



South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council

Local Development Framework  
Site Specific Policies DPD

# Responding to a Housing Shortfall

## Habitats Directive Assessment

December 2008

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Local Development Framework  
Site Specific Policies DPD

Responding to a  
Housing shortfall

Habitat Regulations Assessment

**South Cambridgeshire District Council**

**December 2008**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

South Cambridgeshire District Council carried out a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) on the Submission Site Specific Policies DPD in August 2007, which was agreed with Natural England. The Council is now proposing new housing allocations to be included in the DPD in response to the Examination Inspectors identifying a housing shortfall. It is therefore necessary to re-screen the findings of the HRA. This document has been produced in consultation with Natural England.

## **THE NEED TO REVIEW THE HRA**

The Site Specific Policies Development Plan Document contains detailed policies that are relevant to particular sites within the district of South Cambridgeshire. The policies cover a number of subject areas including housing; employment; services and facilities; cultural heritage; transport; phasing and delivery; and monitoring. A Habitat Regulations Assessment was carried out on this DPD before the examination stage in August 2007 and it was concluded in the screening that an Appropriate Assessment was not required for this DPD.

Independent Inspectors have advised the Council that it has not identified sufficient land to meet its housing requirements of 20,000 new homes between 1999 and 2016. They have concluded there is a housing shortfall of 2,200 dwellings that must be made up if the Council's Site Specific Policies Development Plan Document (DPD), currently at public examination, is to be found to be 'sound'.

The Inspectors asked the Council to carry out a process to compare site options on a comparable basis, prepare a Sustainability Appraisal and carry out public consultation, and to then put forward its preferred sites. This must be consistent with the development sequence that focuses development on Cambridge with only limited development at villages. The Inspectors will make the final decision in their binding report.

The shortfall is mainly as a result of the new town of Northstowe not coming forward as quickly as anticipated and the change in national policy that windfall sites can no longer be taken into account in housing land supply. Therefore the overall provision of housing to 2016 in the district taking all the LDF documents together will not change from that anticipated at the time of the Submission SSPDPD, although the number of dwellings allocated in the SSPDPD itself will be greater and on a wider number and different geographical distribution of allocated sites.

This is an additional stage in the plan making process and there is no formal procedure for it. However, it has significant implications for the district and the Council has therefore carried out public consultation on its preferred site options to ensure it has taken account of all relevant issues.

Given that the Council is proposing changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD then it is necessary at this stage to review the findings of the HRA.

As a result of updating the Housing Land Supply position to September 2008, the housing shortfall has already reduced to about 1,500 houses. The preferred sites to make up the remaining shortfall are as follows -

<b>Site</b>	<b>Site name</b>
Site 1.	Parcel L2, Orchard Park
Site 2	Parcel Com 4, Orchard Park
Site 3.	Parcel Q and H.R.C.C, Orchard Park
Site 6.	Land between Huntingdon Road , Histon Road and the A14, North West Cambridge (South Cambs revised site boundary)
Site 10.	Powell's garage, Woollards Lane, Great Shelford
Site 11	The Ida Darwin Hospital, Fulbourn

The housing that will be delivered through the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan (AAP) will also contribute to making up the shortfall. This plan has been subject to a separate screening exercise (although any in-combination effects will need to be considered).

The Council has prepared draft policies and supporting text for each of the proposed new housing allocations to be included in the Site Specific Policies DPD.

Part of the housing shortfall is as a result of a change in approach at Chesterton Sidings (Cambridge Northern Fringe East), such that it can no longer be relied on to provide residential development. The policy in the draft Site Specific Policies DPD therefore needs to be changed. The Council has taken the opportunity provided by the public consultation to include policy revisions and supporting text for Chesterton Sidings, which continue to safeguard the site for a railway station and interchange facility, and highlight the need for a new planning framework for the area to be prepared jointly with Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council.

