluate each site's vulnerability to any potential adverse impacts related to the plan's policies and spatial strategy for growth. The following tables provide a description of each European Site and were used to inform the screening assessment, with particular regard to conservation objectives and vulnerabilities and risks.

Table 5: Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 1 RAMSAR

Site	Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 1
Characteristics	Designation: RAMSAR Grid Reference: SK026281 Size: 510.88 ha Distance from East Staffordshire boundary: 0.3km
Reason for designation	• The Meres & Mosses form a geographically discrete series of 16 lowland open water and peatland sites in the north-west Midlands of England. These have developed in natural depressions in the glacial drift left by receding ice sheets which formerly covered the Cheshire/Shropshire Plain. • There are over 60 open water sites, or 'meres', as well as a smaller number of peatland sites, known as 'mosses'. They consist of a diverse range of habitats from open water to raised bog. The majority of meres are nutrient-rich with associated fringing habitats; reed swamps, fen, carr and damp pasture. • Peat accumulation has resulted in nutrient poor peat bogs (mosses) forming in some sites in the fringes of meres or completely infilling basins. In a few cases the result is a floating quaking bog or schwingmoor. • The wide range of resulting habitats support nationally important flora & fauna including a number of rare species of plants associated with wetlands including five nationally scarce species together with an assemblage of rare wetland invertebrates.
Vulnerability and risks	• Site is vulnerable to eutrophication through atmospheric pollution and agricultural run-off. • Introduction/ invasion of exotic plant species has the potential to impact on native flora and fauna. • Factors (past, present or potential) which are adversely affecting the site's ecological character: - Eutrophication (on-site and off-site, major impact)

	- Introduction/invasion of non-native plant species(on-site, major impact) • The site's primary interest is its wide range of lowland wetland types and successional stages within a distinct biogeographical area. Waters are generally circumneutral or acidic depending on the component site's soil type, catchment size and usage. Substantial areas of open water remain in some sites, and in many cases this is fringed by extensive and varied swamp, fen and carr communities. Some basins have become peat-filled, leading in some circumstances to development of ombotrophic conditions; of particular importance are the quaking bogs or schwingmoors. • Areas owned by the Local Authority and National Nature Reserves are used by schools and universities, and the site also attracts walkers and anglers.
Conservation objectives	• To maintain, in favourable condition, the wetland habitats and the ecological communities it supports.

Table 6: Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA

Site	**Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1)**
Characteristics	Designation: SPA Grid Reference: SK285835 Size: 45,270.52 ha Distance from East Staffordshire boundary: 10.8km
Reason for designation	• This covers extensive tracts of semi-natural moorland habitats including upland heath and blanket mire. The site is of European importance for several upland breeding species, including birds of prey and waders. • During the breeding season the area regularly supports at least: - 2.2% of the GB breeding population of Asio flammeus - 2.3% of the GB breading population of Falco columbanius - 1.9% of the GB breeding population of Pluvialis apricaria
Vulnerability and risks	• Major urban and industrial centres near to the Peak District Moors provide significant visitor pressure and approximately two-thirds of the moorlands are open to public access. Habitat damage through physical erosion or fire, combined with disturbance of breeding birds, can be significant. Initiatives for sustainable recreation are being developed. Many habitats are sub-optimal (in vegetation terms) as a consequence of historic air pollution, high grazing pressure and wildfire burns. Grazing pressure is generally being lowered and appropriate burning encouraged by two separate ESAs which encourage and support habitat restoration.

	• Not withstanding these schemes, evidence suggests that breeding birds in the south-west of the area may be declining on both open moorland and enclosed rough grazing land, possibly due to general agricultural improvement of the surrounding areas which are used by some species for some of their habitat requirements; e.g. golden plovers feed on in-bye land off the moor. • The site has been identified as a possible SAC for habitats such as blanket bog and there will be a need to balance the management of the different interests across the whole site.
Conservation objectives	• To maintain the mosaic of upland habitats including acid grassland, bog, bracken, heathlands, fen, rivers and streams. The extent of all of these habitats should be maintained unless loss is as a result of restoration to another notified habitat type.

