Barton Area Action Plan DPD
Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening

February 2012
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1. INTRODUCTION

Oxford City Council has undertaken this Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) “in-house”, with auditing undertaken by Levett-Therivel Sustainability Consultants. This report discusses Stage 1 (screening).

The City Council is now producing a Development Plan Document (DPD) which sets out policies to bring forward a residential-led development at Barton. This is the Barton Area Action Plan DPD.

1.1 Requirements of the Habitats Directive

Appropriate assessment of plans that could affect Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites (jointly called ‘European sites’) is required by article 6(3) of the European Habitats Directive¹, which states:

‘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.’

Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive discusses alternative solutions, the test of “imperative reasons of overriding public interest” (IROPI) and compensatory measures:

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 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.

The Habitats Directive applies the precautionary principle to European sites. Plans and projects can only be permitted if it can be shown that they will have no significant adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, or if there are no alternatives to them and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest as to why they should go ahead. In such cases, compensation will be necessary to ensure the overall integrity of the site network.

The Habitats Directive was implemented into UK legislation through the “Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c) Regulations 1994” (as amended). This piece of legislation is generally known as the Habitats Regulations.

1.2 Methodology Used for this Habitats Regulations Assessment

Habitats Regulations Assessment can involve up to a four stage process:

1. **Screening.** Determining whether a plan ‘alone, or in combination’ is likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

2. **Appropriate Assessment.** Determining whether, in view of the site’s conservation objectives, the plan ‘alone or in combination’ would have an adverse effect (or risk of this) on the integrity of the site. If not, the plan can proceed.

¹ Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora
3. **Assessment of alternative solutions.** Where the plan is assessed as having an adverse effect (or risk of this) on the integrity of a site, there should be an examination of alternatives.

4. **Assessment where no alternative solutions remain and where adverse impacts remain.**

This HRA covers Stages 1 of this process. This was carried out in October-November 2011. Broadly, the HRA process involved:

- Identification of European sites that could possibly be affected by the Barton Area Action Plan, qualifying features of those sites and, where available, key environmental conditions to support the sites’ integrity. This process relied on information used in the Core Strategy HRA;

- Identification of possible impacts arising from the Barton Area Action Plan;

- Identification of impacts and policies that could be screened out, and those that were likely to require more detailed appropriate assessment;

- Consultation with Natural England to confirm that the proposed approach for the Appropriate Assessment was acceptable, and what additional information (if any) was required to complete the analysis;

This report discusses Stage 1 (screening).
2.1 European Sites

Table 2.1 lists all European sites that are within 20km of the boundary of Oxford City Council.

Table 2.1 European sites within 20km of Oxford City Council boundary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Site</th>
<th>Distance from boundary</th>
<th>Reason for Designation*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oxford Meadows SAC</td>
<td>Within City Boundary, extending into administrative area for Cherwell District Council and into the administrative boundary of West Oxfordshire District Council.</td>
<td>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site&lt;br&gt; Oxford Meadows represents lowland meadows in the Thames Valley centre of distribution. The site includes vegetation communities that are perhaps unique in the world in reflecting the influence of long-term grazing and hay-cutting on lowland meadows. The site has benefited from the survival of traditional management, which has been undertaken for several centuries, and so exhibits good conservation of structure and function. <strong>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</strong>&lt;br&gt; Oxford Meadows is selected because Port Meadow is the larger of only two known sites in the UK for creeping marshwort Apium repens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cothill Fen SAC</td>
<td>Located 7 kilometres from the city boundary</td>
<td>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site&lt;br&gt; This lowland valley mire contains one of the largest surviving examples of alkaline fen vegetation in central England, a region where fen vegetation is rare. The M13 Schoenus nigricans – Juncus subnodulosus vegetation found here occurs under a wide range of hydrological conditions, with frequent bottle sedge Carex rostrata, grass-of-Parnassus Parnassia palustris, common butterwort Pinguicula vulgaris and marsh helleborine Epipactis palustris. The alkaline fen vegetation forms transitions to other vegetation types that are similar to M24 Molinia caerulea – Cirsium dissectum fen-meadow and S25 Phragmites australis – Eupatorium cannabinum tall-herb fen and wet alder Alnus spp. wood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Wittenham SAC</td>
<td>Located 19km from the City Boundary</td>
<td>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site&lt;br&gt; One of the best-studied great crested newt sites in the UK, Little Wittenham comprises two main ponds set in a predominantly woodland context (broad-leaved and conifer woodland is present). There are also areas of grassland, with sheep grazing and arable bordering the woodland to the south and west. The River Thames is just to the north of the site, and a hill fort to the south. Large numbers of great crested newts Triturus cristatus have been recorded in the two main ponds, and research has revealed that they range several hundred metres into the woodland blocks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source: [www.jncc.gov.uk](http://www.jncc.gov.uk)
2.2 Appropriate Assessment of the South East Plan