## **THE AMOUNT OF DEVELOPMENT**

The preferred sites listed above and proposed to be added as new housing allocations to the SSPDPD are anticipated to deliver up to 1265 dwellings in the plan period (up to 2016). Delivery of this number will depend on the timing of the completion of the A14 improvements. The net impact of the new allocations on this particular DPD will be an increase of 665 dwellings, as part of this new provision is to replace the loss of 600 dwellings from Chesterton Sidings. However, the cumulative impact on overall housing development in the district to 2016 must also take account of slower delivery anticipated at Northstowe as detailed earlier, which the new allocations are, in part, to replace.

Thus the net effect is that there is no change in overall planned housing provision in the district compared with the level of development already tested through the HRA of the Core Strategy DPD, which requires at least 20,000 dwellings to be delivered between 1999 and 2016.

## **CHANGES SINCE AUGUST 2007**

Since the HRA was approved by Natural England in August 2007 there have been a number of changes that will need to be taken into consideration in reviewing the HRA.

### Regulations now in UK law –

The regulations implementing the Habitats Directive have now been amended to ensure that Appropriate Assessments are explicitly applied to land use plans. The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) (Amendment) Regulations came into force in 2007 just after the completion of the HRA for the Site Specific Policies DPD. As the assessment already complied with the requirements, it will not be necessary to make any changes to the methodology used by this Council in preparing HRAs. The regulations were not accompanied as had been expected by detailed guidance from Central Government on how HRAs should be carried out.

### 'In combination effect' of other plans. -

The East of England Plan was published in May 2008. A public consultation was carried out on the draft Plan at the end of 2007 as a result of a new HRA that was completed for the draft. As a result of this consultation the final Plan has additional wording to policies to take into account their impact on Natura 2000 sites and other wildlife conservation sites. These changes will not result in specific amendments needing to be made to any policies in the Site Specific Policies DPD.

Since August 2007 there have been additional plans produced for consultation by adjoining District Councils which will need to be considered in the 'in combination effect' of these plans with the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD:

- East Cambridgeshire DC: Core Strategy Submission Draft 2008
- Huntingdonshire DC: Core Strategy Submission Draft 2008

Both these Core Strategies reflect the strategy in the adopted East of England Plan. In the assessment matrix of the HRA for the Submission Site Specific Policies DPD the preferred minerals site at Barrington was highlighted as a proposal that may impact on a European site notably at Eversden and Wimpole Woods. Cambridgeshire County Council has recently carried out a consultation on its Minerals and Waste Development Plan – Preferred Option 2. A preferred site allocation was included in this consultation at Barrington for Chalk Marl extraction. As a result of the HRA scoping work it was concluded that a full Appropriate Assessment (AA) was required.

As a result of the scoping work for the Preferred Option 2 a number of other sites within South Cambridgeshire that have been identified in the Site Specific plan of the Minerals and Waste Plan will be assessed as part of a full AA. These include



Cambridge East; Cambridge Northern Fringe; Cottenham; Cottenham Business Centre; Needingworth.

The potential impacts of the Minerals and Waste plan are distinctly different from the impacts identified as potentially arising from the SSPDPD policies. For example a particular issue identified and assessed in the SSPDPD HRA was the potential for increased recreational use of the nature conservation sites, which is very different from the direct impacts that could arise from minerals and waste operations. The fact that the County Council considers it should carry out a full AA for a number of minerals and waste sites does not as a matter of principle mean there is a similar need to carry out a full AA of the SSPDPD.

## **REVIEW OF HRA**

As with the HRA of the Submitted DPD each of the following European Sites have been included in the assessment matrix included as an appendix to this report:

- Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC.
- Devil's Dyke SAC
- Fenland SAC
- Portholme SAC
- Ouse Washes SAC and SPA

Maps of the locations of the European sites relative to the preferred housing sites have been also been provided.

The assessment matrices should be read alongside the original HRA, as this update focuses on whether any additional direct or cumulative impact would result from development of the preferred sites, rather than repeating the full content of the original HRA.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

It has been objectively concluded that the proposed amendments to the Site Specific Policies DPD not likely to have any significant effects on any Natura 2000 or Ramsar sites. There is therefore no requirement to proceed to the next stage of an Appropriate Assessment.