Table 7: South Pennine Moors SAC

Site	**South Pennine Moors**
Characteristics	Designation: SAC Grid Reference: SK021683 Size: 64,983.13 ha Distance from East Staffordshire boundary: 10.8km
Reason for designation	• Supports a significant presence of Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix, and Transition mores and quaking bogs. • The area is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for European dry heaths, Blanket bogs and Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles. **Primary Annex I habitats** • **European dry heaths:** The site is representative of upland dry heath at the southern end of the Pennine range, the habitat's most south-easterly upland location in the UK. Dry heath covers extensive areas, occupies the lower slopes of the moors on mineral soils or where peat is thin, and occurs in transitions to acid grassland, wet heath and blanket bogs. The upland heath of the South Pennines is strongly dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris*. Its main NVC types are H9 *Calluna vulgaris – Deschampsia flexuosa* heath and H12 *Calluna vulgaris – Vaccinium myrtillus* heath. More rarely H8 *Calluna vulgaris – Ulex gallii* heath and H10 *Calluna vulgaris – Erica cinerea* heath are found. On the higher, more exposed ground H18 *Vaccinium myrtillus – Deschampsia flexuosa* heath becomes more prominent. In the cloughs, or valleys, which extend into the heather moorlands, a greater mix of dwarf shrubs can be found together with more lichens and mosses. The moors support a rich invertebrate fauna, especially moths, and important bird assemblages. • **Blanket bogs:** This site represents blanket bog in the south Pennines, the most south-easterly occurrence of the habitat in Europe. The bog vegetation communities are botanically poor. Hare's-tail cottongrass *Eriophorum vaginatum* is often overwhelmingly dominant

	and the usual bog-building *Sphagnum* mosses are scarce. Where the blanket peats are slightly drier, heather *Calluna vulgaris*, crowberry *Empetrum nigrum* and bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* become more prominent. The uncommon cloudberry *Rubus chamaemorus* is locally abundant in bog vegetation. Bog pools provide diversity and are often characterised by common cottongrass *E. angustifolium*. Substantial areas of the bog surface are eroding, and there are extensive areas of bare peat. In some areas erosion may be a natural process reflecting the great age (9000 years) of the south Pennine peats. • **Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles:** Around the fringes of the upland heath and bog of the south Pennines are blocks of old sessile oak woods, usually on slopes. These tend to be dryer than those further north and west, such that the bryophyte communities are less developed (although this lowered diversity may in some instances have been exaggerated by the effects of 19th century air pollution). Other components of the ground flora such as grasses, dwarf shrubs and ferns are common. Small areas of alder woodland along stream-sides add to the overall richness of the woods. **Non-Primary Annex I habitats** • Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* • Transition mires and quaking bogs
Vulnerability and risks	• The site is largely enclosed on two sides by large industrial urban areas, which means that large numbers of people use the area for recreational activities. Around two-thirds is within the Peak District National Park. Land management is primarily driven by agriculture, rough grazing for sheep, and grouse-shooting. • Access management has been a key issue, and with proposals under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, will continue as such. • Accidental fires can cause extensive damage to vegetation. The National Park Authority has produced a strategic Fire Plan and areas are closed to the public at times of high fire risk. • Key pressures on the site include overgrazing by sheep, burning as a tool for grouse moor management and inappropriate drainage through moor-gripping. Combined with atmospheric pollution, large areas of blanket bog have become de-vegetated and eroded. It is unclear at this stage whether the effects are irreversible. Attempts over recent decades to reverse these processes have achieved mixed and limited results. The combination of these effects means that most if not all of the blanket bog will not be classed as favourable according to English Nature's condition assessment criteria. • The former extensive cover of woodland has declined over many centuries to the point that it is fragmented, relatively small-scale and largely restricted to steeper valley sides. There is no woodland included in the site to the north of the National Park. Remaining woods are often unfenced and open to grazing which restricts tree regeneration. In some Rhododendron has invaded, choking out native flora. • The aim is to try and ensure continued improvements in air quality to allow affected species to recolonise if they can. Access management has been a key issue for the area. Management of key pressures in order to maintain ecosystems is being carried out.

