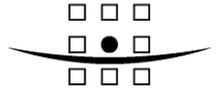




**Appropriate Assessment for Somerset
Authorities Core Strategies:
Somerset Levels and Moors and Severn Estuary
(Bridgwater Bay) Natura 2000 sites
Scoping Report
Volume 1 Main Report**

Somerset Authorities' Core
Strategies Appropriate Assessment
October 2009
Final Scoping Report
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Appropriate Assessment

The need for an 'Appropriate Assessment' arises under the requirements of the EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and its implementation in the UK under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (known as the 'Habitats Regulations'). Under Regulation 48(1), an Appropriate Assessment is required for a plan or project, which either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site and which is not directly connected with the management of the site. A European Site is either a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or a Special Protection Area (SPA), and form part of an EU wide suite of such sites referred to as the Natura 2000 network. Government policy, as stated in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 9, is that sites designated under the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar sites) should also be subject to the provisions of the Habitats Regulations.

An Appropriate Assessment is a decision by the 'Competent Authority', in this case Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, and Taunton Deane Borough Council, as to whether their Core Strategies can be determined as not having an adverse effect on the integrity of any European Sites.

An adverse effect on integrity is likely to be one that prevents the site from maintaining the same contribution to favourable status for the relevant feature(s), as it did when the site was designated. Only where a plan or project can be determined by the Competent Authority as not having an adverse effect on site integrity, can it be allowed to proceed.

The favourable conservation status of the site is defined through the site's conservation objectives and it is against these objectives that the effects of the plan or project must be assessed. Regulation 85B(1) requires that a person applying to carry out a plan or project, which requires Appropriate Assessment, shall provide information to the Competent Authority as may be reasonably required for the purposes of the assessment.

Focus of the Scoping Report

The Scoping Report concerns an Appropriate Assessment of the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar and Severn Estuary (Bridgwater Bay) SPA/cSAC/ Ramsar sites only, as the two Natura 2000 sites have related and overlapping functioning ecosystems and therefore they could be treated as an entity. Other Natura 2000 sites in Somerset will undergo a separate assessment by the individual local authorities concerned.

The Core Strategies covered by this scoping report are:

- Mendip District Council Core Strategy Issues and Options Report;
- Sedgemoor District Council Core Strategy Issues and Options Report;
- South Somerset District Council Core Strategy Issues and Options Report; and
- Taunton Deane Borough Council Local Plan and Emerging Allocations.

Aim of Scoping Report

The aim of the Scoping Report is to:

1. Identify those policies and options for each of the Core Strategies which are likely to have a significant impact on the Somerset Levels SPA/ Ramsar and the Severn Estuary cSAC/ SPA/ Ramsar sites. These will be carried forward to the next stage of the process.
2. Identify those policies and options for each of the Core Strategies which could potentially have a significant impact on the Somerset Levels SPA/ Ramsar and the Severn Estuary cSAC/ SPA/ Ramsar sites. These will be carried forward to the next stage of the process as there is not enough detail to scope these out at present.
3. Identify which policies are not considered likely to have a significant effect on the Somerset Levels SPA/ Ramsar and the Severn Estuary cSAC/ SPA/ Ramsar sites. These have been scoped out and will not be considered further after this report.

Sites Considered under this Assessment

- The Somerset Levels and Moors Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar; and
- The Severn Estuary SPA, candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) and Ramsar.

With regard to the above sites, it is necessary to consider the features for which each of the sites has been designated. Consideration of the features of each site and the impacts upon each feature was central to assessment of the potential effects of policies or land allocation on the integrity of the site.

Much of the data available for assessing European Site condition relates to the nature conservation interests of the component SSSIs and not to the condition of the specific features for which a European Site has been designated. However, as SSSI designation often underlies European Site designation, SSSI condition is a useful tool in assessing the condition of European Sites.

For each of the European Sites, Natural England provides a series of conservation objectives which relate to the features for which the site was designated. These contain targets to ensure the European Sites remain in favourable condition.

Although Ramsar features do not themselves have conservation objectives, it should be stressed that conservation objectives for SPA/SAC features have been produced to broadly protect the underlying habitat and environmental conditions required by the qualifying habitats and species. Thus, given the close correspondence between Ramsar and SPA/SAC features, the conservation objectives for the SAC/SPA features are generally adequate to protect Ramsar features. Nonetheless, where Ramsar features need consideration over and above those of European features, the high level generic conservation objective for European Sites were applied to Ramsar sites and their features, that is: subject to natural change, to maintain in favourable condition the Ramsar features and their supporting habitats.

Methodology

The methodology for this exercise has been developed in accordance with the guidance of the DCLG and Natural England, as well as utilising the RSPB guidance. The approach developed has also been tailored to ensure that the requirements of the Habitats Regulations and supporting guidance are met. The need to ensure that the assessment is actually

‘appropriate’ to the evaluation of policy and strategic allocation of land for future development has also been recognised.

Appropriate Assessment is a four stage process. These steps are outlined below.

Stage	Description	Comments
Screening	The initial evaluation of a plan’s effects on a European Site. If it cannot be concluded that there will be no significant effect upon any European Site an Appropriate Assessment will be required. At the end of this process a screening decision is made by the Competent Authority as to whether Appropriate Assessment is triggered.	This stage has been partly undertaken by Somerset County Council on behalf of all of the Somerset Local Authorities (See Appendix C).
Scoping	Preparation for the Appropriate Assessment where screening has shown that likely significant effects could occur to a European Site. It identifies what impacts the AA should cover and should address any gaps in knowledge to ensure the AA is complete and accurate.	This report comprises the screening and scoping stages together. It determines which policy options have likely significant effect and which therefore will be subject to Appropriate Assessment (final report).
Appropriate Assessment	Evaluating the evidence gathered on impacts and considering whether changes to the plan are need to ensure that it will not have an adverse effect on a European Site. Normally the AA process will stop here and the plan can be adopted.	The methodology for this stage is set out in Sections 3.3.1 - 3.3.3
Consideration of alternatives	The plan-making authority must demonstrate that its policy or allocation is the least damaging way of meeting the need identified in the plan.	This stage may not be required. Further details are set out in Section 3.3.4

Significant effects have been screened using the RSPB guidance (2007) which states that a significant effect is triggered when:

- There is the **probability or a risk** of a plan or project having a significant effect on a European Site;
- The plan is **likely to undermine** the site’s conservation objectives; and
- A significant effect **cannot be excluded** on the basis of objective information.