**APPENDIX 1  
SCREENING MATRIX REVIEW**

Screening Matrix For Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC  
The Assessment of significance of effects -

<b>Nature of potential impact</b>	<b>How the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD (alone or in combination with other plans) is likely to affect the European site</b>	<b>Why these effects are not considered significant</b>
Land take by development	The preferred sites do not take any land from Wimpole and Eversden Woods.	The proposed changes do not effect this site.
Impact on protected species outside the protected sites	Eversden and Wimpole Woods are home to the Barbastelle Bat, a protected species. The bats can forage up to 20km from their roosts but more typically venture around 6-8km. Barbastelle bats require minimal disturbance within 2 km of their roost.	There are no additional sites proposed for housing near to these woods. The nearest site is around 12km, and they are some distance outside the Area of Importance identified for the Barbastelle Bat in the Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Strategy.
Recreational Pressure and Disturbance	<p>The additional sites are necessary to achieve the level of development already tested through the Core Strategy, which requires at least 20,000 dwellings to be delivered between 1999 and 2016. Whilst the number of dwellings allocated in the SSPDPD would increase, this is to make up for less dwellings anticipated to come forward from other DPDs in the same period and the net impact would not change from the previous assessment. Development could increase demand for countryside recreation.</p> <p>However, the preferred sites are relatively distant from the woods. The nearest is some 12km distant.</p>	<p>The distance of the sites, and the nature of the woods make the likely increase in recreational usage very small. The woods are relatively inaccessible both from centres of population and from car parking close to the woods. There are other countryside access opportunities available in more accessible locations.</p> <p>Notwithstanding, according to the Natura 2000 Data, the current use of the woods, including public access, is considered compatible with the barbastelle bats' interest</p>

Nature of potential impact	How the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD (alone or in combination with other plans) is likely to affect the European site	Why these effects are not considered significant
		and should not affect the barbastelle population or their roosts.
Water Quality and Quantity	Not relevant for the conservation objectives of this site	N/A
Changes in Pollution Levels	<p>The proposed sites will not significantly increase the overall number of dwellings being built within the plan period compared with that assumed in the HRA of the Submission Plan which looked at the combined impact of the South Cambridgeshire DPDs which will not change, and so there will be no significant increase in the pollution levels than those already considered. The preferred sites are located near to Cambridge therefore will not generate significant car traffic in the area of the woods.</p>	<p>The preferred sites are not in close proximity to the European site, and are located near to Cambridge, which should minimise the need for car journeys generated from the development.</p> <p>The preferred sites will not result in a significant net increase in the scale of development planned in the District through the Core Strategy.</p> <p>There are also general policy requirements within the package of LDF documents, although not within the Site Specific Policies DPD, that development does not harm the identified European Sites and to address air quality.</p>

Screening Matrix for Devils Dyke SAC  
The Assessment of significance of effects -

<b>Nature of potential impact</b>	<b>How the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD (alone or in combination with other plans) is likely to affect the European site</b>	<b>Why these effects are not considered significant</b>
Land take by development	The preferred sites do not take any land from Devils Dyke SAC	The preferred sites do not effect this site.
Impact on protected species outside the protected sites	The conservation objectives relate to species of plant within the grassland. Therefore there are no species listed as important to the integrity of the site that travel to forage outside the site.	Due to the distance of the site from the preferred sites and as there are no species listed as important to the integrity of the site that travel to forage outside the site there is not likely to be any significant effect.
Recreational Pressure and Disturbance	<p>The additional sites are necessary to achieve the level of development already tested through the Core Strategy, which requires at least 20,000 dwellings to be delivered between 1999 and 2016. Whilst the number of dwellings allocated in the SSPDPD would increase, this is to make up for less dwellings anticipated to come forward from other DPDs in the same period and the net impact would not change from the previous assessment. Development could increase demand for countryside recreation.</p> <p>None of the sites proposed are near to this site, with Ida Darwin Hospital Fulbourn being the nearest at around 12km. There are other countryside access opportunities available in more accessible locations. It is not considered that the level of public use of the dyke will increase greatly as a result of the preferred sites.</p>	<p>The scale of the preferred sites and the distance from the Dyke means increased visitor numbers are likely to be insignificant.</p> <p>The impact of public access is not listed in the vulnerabilities relating to the site.</p>
Water Quality and Quantity	Not relevant for the conservation objectives of this site	N/A