Although it is due to be revoked through the Localism Act, at the time of writing, the South East Plan set out the spatial strategy for the region. The HRA focused on information and impacts considered appropriate at the regional level. For example, rather than focusing on information and impacts relating to the specific location of future development, the assessment has addressed bigger issues such as air pollution and water abstraction across the region. The document states that in many instances the impacts are not inevitable but rather depend on how the South East Plan’s policies and proposals are implemented on the ground.

The HRA of the Draft South East Plan concluded that there were a number of possible impacts ‘for which it was not possible to conclude’ that there would be ‘no adverse effect’ on the Oxford Meadows SAC due to developments under the South East Plan, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. These included:

- Increased water abstraction;
- Increased effluent discharge;
- Reduced air quality;
- Increased primary aggregate requirements.

2.3 Oxford Core Strategy

An HRA was carried out for the Oxford Core Strategy “in house” by officers at the City Council. The Core Strategy HRA was audited by Levett-Therivel Sustainability Consultants. The Oxford Core Strategy sets out the strategic locations for housing and employment developments within Oxford, identifies a hierarchy of centres and sets a number of more general policies on climate change, housing, transport and employment. The Oxford Core Strategy also sets out the amount of housing required up to 2026. The HRA for the Core Strategy examined whether the policies within the Core Strategy would adversely affect the integrity of any European Sites within 20km of the City. Of the three sites that were within 20km of the Oxford, two were screened out, and an Appropriate Assessment was undertaken on the Oxford Meadows SAC. The Appropriate Assessment concluded that none of the policies in the Oxford 2026 Core Strategy were likely to have adverse effects on the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC with regard to the following environmental requirements of the site:

- Maintenance of traditional hay cut and light aftermath grazing
- Absence of direct fertilisation
- Minimal air pollution
- Absence of nutrient enrichment of waters; good water quality
- Balanced hydrological regime
- Recreational pressures

The Core Strategy Inspectors referred to the HRA in their report. They summarised the HRA process, and noted that the original and updated assessments considered in detail impacts relating to air quality, the hydrological regime and increased recreational pressure. The Inspectors recommended the need for some further work at a more detailed planning stage for the Northern Gateway and Summertown strategic areas, to confirm that the Core Strategy would not have a significant impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC.

The Adopted Oxford Core Strategy included Policy CS7 Land at Barton. The text of which is as follows:

*Land at Barton is allocated as a strategic location for a predominantly residential development.*
Planning permission will be granted for 800-1,200 dwellings, and infrastructure and amenities to support the new community (including a new primary school). Development will be required to deliver access improvements that integrate it into the wider community and stimulate regeneration in Barton and Northway.

Development proposals will be expected to retain the existing allotments and an area of public open space equivalent in area to what currently exists, and to incorporate additional publicly accessible open space and an appropriate buffer zone to Bayswater Brook and the A40.

The HRA for the Core Strategy screened out Policy CS7 Land at Barton and stated that the site is over 3.7km away from the Oxford Meadows SAC and therefore the policy helps to steer development away from European Sites.