	• Mechanisms for addressing access management issues include a range of flora, research and the role of organisations such as the Peak District National Park and its Ranger Service. • Maintenance of the ecosystems relies primarily on appropriate grazing levels and burning regimes. • Key pressures are being tackled, and an integrated management strategy and conservation action programme has been produced as part of an EU funded LIFE project for the area to the north of the National Park. Within the Park, the MAFF-funded North Peak and South West Peak Environmentally Sensitive Areas are important mechanisms in attempts to achieve balanced management. MAFF's Countryside Stewardship Scheme and English Nature's Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (WES) are also being used to achieve favourable management. Management of the site, especially north of the National Park, is further complicated by the large number of commons. The National Park Authority owns a significant area of moorland, as does the National Trust. • Whilst all efforts can be made to control current factors such as current grazing and burning patterns, current atmospheric pollutant levels and access impacts, it is unclear whether this can fully mitigate the long-term influence of the historical factors such as atmospheric pollution, past burning and overgrazing. The situation is further complicated by a view that some erosion features can be considered natural phenomena of intrinsic interest. It may not therefore always be appropriate to try and revegetate bare peat even if suitable techniques exist. • The woodland issues are being tackled through the Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme and Challenge Fund for creating new native woodland, MAFF's North Peak ESA and English Nature's WES though more incentive and resources are needed. As well as restoring existing stands of woodland there is an emphasis on re-creation to expand and link fragments which inevitably involves changing existing habitats. This will raise questions over the balance of vegetation types we wish to see on the site but given woodland would naturally have covered much of the area we need to treat it's expansion seriously. The flora of woodlands, quality as with bog and heath, has suffered from poor air quality. Again, it is less clear what can be done to reverse this situation other than to try and ensure continued improvements in air quality to allow affected species to recolonise if they can.
Conservation objectives	• Avoid the deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying features, and the significant disturbance of the qualifying features, ensuring the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes a full contribution to achieving the aims of the Birds Directive. • To maintain the current extent of blanket bog habitats. Losses can only be accepted in cases where bog is restored to a more diverse form. • For there to be no loss of ancient semi natural woodland stands. • To maintain the current extent of dry heath habitats. In areas where heath is mixed with grassland a loss can be accepted if it is through restoration to dry heath. • To maintain the current extent of wet heath habitats.

Table 8: Cannock Chase SAC

Site	Cannock Chase
Characteristics	Designation: SAC Grid Reference: SJ982188 Size: 1,236.93 ha Distance from East Staffordshire boundary: 3.7km
Reason for designation	• Supports a significant presence of Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix. • Area is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for European dry heaths. **Primary Annex I habitats** • **European dry heaths** **The** area of lowland heathland at Cannock Chase is the most extensive in the Midlands, although there have been losses due to fragmentation and scrub/woodland encroachment. The character of the vegetation is intermediate between the upland or northern heaths of England and Wales and those of southern counties. Dry heathland communities belong to NVC types H8 *Calluna vulgaris – Ulex gallii* and H9 *Calluna vulgaris – Deschampsia flexuosa* heaths. Within the heathland, species of northern latitudes occur, such as cowberry *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* and crowberry *Empetrum nigrum*. Cannock Chase has the main British population of the hybrid bilberry *Vaccinium intermedium*, a plant of restricted occurrence. There are important populations of butterflies and beetles, as well as European nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and five species of bats. **Non-Primary Annex I habitats** • Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*
Vulnerability and risks	• Much of Cannock Chase falls within a popular and well-used Country Park. Visitor pressures include dog walking, horse riding, mountain biking and off-track activities such as orienteering, all of which cause disturbance and result in erosion, new track creation and vegetation damage. • Bracken invasion is significant, but is being controlled. Birch and pine scrub, much of the latter from surrounding commercial plantations, is continually invading the site and has to be controlled. High visitor usage and the fact that a significant proportion of the site is Common Land, requiring Secretary of State approval before fencing can take place, means that the reintroduction of sustainable management in the form of livestock grazing has many problems. • Cannock Chase overlies coal measures which have been deep-mined. Mining fissures continue to appear across the site even though mining has ceased and this is thought to detrimentally affect site hydrology. • Furthermore the underlying Sherwood Sandstone is a major aquifer with water abstracted for public and industrial uses and the effects of this on the wetland features of the Chase are not fully understood.

Conservation objectives	The Conservation Objectives for this site are to maintain the following habitats and geological features in favourable condition, with particular reference to any development component special interest features for which the land is designated as individually listed: • Dwarf shrub heath • Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland On this site favourable condition requires the maintenance of the extent of each designated habitat type. Maintenance implies restoration if evidence from condition assessment suggests a reduction in extent.