<b>Nature of potential impact</b>	<b>How the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD (alone or in combination with other plans) is likely to affect the European site</b>	<b>Why these effects are not considered significant</b>
Changes in Pollution Levels	<p>The proposed sites will not significantly increase the overall number of dwellings being built within the plan period compared with that assumed in the HRA of the Submission Plan which looked at the combined impact of the South Cambridgeshire DPDs which will not change, and so there will be no significant increase in the pollution levels than those already considered.</p> <p>The preferred sites are located near to Cambridge therefore will not generate significant increased road traffic in the area of the Dyke.</p>	<p>The preferred sites are not in close proximity to the European site, and are located near to Cambridge, which should minimise the need for car journeys generated from the development.</p> <p>The preferred sites will not result in a significant net increase in the scale of development planned in the District through the Core Strategy.</p> <p>There are also general policy requirements within the package of LDF documents, although not within the Site Specific Policies DPD, that development does not harm the identified European Sites and to address air quality.</p>

Screening Matrix for Fenland SAC and Ramsar Sites SAC

(Woodwalton Fen; Chippenham Fen and Wicken Fen are component SSSIs of Fenland SAC and are all designated Ramsar sites.)

The Assessment of significance of effects –

<b>Nature of potential impact</b>	<b>How the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD (alone or in combination with other plans) is likely to affect the European site</b>	<b>Why these effects are not considered significant</b>
Land take by development	The preferred sites do not take any land from Fenland SAC and Ramsar Sites SAC	The preferred sites do not effect this site.
Impact on protected species outside the protected sites	The conservation objectives relate to species of plant within the fen, and species of invertebrates. The development of land at the preferred sites will not have a significant impact on species listed as important to the integrity of the site.	Due to the distance of the site from the preferred sites and as there are no species listed as important to the integrity of the site that travel to forage outside the site there is not likely to be any significant effect.
Recreational Pressure and Disturbance	<p>The additional sites are necessary to achieve the level of development already tested through the Core Strategy, which requires at least 20,000 dwellings to be delivered between 1999 and 2016. Whilst the number of dwellings allocated in the SSPDPD would increase, this is to make up for less dwellings anticipated to come forward from other DPDs in the same period and the net impact would not change from the previous assessment. Development could increase demand for countryside recreation.</p> <p>However, none of the preferred sites are located near to these European sites. There are other countryside access opportunities, available in more accessible locations.</p>	<p>The scale of the preferred sites and the distance from the European sites means increased visitor numbers are likely to be insignificant.</p> <p>Access to Wicken Fen, Woodwalton Fen, and Chippenham Fen is highly managed.</p>
Water Quality and	The impact on water quality and quantity is the same as that	Whilst not within the Site Specific Policies

<b>Nature of potential impact</b>	<b>How the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD (alone or in combination with other plans) is likely to affect the European site</b>	<b>Why these effects are not considered significant</b>
Quantity	considered in the approved HRA. There are no specific impacts generated by the preferred sites due to their location and scale.	<p>DPD, policies in the LDF as a whole address both run off and wastewater flood risk and require that there is no unacceptable impacts. This includes impacts on designated sites. As such, the plan is not likely to result in significant impacts on the nature conservation objectives.</p> <p>It should be noted that the Cambridge Water Cycle Strategy is currently being prepared by Cambridgeshire Horizons. Phase 1 of the project has been completed and it aims to ensure sustainable management of water resources (supply and disposal) as the area is developed, including ensuring protection of internationally designated conservation sites.</p> <p>The Environment Agency also has an important role in regulating proposals for wastewater treatment and drainage. They are also governed by the Habitats Directive, and the Urban Wastewater Directive. The quality of water released from wastewater treatment works is also a matter for regulation by the Environment Agency. Therefore, the impact of the Site Specific Policies DPD is not considered likely to be significant on the site.</p>
Changes in Pollution	The proposed sites will not significantly increase the overall	The preferred sites are not in close proximity