Consultation with the Environment Agency was undertaken to determine buffer zones from proposed development types. The zones that have been used are 5km for business/housing development, 10km for trade industry (i.e. trading estates) and 15km for industrial proposals that may require an air stack. These buffer zones have been used to screen out direct impacts to European Sites. In addition a Source-Pathway-Receptor Model has been used based on the site sensitivities to assess the likely impacts.

Determination of the Likely Significant Effects of the Somerset Authorities’ Core Strategies

Only those policies which are likely to have a significant effect on European Sites need to be considered within the Appropriate Assessment. The identification of these policies is therefore essential to provide the scope for more detailed assessment. Policies that will have ‘no effect’

on the features of European Sites have been identified and excluded from the assessment. The box below sets out those criteria that have been used to exclude policies from the appropriate assessment process.

- A. Policies that will not lead to the development of land (for example policies that address issues such as amenity and social issues etc, but do not provide a trigger for development);
- B. Policies that actively seek to prevent impacts on European Sites or the wider environment (for example policies which seek to ensure that development is focussed on areas well away from European Sites); and
- C. Policies intended to improve the existing natural or built environment of specific areas, but which do not specify levels of development (for example policies which propose the reuse of manufacturing land for housing development where it is clear such a policy cannot result in development in or near to Natura 2000 sites, or where the policy or its affects are likely to result in a significant effect).

The full list of policies for all 4 plans was appraised in the Scoping Report. These were assessed initially against the criteria in the Box above to give an indication of whether there is likely to be an impact to the Natura 2000 sites from each policy. Following this, a technical assessment was made for each policy, considering their relevance with regard to having a likely significant effect on European Sites against the conservation objectives for each of the Natura 2000 sites. This was undertaken on the basis of the criteria offered in Natural England's HRGN Number 3 (English Nature, 1999), as shown in the box below.

1. Causing change to the coherence of the site or to the Natura 2000 series (e.g. presenting a barrier between isolated fragments, or reducing the ability of the site to act as a source of new colonisers);
2. Causing reduction in the area of habitat or of the site;
3. Causing direct or indirect change to the physical quality of the environment (including the hydrology) or habitat within the site;
4. Causing ongoing disturbance to species or habitats for which the site is notified;
5. Altering community structure (species composition);
6. Causing direct or indirect damage to the size, characteristics or reproductive ability of populations on the site;
7. Altering the vulnerability of populations etc. to other impacts;
8. Causing a reduction in the resilience of the feature against external change (for example its ability to respond to extremes of environmental conditions); and
9. Affecting restoration of a feature where this is a conservation objective.

In-combination Assessment

The Habitats Regulations provide the requirement for an 'in combination' assessment to ensure that the integrity of sites is afforded full protection from the cumulative impacts of development, and to ensure that holistic approaches to assessment are provided. In order to provide a focus to determine which plans and projects, will be included within this assessment, the following criteria was applied:

- Projects which have been given consent, but which have not yet been implemented (this could include unimplemented large scale housing developments or proposals);
- Ongoing projects subject to regulatory reviews;
- Other plans which contain policies which may trigger development which may impacts on the sites identified as being relevant to this assessment; and
- Non-statutory plans which may influence development.

The plans and projects that were considered as likely to have an in-combination impact with the Somerset Authorities Core Strategies are:

- The Draft Revised Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West Incorporating the Secretary of States Proposed Changes – For Consultation 2008
- Responding to Climate Change in Somerset;
- North Devon and Somerset SMP;
- West Somerset Local Plan;
- North Somerset Core Strategy – Issues and Options Report;
- The Parrett Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy;
- River Tone Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy;
- Bristol Container Port habitat creation scheme;
- Hinkley Point;
- Waterlinks;
- Somerset Local Transport Plan; and
- Somerset Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2006.

Key Issues Identified

The key issues have been identified through literature review and consultation with Natural England and the Environment Agency and from the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and its Appropriate Assessment. Key issues anticipated to arise from the Core Strategies are: water resources, recreation and flooding.

Conclusion

The examination and scoping against the Natural England criteria identified in **Section 1.4** above, established that *'it could not be concluded that the Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies would not have a likely significant effect on the features of the European Sites in Somerset region'*.

Given that none of the policies propose development within the boundaries of the European Sites, (and that the nature of these policies relates to activities which are not likely to have a direct impact on such sites), the key issues, to be addressed within the Appropriate Assessment will relate to the secondary impacts of such development, mainly disturbance, water resources, water quality and air pollution. Further details can be found in **Section 4.1.1** of the man report.

Impacts that have been 'scoped in' to the Appropriate Assessment for each Core Strategy are outlined in the table overleaf.