Table 9: Cannock Extension Canal SAC

Site	**Cannock Extension Canal**
Characteristics	Designation: SAC Grid Reference: SK020058 Size: 5.47 ha Distance from East Staffordshire boundary: 15.8km
Reason for designation	• A cul-de-sac canal. Is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom for Luronium natans. **Primary Annex II species** • **Floating water-plantain *Luronium natans*** **Cannock** Extension Canal in central England is an example of anthropogenic, lowland habitat supporting floating water-plantain *Luronium natans* at the eastern limit of the plant's natural distribution in England. A very large population of the species occurs in the Canal, which has a diverse aquatic flora and rich dragonfly fauna, indicative of good water quality. The low volume of boat traffic on this terminal branch of the Wyrley and Essington Canal has allowed open-water plants, including floating water-plantain, to flourish, while depressing the growth of emergents.
Vulnerability and risks	• The population of *Luronium natans* in this cul-de-sac canal is dependent upon a balanced level of boat traffic. If the canal is not used, the abundant growth of other aquatic macrophytes may shade-out the *Luronium natans* unless routinely controlled by cutting. • An increase in recreational activity would be to the detriment of *Luronium natans*. • Existing discharges of surface water run-off, principally from roads, cause some reduction in water quality.
Conservation objectives	Ensure favourable conditions for floating water plantain are maintained. Cutting of emergents may be required if disturbance occurs.

Table 10: Pasturefields Salt Marsh SAC

Site	Pasturefields Salt Marsh
Characteristics	Designation: SAC Grid Reference: SJ992249 Size: 7.7 ha Distance from East Staffordshire boundary: 3.1km
Reason for designation	• Is the only known outstanding locality in the UK of a natural spring with Inland Salt Meadows, which is considered to be rare as its total extent in the UK is estimated to be less than 10 hectares. **Primary Annex I habitats** • **Inland salt meadows (Priority feature)** Pasturefields Salt Marsh in the West Midlands is the only known remaining example in the UK of a natural salt spring with inland saltmarsh vegetation. The vegetation consists of red fescue *Festuca rubra*, with common saltmarsh-grass *Puccinellia maritima*, lesser sea-spurrey *Spergularia marina*, saltmarsh rush *Juncus gerardii* and sea arrowgrass *Triglochin maritimum* in the most saline situations.
Vulnerability and risks	• This inland saltmarsh is dependent upon traditional agricultural management, with livestock grazing and no, or minimal use, of agricultural chemicals. It is also dependent upon the brine source being maintained and, whilst the hydrogeology of the site is not fully understood, it would be likely to be vulnerable to any abstractions of water from the underground aquifer. • The site is managed by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust with support from English Nature's Reserve Enhancement Scheme.
Conservation objectives	• Ensure the salt marsh is maintained to a favourable condition.

Table 11: Peak District Dales SAC

Site	Peak District Dales
Characteristics	Designation: SAC Grid Reference: SK142550 Size: 2,326.33 ha Distance from East Staffordshire boundary: 0.93km
Reason for designation	• Is considered to support a significant presence of: - European dry heaths - Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae - Alkaline fens - Cottus gobio - Lampetra planeri - Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation (rare) - Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (Thlaspietea rotundifolia) (rare) • Is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for: - Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia), - Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines, - Austropotamobius pallipes. **Primary Annex I habitat** • **Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous** substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) Peak District Dales is one of the most extensive surviving areas in England of CG2 *Festuca ovina – Avenula pratensis* grassland. Grasslands at this site range from hard-grazed short turf through to tall herb-rich vegetation, with transitions through to calcareous scrub and *Tilio-Acerion* forests – a diversity of structural types unparalleled in the UK. There is also a great physical diversity due to rock outcrops, cliffs, screes and a variety of slope gradients and aspects. In contrast to examples of *Festuca – Avenula* grassland on chalk to the south, these grasslands are less at risk from the threat of invasion by upright brome *Bromopsis erecta* and tor-grass *Brachypodium pinnatum*, which are at the edge of their range here and have limited vigour. The relatively cold oceanic nature of the climate means that there is enrichment with northern floristic elements, such as limestone bedstraw *Galium sterneri* and globeflower *Trollius europaeus.* **Non-Primary Annex I habitats** • **European dry heaths** • **Calaminarian grasslands of the *Violetalia calaminariae*** • **Alkaline fens**