2.4 Barton Area Action Plan DPD Proposed Submission

The Barton AAP provides a series of policies to deliver the following:

- A new neighbourhood and new homes that are of the highest quality, creating an attractive, functional and sustainable place;

- Transformation of the ring-road to secure a reduction in traffic speeds to a maximum of 40 miles per hour and homes fronting the northern side;

- Physical integration with Barton, with the recreation ground retained but re-orientated to lie east-west, the land currently cultivated as allotments retained, and the uncultivated allotment land retained for community use or replaced elsewhere within the development site;

- New public open space in the form of a linear park along Bayswater Brook;

- A network of safe and easy-to-use footpaths and cycle-ways, with new and enhanced links across the ring-road, including re-connecting the Stoke Place bridleway and enhancement of the existing crossing between Barton and Headington;

- Revised or new bus services;

- A new at-grade left in/ left out, right in/ right out junction or signalised roundabout towards the western end of the strategic development site, with bus and emergency vehicle only movements between the development site and Northway and between the ring-road and Northway;

- Two further secondary all-vehicle access points from Barton;

- A minimum of 40% affordable housing for social rent;

- A local centre with a supermarket and a multi-purpose community hub building incorporating a primary school.

2.5 Other Plans and Projects

In compliance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, the City Council must consider the implications of the Barton AAP for relevant sites ‘in combination’ with other plans or projects’ that might have significant impacts for these sites. The HRA for the Core Strategy considered many of
these documents, but since that assessment was made, some documents have been progressed further. The following list updates the list set out in the HRA for the Core Strategy:

Regional Planning

- South East Plan (due to be revoked)

Oxford City Council Local Development Framework:

- Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 – although this document will eventually be superseded by the Local Development Framework, at present it sets out the City Council’s adopted development management policies.
- Oxford Core Strategy – sets out the spatial for Oxford until 2026. Also includes development management policies including housing, employment and climate change.
- West End Area Action Plan
- Sites and Housing DPD (Preferred Options June 2011)

Other District Council Planning

- West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and Draft Core Strategy (January 2011) and additional consultation (June 2011)
- Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 and Core Strategy Preferred Options (January 2009) and additional consultation (December 2009)
- Cherwell District Council Draft Core Strategy (February 2010) and Delivery DPD Supplementary Issues and Options (February 2008)
- South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and Core Strategy Proposed Submission (December 2010) Submission (March 2011) and Examination (November 2011)

Other Relevant Plans and Projects

- Oxford Flood Risk Management Strategy (Autumn 2010)
- River Thames Catchment Flood Management Plan (September 2009)
- Chiltern Railways Evergreen 3 Project (Inquiry November 2010) (Report recommends that the Order should not be made, no Open Space Certificate be issued and no Planning Direction be given.)

2.6 Legal Challenge to the Habitat Regulations Assessment for the Core Strategy

On 21 April 2011 a legal challenge to Oxford City Council’s decision to adopt the Core Strategy was put forward. On 28 June 2011 the Council applied to strike out and/or dismiss the Claimant’s claim on the grounds that the Claimant had no real prospect of success.

The Core Strategy Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) concluded that there may be a tension between the competing objectives of, on the one hand, achieving the Northern Gateway in its current form and, on the other hand, protecting the interests of the Oxford Meadows SAC. The City Council agreed with Natural England and the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) that a conditional approval was the appropriate way to reconcile these tensions. The Court found that “the conditional approval is a permissible and lawful course of action”.

In paragraph 92 of the Judgement it is recognised that “the Core Strategy is a high level strategic document and the detail falls to be worked out at a later stage. Subsequent appropriate
assessment of specific proposals is indeed necessitated under the regime.” In this case the details that were to be worked out at a later stage included an assessment of how increased recreational pressure as a result of housing development at the Northern Gateway would impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC. The Judgement clarifies the issue of whether subsequent DPDs should have their own appropriate assessment:

> Each appropriate assessment must be commensurate to the relative precision of the plans at any particular stage and no more. There does have to be an appropriate assessment at the Core Strategy stage, but such an assessment cannot do more than the level of the strategy at that stage permits.