Local Authority	Scoped in	Scoped out
<p>Mendip District Council (Options 1a, 1b, 4a, 4b, 4d, 5a, 5b, 6a-6c, 7a-7d, 12a-12d)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased recreational disturbance to birds within the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA due to population growth within the district. Particularly at Street and Glastonbury. Increased water quality impacts to invertebrates within the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar due to eutrophication from new water treatment facilities and run-off. These are anticipated from developments at Glastonbury and Street and from potential developments at Bleadney, Meare, Walton, Westhay and Wookey. Increased flood risk to the Somerset Levels and Moors from development at Glastonbury and Street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts to Severn Estuary SPA, cSAC, Ramsar due to distance.
<p>Sedgemoor District Council (Options SS1, SS2, BW1, BW2, BW4 (C) BH1, BH2 (B-D), BH3, BH4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased recreational disturbance to birds within the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA and Severn Estuary SPA due to population growth and increased recreation within the district, particularly at Burnham, Highbridge, Bridgwater, Westonzoyland, Woolavington, and Ashcott, Cannington, Pawlett, Puriton and Wedmore. Potential development and renewable energy projects in the flyways between the Severn Estuary SPA and the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA affecting birds. Potential increased recreational disturbance to saltmarsh, sandflat and mudflat habitats within the Severn Estuary SPA and cSAC due to population growth and increased recreation within the district. Potential development in undesignated areas outside the Severn Estuary SPA which nonetheless support the ecological functioning of bird species, such as for roosting and/or feeding, from the SPA. Potential to impact upon fish migratory signals (Severn Estuary cSAC and Ramsar species) due to increased levels of abstraction or increased obstruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct impacts to the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar, as there is no hydrological pathway.
<p>South Somerset District Council (Options S1, S3, EP1, TA2 (B), EQ4,)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased recreational disturbance to birds within the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA due to population growth within the district, particularly at Yeovil Increased water quality impacts to invertebrates within the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar due to changes in water quality arising from run-off and increased sewage treatment works that could arise from development at Langport/ Huish Episcopi, South Petherton, Somerton and Martock. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts to Severn Estuary SPA/ cSAC/ Ramsar due to distance.

Local Authority	Scoped in	Scoped out
Taunton Deane Borough Council (Options S9, EC1, EC2, EC10 (i&iv), EC24, EC25, C3 (C), C4 (D), C5 (C), T2-T11, T13-T18, T23, T24, T28, T32, CSL1, CM1, CM2, HB1, HE1, KM1, OK1, WV1, WV3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to impact upon fish migratory signals (Severn Estuary cSAC and Ramsar species) due to increased levels of abstraction. • Increased recreational disturbance to birds within the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA due to population growth within the district, particularly North Curry, Creech St Michael, Monkton Heathfield (TA1), West Greenway (TA3), East Greenway (TA2), Priorswood/Nerrols (TA5), Killams (TA10), Staplegrove (TA7), Comeytrove (TA4), Bishops Hull (TA8), and Ford Farm (TA9). • Increased water quality impacts to invertebrates within the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar due to eutrophication from new water treatment facilities and surface water run-off from developments at North Curry, Creech St Michael, Monkton Heathfield (TA1), West Greenway (TA3), East Greenway (TA2), Priorswood/Nerrols (TA5), Killams (TA10), Staplegrove (TA7), Comeytrove (TA4), Bishops Hull (TA8), and Ford Farm (TA9). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts to Severn Estuary SPA, and habitats within the Severn Estuary cSAC due to distance.

Next Steps

The policies that have been identified as likely to have an impact on the European Sites and those that have the potential to have an impact on the European Sites will be carried forward to the next stage of 'detailed appropriate assessment'. The level of assessment undertaken will be at an 'appropriate' level, commensurate with a policy based assessment, and in recognition of the fact that further assessment would be undertaken at the proposal stage.

Each policy will be assessed against the conservation objectives for the European Sites in regard to the potential effects of the policy for each feature of interest and mitigation measures that could be taken if an adverse effect is identified. This will include the use of additional detailed data on water quality, water resources, Waste Water Treatment capacity and discharges, proximity of recreational space and proximity of development. In-combination impacts will be assessed for projects and plans which are likely to have similar impacts on the European Sites as the Core Strategies.

If it can be concluded that all of the Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies policies alone or 'in combination' with other plans or projects would not have an adverse effect on the European sites in question, then the assessment would finish at this stage. If following completion of the above stages, policies or land allocations remain that could have an adverse effect on the integrity of any of the European Sites, consideration will then need to be given to how such effects could be avoided or mitigated.

It should be recognised at this stage, that at a policy level, preventative measures can be provided simply by the provision of additional supporting policy to offset adverse impacts. For example, it may be considered that site specific housing allocations may lead to additional recreational disturbance on SPA and / or Ramsar bird species. In this instance supporting policy could be developed that requires enhanced levels of recreational space to be provided with housing allocations, to prevent any increase in recreational disturbance of designated European features, where there is clear evidence for the use of the alternative as opposed to

continued or increased pressure on existing sites through the use of obstruction/exclusion methods. Additionally, if policies remain for which preventative measures or mitigation cannot be established, then alternatives must be considered.

At the conclusion of the assessment a full account of the analysis will be provided in the form of an Appropriate Assessment Report. In addition to the analysis, the report will also include records of further consultation with Natural England and other organisations, their response and any actions subsequent to this. The Appropriate Assessment Report will then be presented for public consultation along with the Core Strategies.

Following public consultation, any required amendments will be made, and a finalised report including recommendations will be provided to the Competent Authorities. Within this report, agreed actions for policy amendment, replacement or modification (if required) will be presented.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Appropriate Assessment

The need for an 'Appropriate Assessment' arises under the requirements of the EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and its implementation in the UK under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (known as the 'Habitats Regulations'). Within the context of this report, the term 'Regulations' relates to the Habitats Regulations, unless stated otherwise. Under Regulation 85B(1) an Appropriate Assessment is required for a plan or project, which either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on a European site and which is not directly connected with the management of the site. A European site is either a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or a Special Protection Area (SPA), and form part of an EU wide suite of such sites referred to as the Natura 2000 network. Government policy, as stated in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 9, is that sites designated under the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar sites) should also be subject to the provisions of the Habitats Regulations.

An Appropriate Assessment is a decision by the 'Competent Authority', in this case Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, and Taunton Deane Borough Council, as to whether the proposed plan or project can be determined as not having an adverse effect on the integrity of any European sites.

This report concerns only an Appropriate Assessment of the Somerset Levels and Moors and Severn Estuary (Bridgwater Bay) SPA/ Ramsar sites (as shown on **Figure 2.1**) as it was considered at an early meeting between Natural England, the Environment Agency and the local authorities concerned that a specific and detailed study was needed owing to the complex issues potentially affecting the sites. As the two Natura 2000 sites have related and overlapping functioning ecosystems they could be treated as an entity. The aim was for a comprehensive study of the ecology of the sites the factors influencing them.