Nature of potential impact	How the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD (alone or in combination with other plans) is likely to affect the European site	Why these effects are not considered significant
Levels	number of dwellings being built within the plan period compared with that assumed in the HRA of the Submission Plan which looked at the combined impact of the South Cambridgeshire DPDs which will not change, and so there will be no significant increase in the pollution levels than those already considered.	<p>to the European sites, and are located near to Cambridge, which should minimise the need for car journeys generated from the development.</p> <p>The preferred sites will not result in a significant net increase in the scale of development planned in the District through the Core Strategy.</p> <p>There are also general policy requirements within the package of LDF documents, although not within the Site Specific Policies DPD, that development does not harm the identified European Sites and to address air quality.</p>

Screening Matrix for Portholme SAC  
The Assessment of significance of effects –

Nature of potential impact	How the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD (alone or in combination with other plans) is likely to affect the European site	Why these effects are not considered significant
Land take by development	The preferred sites do not take any land from Portholme SAC	The preferred sites do not effect this site.
Impact on protected species outside the protected sites	The conservation objectives relate to species of plant within the hay meadow. Due to the distance of the site from the preferred sites there will be no effect.	Due to the distance of the site from the preferred sites and as there are no species listed as important to the integrity of the site



Nature of potential impact	How the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD (alone or in combination with other plans) is likely to affect the European site	Why these effects are not considered significant
		that travel to forage outside the site there is not likely to be any significant effect.
Recreational Pressure and Disturbance	<p>The additional sites are necessary to achieve the level of development already tested through the Core Strategy, which requires at least 20,000 dwellings to be delivered between 1999 and 2016. Whilst the number of dwellings allocated in the SSPDPD would increase, this is to make up for less dwellings anticipated to come forward from other DPDs in the same period and the net impact would not change from the previous assessment. Development could increase demand for countryside recreation.</p> <p>None of the sites proposed for development are near to this European site, with the preferred sites on the edge of Cambridge being around 22km distant. There are other countryside access opportunities available in more accessible locations. It is not considered that the level of public use of the fen will increase significantly as a result of the preferred sites.</p>	<p>The scale of the preferred sites and the distance from the fen means increased visitor numbers are likely to be insignificant.</p> <p>The impact of public access is not listed in the vulnerabilities relating to the site.</p>
Water Quality and Quantity	Development could theoretically have an impact on water quantity, through run off from the sites, or water use. It could also have an impact on water quality, through additional waste products produced. However, the impact of the preferred sites is not considered significant.	It should be noted that the Cambridge Water Cycle Strategy is currently being prepared by Cambridgeshire Horizons. Phase 1 of the project has been completed and it aims to ensure sustainable management of water resources (supply and disposal) as the area is developed, including ensuring protection of internationally designated conservation sites.

Nature of potential impact	How the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD (alone or in combination with other plans) is likely to affect the European site	Why these effects are not considered significant
		<p>New development proposed is considered to be located too far away to be likely to have significant effects on the hay meadows and is located down stream on the River Ouse catchment.</p>
<p>Changes in Pollution Levels</p>	<p>The proposed sites will not significantly increase the overall number of dwellings being built within the plan period compared with that assumed in the HRA of the Submission Plan which looked at the combined impact of the South Cambridgeshire DPDs which will not change, and so there will be no significant increase in the pollution levels than those already considered.</p> <p>The preferred sites are located near to Cambridge therefore will not generate significant increased road traffic in the area of Huntingdon.</p>	<p>The preferred sites are not in close proximity to the European site, and are located near to Cambridge, which should minimise the need for car journeys generated from the development.</p> <p>The preferred sites will not result in a significant net increase in the scale of development planned in the District through the Core Strategy.</p> <p>There are also general policy requirements within the package of LDF documents, although not within the Site Specific Policies DPD, that development does not harm the identified European Sites and to address air quality.</p>