In light of this judgement it was decided to undertake a Habitats Regulation Assessment for the Barton Area Action Plan.

### 2.7 Barton Area Action Plan

The policies in the Barton Area Action Plan DPD have been assessed in Table 2.2 below. The table shows that there are no policies within the Area Action Plan which are likely to have an adverse impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC.

### 2.8 Possible Impacts of the Barton Area Action Plan DPD on the European Sites

Table 2.2 above showed that none of the policies within the Barton Area Action Plan Proposed Submission document would be likely to have an adverse impact on the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Categorisation of the effects of elements of the Barton Area Action Plan

- A – Policies and proposals that cannot have any negative effect on a European site
- B – Effects will be addressed in assessments “down the line”, including project assessment under Regulation 48
- C – Could have an effect, but would not be likely to have a significant (negative) effect (alone or in combination with other plans or projects
- D – Likely to have a significant effect alone and would require an Appropriate Assessment
- E – Likely to have a significant effect in combination with other plans or projects and which require Appropriate Assessment of those combinations
- F – Likely to have a significant effect, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, but which would not adversely affect the integrity of a European site
- G – Likely to have a significant effect, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and for which it cannot be ascertained that they would not adversely affect the integrity of a European site
Table 2.2 showing the likely key environmental considerations that are likely to give rise to significant effects as a result of policies in the Housing section of the Barton Area Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Categorisation of the effects of elements of the Barton AAP</th>
<th>If the policy has no effect, then reasons why</th>
<th>Key environmental considerations likely to give rise to significant effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA1 – Transforming the Ring Road</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy to ensure that appropriate traffic management measures are put in place deliver a 40mph zone fronting the development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA2 – Recreation Ground</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy to ensure that the recreation ground and sports pitches are maintained and there is no net loss of this type of space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA3 – Allotments</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy to ensure that an area of allotments is maintained on site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA4 – Linear Park</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy to ensure that at least 10% of the Strategic Development Site will be public open space which will take the form of a linear park along Bayswater Brook.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA5 – Sustainable Travel</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy to ensure that the design and layout of the development and location of the local centre is planned to encourage people to walk, cycle and travel by public transport. Policy also requires a Strategic Transport Assessment and comprehensive travel plan for the site.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA6 – Vehicle Access</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy specifying the type and location of primary and secondary vehicle accesses to the development site.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA7 – Pedestrian and Cycle links</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy specifying the locations of pedestrian and cycle links into/ out of, and within the development site.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA8 – Housing Mix</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy setting out the preferred mix of housing types for the new development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA9 – Affordable Housing</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy setting the required level of affordable housing to be provided as part of the development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA10 – Local Centre</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy setting the broad location and maximum level of retail floorspace of the proposed local centre.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA11 – Community Hub</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy detailing the amount of land needed and the broad location within the development site for a new community hub.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA12 – Energy Efficiency</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy setting the energy efficiency requirements and specifications which the development must be built to.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA13 – Design</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy requiring that a design code must be prepared approved by the local planning authority in advance of any outline planning application. The policy also sets out a list of principles which the design code will reflect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA14 – Delivery</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy setting out how the planning contributions (Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy) will be should be collected and also that a phasing strategy must be submitted with the planning application.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA15 – Flooding</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy requiring a flood risk assessment be carried for the site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Categorisation of the effects of elements of the Barton AAP</td>
<td>If the policy has no effect, then reasons why</td>
<td>Key environmental considerations likely to give rise to significant effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA16 – Surface Water Drainage</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy ensuring that Sustainable Drainage Systems are used to reduce overall surface-water runoff volumes leaving the site and to improve water quality.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA17 – Water Supply and Wastewater Drainage</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy requiring a water network supply and drainage strategy be produced ahead of occupation of the development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA18 – Land Remediation</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy requiring appropriate land remediation works to be carried out (where necessary) prior to commencement of development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA19 – Sidlings Copse and College Pond SSSI</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy requiring that a mitigation plan be submitted and agreed prior to the determination of planning consent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA20 – Linking local people to economic opportunities</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Policy setting out how local people and business should benefit from the proposed development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Environmental Requirements for European Sites