It was also considered that other Natura 2000 sites (all SAC sites) could undergo a separate assessment by the individual local authorities concerned as they could be treated exclusive of the Somerset Levels and Moors and the Severn Estuary, there being little or no overlap or influence between the sites ecologically.

The Appropriate Assessment process is a four stage approach: Screening, Scoping, Appropriate Assessment and Consideration of Alternatives. These steps are described further in **Table 3.1**.

Site integrity is defined by the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM 2006) as the "coherence of the site's ecological structure and function, across its whole area, or the habitats, complex of habitats and/or population of the species for which the site is classified". An adverse effect on integrity is likely to be one that prevents the site from maintaining the same contribution to favourable status for the relevant feature(s), as it did when the site was designated. Only where a plan or project can be determined by the Competent Authority as not having an adverse effect on site integrity, can it be allowed to proceed.

The favourable conservation status of the site is defined through the site's conservation objectives and it is against these objectives that the effects of the plan or project must be assessed.

1.1.2 Appropriate Assessment in the Land Use Plan Context

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has produced draft guidance (August 2006) on how to determine the need for an Appropriate Assessment for a given plan and the provision of an assessment if one is considered to be required. In addition to this, the UK Habitats Regulations were amended in 2007 (in order to include provisions for land use plans). Natural England (formerly English Nature) has drafted guidance on the provision of Appropriate Assessments for Regional Spatial Strategies and Sub-Regional Strategies. Furthermore, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) has produced a guidance document on the undertaking of Appropriate Assessment of Spatial Plans in England (RSPB, 2007).

These documents currently provide the most cohesive source of guidance relating to the provision of Appropriate Assessments for Core Strategies.

1.2 Requirement for an Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategies

1.2.1 Need for Appropriate Assessment

The need for an Appropriate Assessment for the Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies was considered in the Initial Screening Report (Somerset County Council, 2007). The approach to establishing whether the policies of the Somerset Authorities' emerging Core Strategies would be likely to have, or have the potential to have a significant effect on the Severn Estuary cSAC/SPA/Ramsar or the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/ Ramsar, is documented in the Initial Screening Report (see **Appendix C**). The conclusion of the Initial Screening report is that significant effects are considered to be likely to arise from the proposed Core Strategies and that further screening should be undertaken.

1.3 Core Strategies

This report details the findings of the scoping stage of the Appropriate Assessment process for Core Strategies being produced by District and Borough Councils in Somerset. The Core Strategies covered by this scoping report are those of:

- Mendip District Council Core Strategy Issues and Options Report;
- Sedgemoor District Council Core Strategy Issues and Options Report;
- South Somerset District Council Core Strategy Issues and Options Report; and
- Taunton Deane Local Plan and Emerging Allocations (2009).

1.4 Aim of Scoping Report

The aim of this report is to:

1. Identify those policies and options for each of the Core Strategies which are likely to have a significant impact on the Somerset Levels SPA/ Ramsar and the Severn Estuary cSAC/ SPA/ Ramsar sites. These will be carried forward to the next stage of the process as described in **Section 3.3**.
2. Identify those policies and options for each of the Core Strategies which could potentially have a significant impact on the Somerset Levels SPA/ Ramsar and the Severn Estuary cSAC/ SPA/ Ramsar sites. These will be carried forward to the next stage of the process as there is not enough detail to scope these out at present.

3. Identify which policies are not considered likely to have a significant effect on the Somerset Levels SPA/ Ramsar and the Severn Estuary cSAC/ SPA/ Ramsar sites. These have been scoped out and will not be considered further after this report.

In addition, this report has been used as a consultation tool with Natural England, Environment Agency and RSPB to inform the Appropriate Assessment stage of the works.

It should be noted that a worst case scenario approach has been taken whilst scoping the policies and options, as the Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies are at an early stage in their production.

1.5 Report Structure

The remainder of this report is set out as follows:

- Section 2 Sites and Features for Consideration within the Appropriate Assessment.
- Section 3 Appropriate Assessment Methodology.
- Section 4 Appraisal of Somerset Authorities Core Strategy Documents
- Section 5 Consideration of Other Plans and Projects.
- Section 6 Conclusion of Scoping Phase and Recommendations.

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2 SITES AND FEATURES FOR CONSIDERATION WITHIN THE APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

2.1 Sites Considered under this Assessment

The Appropriate Assessment focuses on the three European Sites and two Ramsar sites within or adjacent to the four Local Authority areas. The sites comprise:

Sites Designated under the **Birds Directive**:

- The Somerset Levels and Moors Special Protection Area (SPA);
- The Severn Estuary SPA.

Sites designated under the **Habitats Directive**:

- The Severn Estuary candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC).

Sites designated under the **Ramsar Convention**:

- Somerset Levels and Moors;
- The Severn Estuary.

The location of these sites is presented in **Figure 2.1**.

With regard to these sites it is necessary to consider the features for which each of the Sites has been designated. Consideration of the features of each Site and the impacts upon each feature is central to assessment of the potential effects of policies or land allocation on the integrity of each Site. For the Sites under consideration, the following features have been identified with regard to the reasons for which the Sites were designated, their current condition, their conservation objectives, and the sensitivities of the Sites in relation to the potential effects of the Local Authorities Plans.

2.2 The Severn Estuary

The Severn Estuary is a large estuary with extensive intertidal mud-flats and sand-flats, rocky platforms and islands. Saltmarsh fringes the coast, backed by grazing marsh with freshwater ditches and occasional brackish ditches. The seabed is rock and gravel with sub-tidal sandbanks. The estuary's classic funnel shape, unique in the UK, is a factor causing the Severn to have the second-highest tidal range in the world (after the Bay of Fundy in Canada). This tidal regime results in plant and animal communities typical of the extreme physical conditions of liquid mud and tide-swept sand and rock. The species-poor invertebrate community includes high densities of ragworms, lugworms and other invertebrates forming an important food source for passage and wintering waders. A further consequence of the large tidal range is an extensive intertidal zone, one of the largest in the UK. The site is of importance during the spring and autumn migration periods for waders moving up the west coast of Britain, as well as in winter for large numbers of waterbirds, especially swans, ducks and waders. The area of interest for the purposes of this assessment is identified in **Figures 2.2 and 2.3**.