Screening Matrix for Ouse Washes SAC, SPA and RAMSAR site  
The Assessment of significance of effects –

<b>Nature of potential impact</b>	<b>How the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD (alone or in combination with other plans) is likely to affect the European site</b>	<b>Why these effects are not considered significant</b>
Land take by development	The proposed sites do not take any land from Ouse Washes SAC, SPA and RAMSAR site	The proposed changes do not effect this site
Impact on protected species outside the protected sites	The nature of the locations of the preferred sites, and their location relative to the washes, means that land take is not likely to have a significant impact on species associated with the integrity of the Ouse Washes.	The development of the preferred sites, alone or in combination with other plans will not be likely to have a significant impact on species listed as important to the integrity of the site.
Recreational Pressure and Disturbance	<p>The additional sites are necessary to achieve the level of development already tested through the Core Strategy, which requires at least 20,000 dwellings to be delivered between 1999 and 2016. Whilst the number of dwellings allocated in the SSPDPD would increase, this is to make up for less dwellings anticipated to come forward from other DPDs in the same period and the net impact would not change from the previous assessment. Development could increase demand for countryside recreation.</p> <p>However, none of the preferred sites are located near to the Ouse Washes. The preferred sites on the northern edge of Cambridge are over 14km from the nearest point of the washes. There are other countryside access opportunities, available in more accessible locations.</p>	The scale of the preferred sites and the distance from the European site means increased visitor numbers are likely to be insignificant.
Water Quality and Quantity	Development could theoretically have an impact on water quantity, through run off from the sites, or water use. It could also have an impact on water quality, through additional waste	It should be noted that the Cambridge Water Cycle Strategy is currently being prepared by Cambridgeshire Horizons. Phase 1 of the

<b>Nature of potential impact</b>	<b>How the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD (alone or in combination with other plans) is likely to affect the European site</b>	<b>Why these effects are not considered significant</b>
	<p>products produced. However, the preferred sites are located where wastewater will not be released upstream of the washes. Instead they are likely to be served by Cambridge STW which feeds into the Cam. Similarly surface water run off will not enter the Great Ouse upstream of the washes. Therefore this will limit direct impacts on water quality or quantity.</p> <p>The additional sites are necessary to achieve the level of development already tested through the Core Strategy, which requires at least 20,000 dwellings to be delivered between 1999 and 2016.</p>	<p>project has been completed and it aims to ensure sustainable management of water resources (supply and disposal) as the area is developed, including ensuring protection of internationally designated conservation sites.</p> <p>Given all the policy requirements of the LDF, taken together with the requirements of other legislation, it is considered that the implementation of the preferred sites alone or in combination with other policies in the DPD and other plans is not likely to result in significant impacts on the washes. The assessment in the approved HRA remains sound.</p>
Changes in Pollution Levels	It is not considered that there is likely to be any significant impact on the nature conservation objectives of the Ouse Washes site as a result of the additional site allocations.	<p>The preferred sites are not in close proximity to the Ouse Washes, and are located near to Cambridge, which should minimise the need for car journeys generated from the development.</p> <p>The preferred sites will not result in a significant net increase in the scale of development planned in the District through the Core Strategy.</p> <p>There are also general policy requirements within the package of LDF documents, although not within the Site Specific Policies</p>

<b>Nature of potential impact</b>	<b>How the proposed changes to the Site Specific Policies DPD (alone or in combination with other plans) is likely to affect the European site</b>	<b>Why these effects are not considered significant</b>
		DPD, that development does not harm the identified European Sites and to address air quality.



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