**Oxford Meadows SAC**

The citation for the Oxford Meadows SAC states that:

Oxford Meadows includes vegetation communities that are perhaps unique in reflecting the influence of long-term grazing and hay-cutting on lowland hay meadows. The site has benefited from the survival of traditional management, which has been undertaken for several centuries, and so exhibits good conservation of structure and function. Port meadow is the largest of only two known sites in the UK for creeping marshwort *Apium repens*.

Qualifying habitats: The site is designated under article 4(4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- Lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*)

Qualifying species: The site is designated under article 4(4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following species listed in Annex II:

- Creeping marshwort *Apium repens*.

Natural England’s report on the condition of Oxford Meadows from 6 July 2010 indicates that currently the Oxford Meadows SAC is in a favourable condition.

The following key environment requirements to support the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC were agreed at a screening workshop carried out for the South East Plan and are as follows:

1. Minimal air pollution.
2. Absence of nutrient enrichment of waters; good water quality.
3. Balanced hydrological regime – alteration to adjacent rivers may alter flooding regime and reduce botanical diversity.
4. Maintenance of traditional hay cut and light aftermath grazing.
5. Absence of direct fertilisation.

A further workshop on HRA for the Oxford Core Strategy raised the additional issues of ensuring recreational pressures are maintained at a reasonable level.

### 2.9 Screening Conclusions

It is worth noting that the HRA for the Core Strategy screened out the two other European Sites within 20km of Oxford. These sites were Cothill Fen SAC and Little Wittenham SAC.

The screening conclusions from the Core Strategy HRA have been summarised below for completeness:

**Cothill Fen SAC**

It is considered that the Oxford Core Strategy could not have an adverse impact on Cothill Fen SAC. Cothill Fen is an alkaline fen dependent on a high water table and calcareous, base-rich water supply. As Cothill Fen is in the catchment of the River Ock, which is a different river catchment, the Oxford Core Strategy could not have an adverse impact on this Designated Site. Cothill Fen SAC is in a relatively remote location and can only be accessed by private car, or by local residents travelling on foot. Recreational pressure is therefore likely to be slight as a result of
the proposed development within the Oxford Core Strategy. Development within Oxford is likely to feature new green spaces which will ease recreational pressure on the Cothill Fen.

**Little Wittenham SAC**

Little Wittenham has been designated because it contains two ponds with large populations of great crested newts. These areas have restricted access which is designed to prevent conflicts between the visiting public, the newts and their habitat. As development in Oxford will not affect the habitat in the ponds or the newts foraging habitat around them, the Oxford Core Strategy could not have an adverse impact on this site. This site has therefore been excluded from further assessment.

**Oxford Meadows SAC**

In the case of the HRA for the Barton Area Action Plan, it has been possible to screen out all of the impacts on the Oxford Meadows SAC:

- Air Pollution;
- Water quality;
- Balanced hydrological regime;
- Increased recreational pressure
- Maintenance of traditional hay cut and light aftermath grazing*
- Absence of direct fertilisation*

*These conservation objectives have been screened out as they are related to activities directly at the site, which the Sites and Housing DPD will not affect.