The Severn Estuary SPA, cSAC, and Ramsar site details are presented in **Appendix A**.

Figure 2-1 Location of Severn Estuary SPA / cSAC / Ramsar and Somerset Levels and Moors SPA / Ramsar

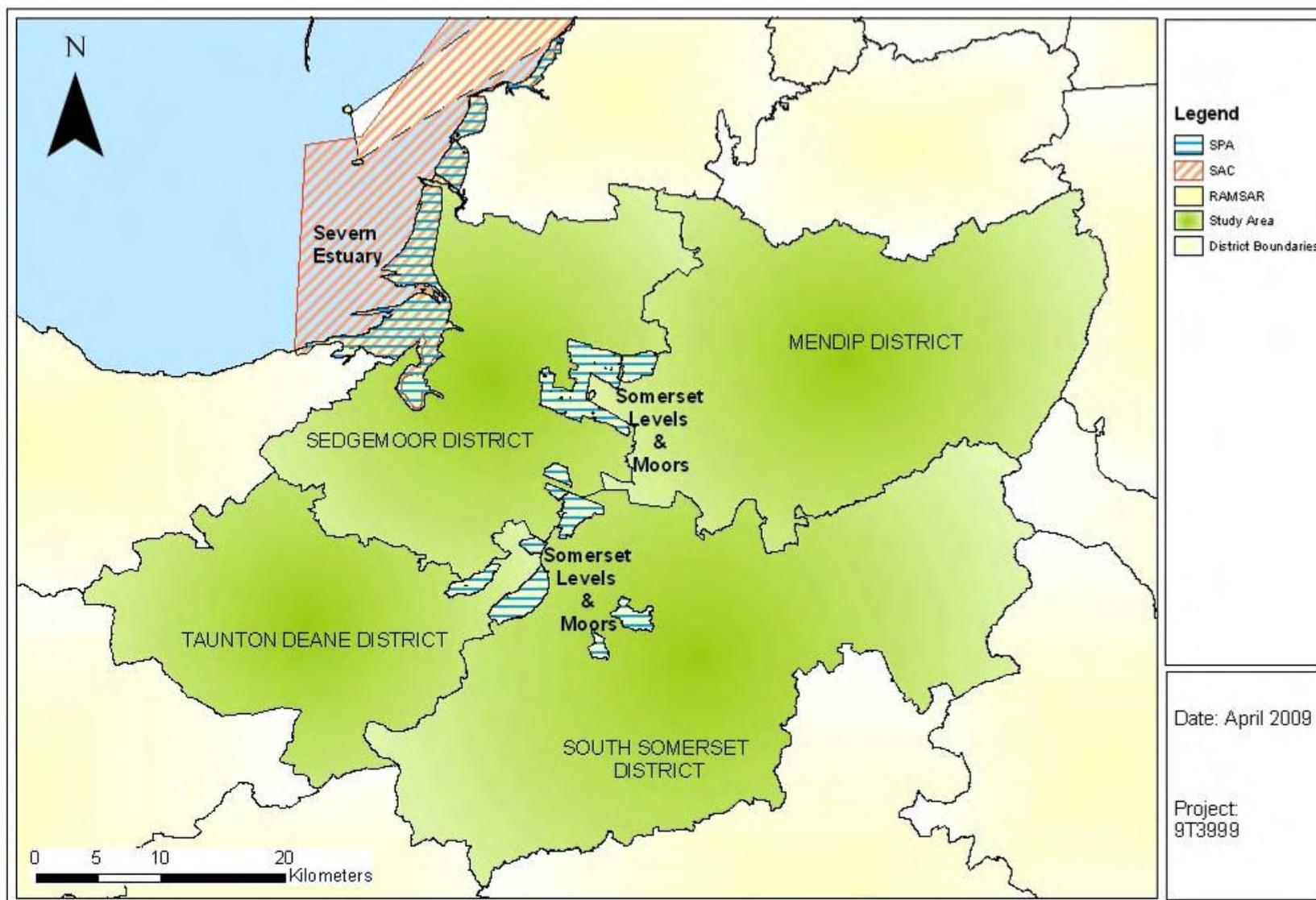


Figure 2-2 Severn Estuary International Designations focussed on Bridgwater Bay (Natural England, 2008)