	• **Alkaline fens** • **Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (*Thlaspietea rotundifolia*)** • **Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegeta** **<u>Primary Annex II species</u>** • **White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish** • **The River Dove presents white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* in a high-quality, upland limestone river, in the north-east of the species' UK range.** **<u>Non-Primary Annex II species</u>** • **Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*** • **Bullhead *Cottus gobio***
Vulnerability and risks	• The main threat to the limestone grasslands of the Peak District Dales is inappropriate grazing management. • Proposed developments have the potential to interfere with drainage patterns within the site. The impact ofdust from quarrying needs to be assessed. Potential adverse effects arising from such proposals will be dealt with under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations. • The woodlands within the SAC occupy very steeply-sloping dalesides, where access is always going to be problematic, and development pressures are therefore limited. Existing permission for limestone or mineral extraction is a potential threat to some of the woodlands on one part of the site. This will be addressed through the planning review procedures under the Habitats Regulations. Neglect has resulted in invasion by non-native species in some woods. This is now being addressed where possible through management under a Wildlife Enhancement Scheme. In some areas access by grazing livestock to some of the woodlands has resulted in a degraded ground flora, and limited regeneration of the shrub and canopy species. Once again, this is to be addressed, wherever practicable, through the Wildlife Enhancement Scheme. • The dominance of sycamore and its regeneration potential are a problem whilst it is considered a non-native part of the woodland. • In addition to grassland and woodland there are a range of scrub communities some of which are valuable for nature conservation. They are a key part of natural woodland and an open daleside. The scrub also illustrates how neglected grassland will revert to woodland whilst grazed woodland may not regenerate. • The ideal management for nature conservation purposes - light grazing throughout most of the year, with a break in grazing during the spring and early summer - tends to conflict with today's agricultural regimes. The result is either neglect and invasion by scrub, or overgrazing and the loss of the important vegetation communities. A number of the daleside grasslands are managed as part of a larger grazing unit with the richer improved plateau lands, with the result that any regulation of stocking levels in the dales becomes difficult. Some of the dalesides are now managed under Countryside Stewardship, which has brought about considerable improvements in their management. Similarly since 1996 English Nature's White Peak Wildlife Enhancement Scheme has been successful in attracting land

	managers and enhancing the conservation value of sites. • Removal of sycamore with the eventual aim of eradication would be a very long-term goal. Assessment of the status of sycamore (naturalised?) is needed to put in perspective eradication proposals. Some mature sycamore should be left as veterans. This will in part make up for the fact that there are few veteran trees in the woods. To have a natural and diverse age structure is therefore a long-term aspiration. • The balance between woodland, grassland and scrub needs to be struck. • There will be a need to work closely with game fishing interests to ensure that fishery management does not adversely affect the freshwater features of the cSAC. The same is true of shooting tenants, who may impact on the overall ecology of the woodland.
Conservation objectives	• Ensure maintenance of all Annex I and supporting Annex I habitats to a favourable condition as designated. Ensure the maintenance of habitats for white-Clawed Crayfish, bullhead and brook lamprey in a favourable condition.

Table 22: River Mease SAC

Site	River Mease
Characteristics	Designation: SAC Grid Reference: SK260114 Size: 21.86 ha Distance from East Staffordshire boundary: 0.16km
Reason for designation	**Non-primary Annex I habitats** • Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation **Primary Annex II species** • **Spined loach *Cobitis taenia*** The River Mease is a good example of a riverine population of spined loach *Cobitis taenia*. It is a small tributary of the River Trent and has retained a reasonable degree of channel diversity compared to other similar rivers containing spined loach populations. It has extensive beds of submerged plants along much of its length which, together with its relatively sandy sediments (as opposed to cohesive mud) provides good habitat opportunities for the species. • **Bullhead *Cottus gobio*** The Mease is an example of bullhead *Cottus gobio* populations in the rivers of central England. Bed sediments are generally not as coarse as other sites selected for the species, reflecting the nature of many rivers in this geographical area, but are suitable in patches due to the river's retained sinuosity. The patchy cover from submerged macrophytes is also important for the species.