It is considered that the Barton Area Action Plan could not have an adverse impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC. The conclusions for the Oxford Meadows SAC are framed in terms of the conservation objectives:

**Air Pollution**

The HRA for the Core Strategy refers to EA Interim advice note 61/05 “Guidance for Undertaking Environmental Assessment of Air Quality for Sensitive Ecosystems in Internationally Designated Nature Conservation Sites and SSSIs” which states:

*If there are no Designated Sites within 200m of an affected road, there is no need to proceed any further with [the] air quality assessment. If there is a Designated Site within 2km of a scheme but there is no significant change in emissions from roads within 200m of the site, then the scheme will not result in a significant change in air quality and the effects of a change in air quality can be assumed to be negligible.*

The Barton site is 3.7km away. This rules out any likely air quality impacts associated with proposed development on the air quality of the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Transport data to support the Core Strategy included a Preliminary Transport Assessment for the Land at Barton. This study concluded that there are “no significant transport issues that would affect the ability to implement the Land at Barton Development”.

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3 Peter Brett Associates on behalf of the Homes and Communities Agency and Oxford City Council, (July 2009) Preliminary Transport Technical Appraisal Report for Land at Barton,
Given the distance of the Land at Barton from the Oxford Meadows SAC and the conclusions from this report this conservation objective has been screened out of the assessment.

**Balanced Hydrological Regime/ Water Quality**
The HRA for the Core Strategy states that “Oxford Meadows SAC straddles the north western boundary of Oxford. Most of it is therefore upstream of the large urban areas of Oxford.” The Barton Area Action Plan area lies 3.7km to the east of the Oxford Meadows SAC. The HRA for the Core Strategy continues, “… a study of ‘The Hydrology of the Oxford Meadows’ states that ‘[t]he Second Terrace Gravels (Summertown Radley Terrace) on which much of Oxford is built appears to be a source of groundwater recharge (Eyles 1986) with groundwater/ surface water flowing south and west across Port Meadow to the Seacourt Stream.’”

The Barton Area Action Plan site lies on a variety of different rocks including Weymouth Member Mudstone bedrock. Some of this Mudstone bedrock has superficial deposits of Head (a combination of clay, silt, sand and gravel), some with a superficial deposit of Alluvium (clay, silt, sand and gravel), and some with no superficial deposits. Finally there is some Temple Cowley Member – Sandstone and Siltstone bedrock with no superficial deposits; West Walton Formation – Mudstone with no superficial deposits. None of these deposits are associated with groundwater recharge for the Oxford Meadows SAC. As such this objective has been screened out of the assessment.

**Recreational Pressure**
The Core Strategy HRA assessed the impacts of recreational pressure from 8,000 new homes on the Oxford Meadows SAC. The HRA for the Core Strategy states that “[p]ublic consultation carried out by Scott Wilson as part of their ‘Oxford City Green Space Study’ revealed that people are willing to walk approximately 1,900m to important green spaces such as Oxford Meadows SAC, which includes Port Meadow.” Since the strategic site of Barton is outside this buffer (the actual AAP site is 3.7km away), and there are other large green spaces closer (such as Cutteslowe Park) as well as green space provided as part of the development – in the form of a linear park, and access to the nearby countryside. As such this conservation objective has been screened out of the assessment.

**Conclusion**
The Oxford Meadows SAC is currently judged by Natural England to be in a favourable condition. This Habitat Regulations Assessment has concluded that none of the policies in the Barton Area Action Plan are likely to have adverse effects on the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC either alone or ‘in-combination’ with other plans or projects.
Appendix 1: Natural England Letter

(Please see following page)
Dear Mr Wyatt,

Proposal: Barton Area Action Plan DPD Habitats Regulations Assessment  
Location: Oxford City

1. Many thanks for the above consultation.
2. I can confirm that Natural England concurs with the conclusions of the assessment.
3. The advice given by Natural England in this letter is made for the purpose of the present consultation only. In accordance with Section 4 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Natural England expects to be included as a consultee in relation to any additional matters to be determined by the Council that may arise as a result of, or are related to, the present proposal. Natural England retains its statutory discretion to modify its present advice or opinion in view of any and all such additional matters or any additional information related to this consultation that may come to our attention.

Should you wish to discuss this response please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Routh
Lead Adviser, Winchester Land Use Operations Team