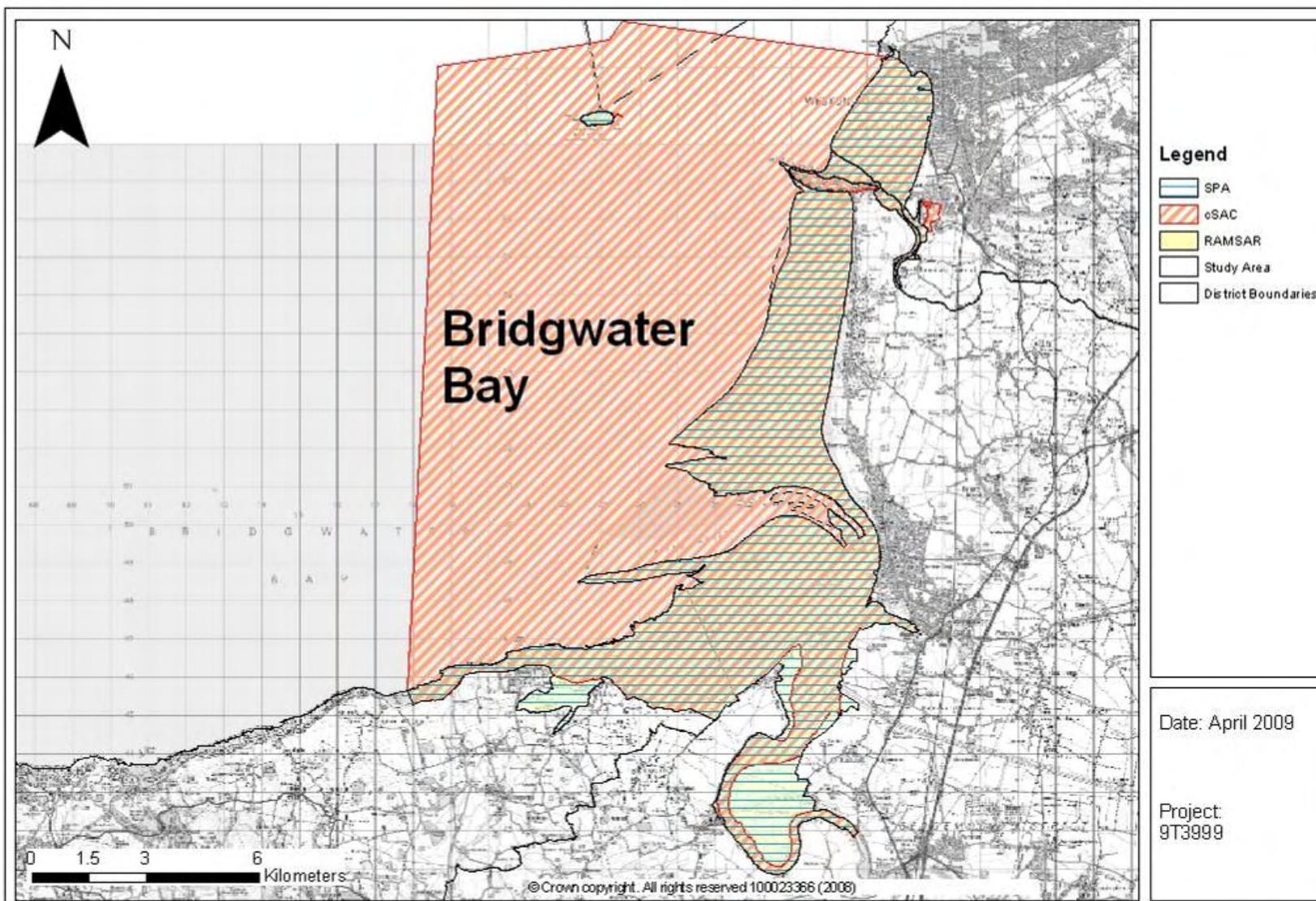
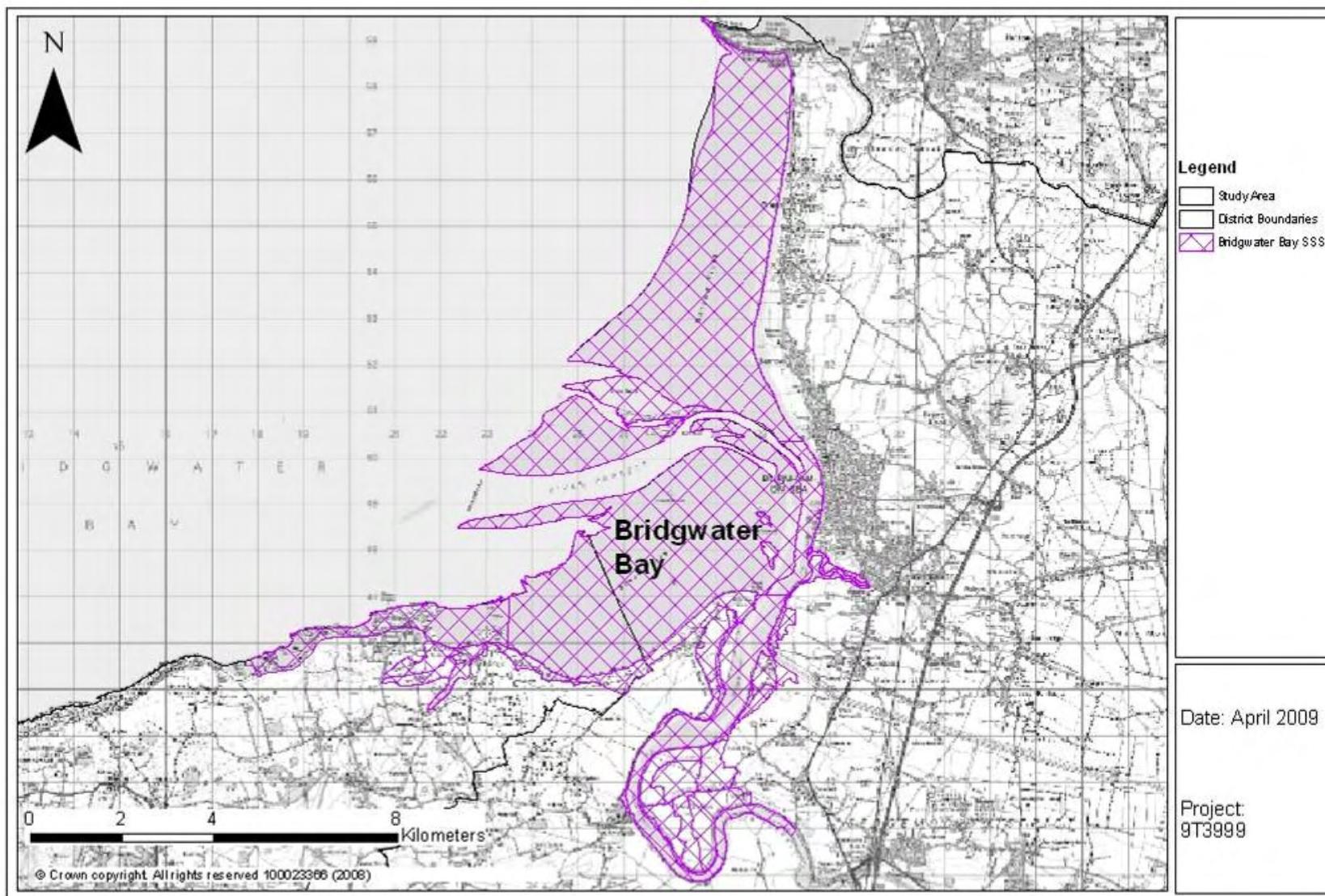


Figure 2-3 Bridgwater Bay SSSI (Natural England, 2006)



2.2.1 Reasons for Designation

The Severn Estuary cSAC covers the (as a focus) the intertidal and subtidal habitats within Bridgwater Bay, whilst the Severn Estuary SPA is contiguous with the cSAC in that it covers the intertidal areas of Bridgwater Bay, as well as some landward areas (see **Figure 2.2**). The Ramsar site covers predominantly the same area as the Severn Estuary cSAC.