	Non-primary Annex II species • **White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*** • **Otter *Lutra lutra***
Vulnerability and risks	• The River Mease is an unusually semi-natural system in a largely rural landscape, dominated by intensive agriculture. Water quality and quantity are vital to the European interests, whilst competition for water resources is high. Diffuse pollution and excessive sedimentation are catchment-wide issues which have the potential to affect the site.
Conservation objectives	• The key conservation objective that is relevant for this site is the objective which relates to levels of Orthophosphates. The figure for Orthophosphates set out in the Conservation Objectives for the site is 0.06 mg/l. • Management should maintain the natural flow regime of the river or stream, including natural erosion and sedimentation processes, in order to meet the requirements of the full range of flora and fauna it supports. Abstraction levels should be managed to protect the characteristic flow regime of the river, including seasonal base flows and flushing flows. Compensation flows are generally not an acceptable alternative to reducing abstraction, and river transfers may also have an undesirable effect on river ecology. • Ensure the river is maintained at a favourable status for floating formations of water crowfoot species (Ranunculus spp), populations of bullhead, spined loach and white-clawed crayfish. Maintain the river and the surrounding lands to provide suitable habitat for populations of otter.

Table 13: West Midlands Mosses SAC

Site	**West Midlands Mosses**
Characteristics	Designation: SAC Grid Reference: SK026282 Size: 184.18 ha Distance from East Staffordshire boundary: 0.38km
Reason for designation	Considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds and Transition mires and quaking bogs. **Primary Annex I habitats** • **Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds** West Midlands Mosses contains three pools, one at Clarepool Moss and two at Abbots Moss, that are examples of dystrophic lakes and ponds in the lowlands of England and Wales, where this habitat type is rare. The lake at Clarepool Moss is unusual as a dystrophic type on account of its relatively base-rich character, which is reflected in the presence of a diverse fauna and flora. The two at Abbots Moss are more typical, base-poor examples. The dystrophic lakes and ponds at this site are

	associated with Schwingmoor development, a characteristic of this habitat type in the West Midlands. Schwingmoor is an advancing floating raft of bog-moss *Sphagnum*, often containing NVC type M3 *Eriophorum angustifolium* bog pool community, which grows from the edge of the pool and can completely cover over the pool; the site has also been selected for this Annex I feature (Transition mires and quaking bogs). • **Transition mires and quaking bogs** West Midlands Mosses represents Schwingmoor vegetation. Floating rafts of *Sphagnum*-dominated vegetation have developed over semi-liquid substrates within basins. In the UK this type of *Sphagnum*-dominated vegetation with a scatter of sedges *Carex* species and cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos* is confined to this part of England and mid-Wales.
Vulnerability and risks	• Several sources of nutrient enrichment, including atmospheric deposition of nutrients, pose a potential threat at these sites. Trees at this site trap airborne nutrients and provide roost areas for birds, but the enrichment effect of both is only localised. • All parts of that site are vulnerable to recreational disturbance, particularly the northern portion which is a scout camp. • Colonisation of open schwingmoors or *Sphagnum* lawns and rafts in the West Midland Mosses by birch and pine is controlled by works under Management Agreement or by National Nature Reserve management, and in liaison with the local wildlife trust at Abbots Moss. • A Management Agreement controls agricultural run-off at Chartley Moss. At Abbots Moss the threat of enrichment from atmospheric sources has been reduced by clear-felling of basin slopes adjacent to the mires.
Conservation objectives	• Ensure maintenance of both habitats as designated, to favourable condition.

Table 34: Gang Mine SAC

Site	**Gang Mine**
Characteristics	Designation: SAC Grid Reference: SK286557 Size: 8.26 ha Distance from East Staffordshire boundary: 14km
Reason for designation	• Calaminarian grasslands of the *Violetalia calaminariae*, for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. **<u>Annex I habitats</u>**

	• **Calaminarian grasslands of the *Violetalia calaminariae*** Gang Mine is an example of Calaminarian grasslands in an anthropogenic context in northern England. Natural limestone outcrops supporting species typical of calaminarian grasslands are rare and small, with a very impoverished flora. This site is included to provide an example of the habitat type on sedimentary rocks; it has colonised the large area of mine workings and spoil heaps on limestone. These are notable for the wide variations in slope, aspect and soil toxicity. Floristically the site contains the richest anthropogenic Calaminarian grasslands in the UK, with abundant spring sandwort *Minuartia verna* and alpine penny-cress *Thlaspi caerulescens*. Other species of grassland vegetation present include early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula* and dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*. Many of these species are likely to be distinct genotypes adapted to soils rich in heavy metals.
Vulnerability and risks	• Approximately one-fifth of Gang Mine is currently ungrazed. If this continues, the accumulation of plant litter will result in detrimental successional change, although temporary cessation of grazing will allow the development of the unusual lichen-rich sub-community. • This area has recently been purchased by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and will be developed as a nature reserve with funding under English Nature's Reserves Enhancement Scheme. The remaining area is currently well-grazed, being managed under the MAFF Countryside Stewardship Scheme, and is under no immediate threat. • Site management will be assisted if appropriate by the White Peak Wildlife Enhancement Scheme which was launched in early 1996. • There is deposition of limestone dust on at least part of the site from the adjacent active Dean Quarry. Dust is visible on the flora, suggesting potentially high deposition rates. The impact needs to be assessed. There is other land adjacent to the SSSI/cSAC which supports calaminarian grassland and other vegetation communities of interest. This should be assessed against SSSI and SAC criteria as a possible addition to the site.
Conservation objectives	• To maintain, in favourable condition, the Calaminarian grassland.

Table 45: Bees Nest and Green Clay Pits SAC

Site	**Bees Nest and Green Clay Pits**
Characteristics	Designation: SAC Grid Reference: SK240545 Size: 14.76 ha Distance from East Staffordshire boundary: 9.52km
Reason for	• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: - on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) for which the area is considered to support a significant

designation	presence. - *Triturus cristatus* for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. **Primary Annex II species** • **Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*** The site encompasses a series of silica sand pits supporting a complex mosaic of acidic and calcareous grassland, with small areas of heathland communities. There are also areas of open water, flushes and communities of disturbed ground. Great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* occur in a number of ponds on site, which vary in size, profile and vegetation cover.
Vulnerability and risks	• The site has been disturbed by, and partially created by, mineral extraction of silica sands. This has led to a rich mix of habitats, including the ponds used by the great crested newts. An extant planning permission (until 2042) for extraction is currently dormant and would need to be reviewed by the planning authority before re-enactment. This permission from around 1950 currently has a condition requiring disposal of waste generated through the quarrying on the site it was taken from. If the permission were reactivated and this condition were followed the ponds might be filled in. It is not clear if there are viable reserves on the site. It has not operated for several years. • There is also a clay-pigeon shoot on the land. Many of the clay pigeons end up in the ponds. It is not clear if these will have an impact on the newt population. • There have been possible problems with unauthorised excavation and tipping. There have been various applications for tipping, but it is not clear if any of these were approved. • The land is currently grazed by a tenant who is in English Nature's Wildlife Enhancement Scheme. There are currently problems with the grazing management, which is affecting the quality of the grassland. • The ponds require maintenance and enhancement management for the newts. English Nature will be taking action on this in the short-term.
Conservation objectives	• To maintain in favourable condition the semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) and the habitats for the population of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*).

5. Updated Screening Appraisal and Cumulative Effects

5.1 This updated screening appraisal has appraised all the policies and sites set out in the Pre-Submission Local Plan 2013.

5.2 There have been amendments to the policies set out in the Preferred Options document and some additional policies. Overall it is concluded that none of the policies or strategic sites individually would result in any significant effects to the qualifying ecological features of interest of the Natura 2000 or Ramsar sites referred to in this Screening Opinion.

5.3 Other plans, programmes and projects that are being prepared and implemented in the areas surrounding East Staffordshire Borough Council have the potential to have significant effects on European sites. Effects from different plans may act in combination with East Staffordshire's Local Plan leading to a potential cumulative, significant effect overall on European sites.

5.4 It is a requirement of the Habitats Regulations that effects identified through the plan screening process are considered for their potential cumulative effects. Guidance suggests that the in combination assessment is undertaken in a targeted way, to ensure that the assessment is most effective, but focusing on those plans most likely to interact with the plan under consideration. A review of other plans and programmes is contained in Appendix 1. When screening the policies and spatial options consideration was given to potential cumulative impacts identified through the review of other plans when concluding the likelihood of an impact.

5.5 The assessment identifies that the following policies and strategic sites may have in combination effects with other plans. However, it was considered that the Plan would make a minor impact in proportion to other growth areas located closer to the European Sites, and would not therefore create a significant impact requiring further AA work. In most cases the proposed mitigation also eliminates the potential cumulative effect.