The Severn Estuary has been submitted to the European Commission as a candidate SAC on the basis that it supports occurrences of habitat types and species listed in Annexes I and II respectively of the Habitats Directive that are considered important in a European context and meeting the criteria in Annex III of the Directive. The Annex I Habitat types are: estuaries, subtidal sandbanks, intertidal mudflats and sandflats, Atlantic salt meadows, and reefs. Annex II species supported within the site comprise river lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*), sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*), and twaite shad (*Allosa fallax*). Ninety nine percent of the cSAC comprises tidal rivers, estuaries, mudflats, sandflats and lagoons, whilst the remaining 1% comprises saltmarsh, salt pastures, and salt steppes.

The Severn Estuary SPA qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of over wintering Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*), Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), Dunlin (*Calidris alpina alpina*), Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Redshank (*Tringa tetanus*), and Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*). In addition, the Severn Estuary SPA qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl, with 53,604 overwintering waterfowl being the 5 year peak mean between 2001/02 - 2005/06. The details and populations are presented in **Appendix A**, and recent bird counts are presented in **Table 1** in **Appendix A**.

The Severn Estuary Ramsar supports the following qualifying criteria (which are presented in **Table 8** in **Appendix A**):

- The extent and diversity of sandbanks, estuaries, mudflats and sandflats and Atlantic salt meadows;
- The unusual estuarine communities, reduced diversity and high productivity;
- The run of migratory fish between sea and river via estuary;
- The bird assemblages of international importance, including species such as Bewick's Swan, Greater white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons albifrons*), Shelduck, Gadwall (*Anas strepera strepera*), Dunlin, and Redshank; and
- The estuarine and river fish.

2.2.2 Condition of the Sites

The majority of the data available for assessing European Site condition relates to the nature conservation interests of the component SSSIs and not to the condition of the specific features for which a European Site has been designated. However, as SSSI designation often underlies European Site designation, SSSI condition is a useful tool in assessing the condition of European Sites. The site conditions for the SSSIs underlying the Severn Estuary European Sites are included in **Table 3** in **Appendix A**. As shown in the Appendix, the predominant reasons for unfavourable condition of the various features of the Sites are fertiliser use, inappropriate water levels, water pollution (from agriculture and run-off), and coastal squeeze. The latter is a phenomenon occurring as a result of rising sea levels, and a current inability for intertidal habitats (such as saltmarsh) to move landward due to existing coastal and fluvial flood defences.

2.2.3 The Sites Conservation Objectives

For each of the European Sites, Natural England has provided a series of conservation objectives which relate to the features for which the Site was designated. With regard to the sites in question, the conservation objectives are listed in **Tables 2 and 6** in **Appendix A**. The policies and associated land allocations for future development contained in the Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies must therefore be considered and assessed with regard to their likely impacts on the features and objectives listed in these tables. The features are the habitats and species identified above, and the objectives relate to the overall extent, type, variety, and populations of the various habitats and species.

Although Ramsar features do not themselves have conservation objectives, it should be stressed that conservation objectives for SPA/SAC features have been produced to broadly protect the underlying habitat and environmental conditions required by the qualifying habitats and species. Thus, given the close correspondence between Ramsar and SPA/SAC features, the conservation objectives for the SAC/SPA features are generally adequate to protect Ramsar features. Nonetheless, where Ramsar features need consideration over and above those of European features, the high level generic conservation objective for European Sites will be applied to Ramsar sites and their features, that is; subject to natural change, to maintain in favourable condition the Ramsar features and their supporting habitats.

2.2.4 Hydrology

The source of the River Parrett is the Thorney Mills springs in the hills around Chedington in Dorset, and flows north west through Somerset and the Somerset Levels to its mouth at Burnham-on-Sea where it flows into Bridgwater Bay, in the Severn Estuary.

The main tributaries of the River Parrett are the Rivers Tone, Isle and Yeo, and the River Cary, which drains into the Parrett via the King's Sedgemoor Drain. The River Parrett catchment is over 1,690 km², with around half of this area in Somerset and the remainder in Dorset (Thomas et al., 2007). Between Langport and Bridgwater the fall of the River Parrett is only 20 cm/km (Somerset County Council, 1997), consequently, it is prone to flooding in winter and on high tides.

The hydrology regime of the tidal area is described in the Sedgemoor Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Scott Wilson, 2008). This states that

“Within Sedgemoor District, there are a number of locations that are susceptible to the effects of coastal flooding from either wave overtopping or breaching. In particular, Burnham-on-Sea is located within Bridgwater Bay and although defended does have incidents of coastal flooding. In addition, Steart Point is identified as an important area along the Sedgemoor District coastline and is within the Bridgwater Bay National Nature Reserve. This area is exposed to tidal flooding and is likely to increase with the effects of climate change.

Coupled with coastal flooding across the low lying topography within the district, the influence of tidal flooding can have a significant effect on watercourses due to the funnelling of tidal waters into a restricted channel, increasing the depth of flow. This is particularly relevant in the River Parrett, where the tidal influence extends beyond the district boundary to Oath Sluice that is located approximately 25 km from the coastline.