Table 16: Cumulative Effects

East Staffordshire Pre-Submission Local Plan	Cumulative Effect	Conclusion
Strategic Policy 3: Provision of Homes and Jobs and Strategic Policy 4: Distribution of Housing Growth	The two policies propose a significant level of residential development within the	There are no European sites within the East Staffordshire Borough and the spatial strategy directs growth within and surrounding the existing built up areas and away from the

East Staffordshire Pre-Submission Local Plan	Cumulative Effect	Conclusion
	Borough, which in-combination with adjacent spatial strategies may contribute to recreational pressures, issues of diffuse air quality and habitat loss.	European sites that border the Borough. As such it is concluded that the East Staffordshire Local Plan will make a minor contribution to in-combination issues in proportion to growth areas located much closer to the European Sites. Nevertheless mitigation is proposed by policies SP24, SP26, DP7 and DP11.
Strategic Policy 7 Sustainable Urban Extensions	The policy proposes significant residential and mixed use development to Uttoxeter and Burton upon Trent, which will deliver the majority of the spatial strategy.	
The Strategic sites are: • Uttoxeter - JCB Site, West of Uttoxeter, Hazelwalls, Stone Road and employment at Derby Road; • Burton upon Trent – Pirelli, Branston Depot, Bargates, High Street, Lawns Farm, Land South of Branston, Derby Road, Middle Yard, Beamhill, Guinevere Close, Tutbury Road/Harehedge Lane • Strategic Villages – Tutbury, Rolleston on Dove, Barton under Needwood and Rocester	The policy proposes a significant level of residential development within the Borough, which in-combination with spatial strategies may contribute to recreational pressures, issues of diffuse air quality and habitat loss.	It is considered that the spatial strategy effectively steers development away from the European Sites, and as such can be classified in accordance with the Screening Criteria as A4 – Policies that positively steer development away from European Sites. In regard to the Strategic Villages and local service villages it is considered that whilst this development steers away from the main urban centres it is of a limited scale and unlikely to have a significant effect when applied in combination with other policies in the plan. The screening process has identified the potential for cumulative impacts on Cannock Chase and this is considered to be sufficiently mitigated by

East Staffordshire Pre-Submission Local Plan	Cumulative Effect	Conclusion
		Detailed Policy 11. Similarly it is considered that development surrounding Uttoxeter, that is in closer proximity to the Midland Meres and Mosses could make a minor contribution to diffuse air quality issues. Detailed Policy 7 would not allow applications with air quality pollution implications. Detailed Policy 11 now refers to all European sites, not just Cannock Chase SAC which would provide sufficient mitigation.

6. Conclusion

6.1 There are no Natura 2000 sites within the East Staffordshire Borough, however in line with the requirement to undertake a precautionary approach this screening assessment has been considered Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the Borough boundary.

4. On the basis of the screening process documented in this Habitats Screening Assessment Report it is the Council's opinion that the pre-submission Local Plan:

a. Is not directly related with or necessary to the management of the site, or
b. Is not likely to have a significant effect on each of the following sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects:

- RAMSAR
  - Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 1
- SPA
  - Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1)
- SACs
  - South Pennine Moors
  - Cannock Chase
  - Cannock Extension Canal
  - Pasturefields Salt Marsh
  - Peak District Dales
  - River Mease
  - West Midlands Mosses Chartley Moss

- Gang Mine
- Bees Nest and Green Clay Pits

6.2 The principle potential effects identified and reviewed are related to additional households and employment development and how this may increase traffic within close proximity to European Sites or result in additional recreational pressure. More specifically the potential for an impact on air quality from industrial and manufacturing processes has also been considered. It has been concluded that the Local Plan Pre-Submission would not result in any significant effects to the qualifying ecological features of interest of the Natura 2000 or Ramsar sites referred to.

6.3 It is however acknowledged that the Plan may have a minor impact on cumulative effects to the Cannock Chase SAC, as a result of an increase in recreational pressure in combination with neighbouring plans. The Local Plan Pre-Submission includes a policy relating to European Sites with a focus on Cannock Chase SAC. This policy reflects work and evidence gathered by the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership. It will be important that monitoring of the implementation of the policy is carried out to ensure the requirements of the Habitat Regulations Assessment are met and individual projects do not have a negative impact on the SAC.

6.4 In addition it can be concluded that the no further work as part of the requirement to comply with the Habitats Regulations is required for Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites referred to as part of this assessment, subject to further Partnership working with the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation Partnership. Should further changes be made to the development strategy, strategic sites and policies be made, a revised screening opinion or note will be produced to set out if further assessment is required.