Bridgwater is at risk from both tidal and fluvial sources, although the risk from tidal flooding is perceived to be greatest with flood defences maintained to the 1 in 200 year return period for a tidal event.

Although other rivers such as the King's Sedgemoor Drain, Huntspill River, River Axe and River Brue are subject to tidal flood risk, this is mitigated to an extent through the use of sluice structures controlling the inflow from tidal waters and the discharge from fluvial flow."

Flood risk is managed by the Environment Agency, further details on their strategies can be found in the following reports:

- Parrett Catchment Flood Management Plan (Environment Agency, 2008);
- Parrett Estuary Flood Management Strategy (Environment Agency, Consultation Draft January 2009); and
- Anchor Head to Lavernock Point Shoreline Management Plan Review (SMP2) (Severn Estuary Coastal Group, Consultation Draft due late 2009).

2.2.5 Site Sensitivities

The Severn Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar Sites and their features are sensitive to a wide range of activities, some of which could be influenced by changes to the development priorities and options of the Somerset Plans. The following potential impacts relate to the sensitivities of the Sites, and the features likely to be sensitive are summarised in **Table 2.1**, and the sensitivities are detailed in **Tables 4, 7 and 9 in Appendix A**:

1. **Loss of adaptation / supporting habitat:** Even if European sites are protected from direct (footprint) development, land take could prevent adaptation of habitats in response to sea level rise, or result in the loss of habitat that supports the site features.
2. **Fragmentation of adaptation / supporting habitat:** Areas of land that could provide adaptation for habitats in response to sea level rise could be fragmented by development, or habitats that support the interest features of designated sites (but which are not designated, for example flood plain grazing marsh in the Wembdon Parish to the northwest of Bridgwater, could be fragmented by development.
3. **Proximity impact:** Where development in close proximity to European Sites could cause a number of potential impacts. Proximity impacts are particularly disturbing to bird species. The likely activities are:
 - a. Disturbance (noise and lighting) during construction (maximum possible radius for noise disturbance – 1km).
 - b. Increased traffic impact during construction (maximum possible radius for road traffic noise – 500m).
 - c. Increased human disturbance in the long-term, i.e. post construction, i.e. recreational disturbance (including walking, dog-walking, cycling, horse-riding, bait digging, boating, and wildfowling) if development is closer to Sites or if increased populations expand current recreational areas or pressures.
4. **Hydrological impacts:** Changes to level of water, water flow, water quality, and alteration to sedimentation and erosion patterns in watercourses can affect habitats and their associated floral and faunal communities. These are broken down into:
 - a. Water supply to new development and increased populations could lead to reduced water within watercourses, which could cause a barrier to migratory fish either due to low flow or poorer water quality. This would be exacerbated during the summer months (the general migratory period) as that is the period when more water is abstracted.

- b. Increased development and populations can result in increased loads on STW and potential increases in pollutant discharges from the STW, which can affect vegetation communities as well as fish.
 - c. Increased flood risk as a result of development and/ or flood defences built as a result of new development could potentially alter the in-channel flow conditions and sedimentation and erosion patterns, and adversely affect floral and faunal communities within and downstream of the watercourses, particularly with regard to migratory fish species.
5. **Impacts from increased roads:** Increased road traffic from new development could result in disturbance to bird species (SPAs) due to road traffic noise. Noise disturbance would be limited to distances of up to 250m; however, a precautionary 500m (maximum) buffer can be used to exclude areas for assessment. Predominantly it is visual disturbance that affects birds, and they are less likely to be affected by vehicles than people.
6. **Renewable energy:** Increased wind energy could affect SPA populations particularly along flight lines.

Table 2-1 The Sensitivity of the Severn Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar Sites and their Features to Likely Effects from the Somerset Authorities Plans

Impact	Loss of land suitable for adaptation	Fragmentation of adaptation or intermediate habitat	Proximity impacts			Hydrological impacts				Renewables
			Construction disturbance	Construction traffic	Recreational disturbance	Increased surface water run-off	Increased abstraction	Decreased water quality from STWs	Flow change due to flood risk	
Site / Feature										
Severn Estuary SAC										
Estuaries	Red	Red						Red		
Subtidal sandbanks										
Intertidal mudflats and sandflats	Red	Red						Red		
Atlantic salt meadows	Red	Red								
Reefs	Red	Red								
River lamprey	Yellow	Yellow				Red	Red	Red	Red	
Sea lamprey	Yellow	Yellow				Red	Red	Red	Red	
Twaite shad	Yellow	Yellow				Red	Red	Red	Red	
Severn Estuary SPA										
Bewick's Swan	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red			Yellow		Red
Ringed Plover	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red			Yellow		Red
Curlew	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red			Yellow		Red
Dunlin	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red			Yellow		Red
Pintail	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red			Yellow		Red
Redshank	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red			Yellow		Red
Shelduck	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red			Yellow		Red

Impact	Loss of land suitable for adaptation	Fragmentation of adaptation or intermediate habitat	Proximity impacts			Hydrological impacts				Increased road traffic noise	Renewables
			Construction disturbance	Construction traffic	Recreational disturbance	Increased surface water run-off	Increased abstraction	Decreased water quality from STWs	Flow change due to flood risk		
Site / Feature											
Severn Estuary Ramsar											
Sandbanks, estuaries, mudflats and sandflats and Atlantic salt meadows											
Estuarine communities											
Migratory fish											
Bird assemblage											
Estuarine and river fish											

Key

	Site or feature is likely to be directly affected as a result of this impact
	Site or feature is likely to be indirectly affected as a result of this impact

2.3 The Somerset Levels and Moors

The Somerset Levels and Moors is one of the largest and richest areas of traditionally managed wet grassland and fen habitats in lowland UK, and is designated as SPA and Ramsar. The majority of the site is only a few metres above mean sea level and drains through a network of ditches, rhynes, drains and rivers. Flooding may affect large areas in winter, depending on rainfall and tidal conditions. Parts of the Brue valley include areas of former raised peat bog that have now been substantially modified by agricultural intensification and peat extraction. This has created areas of open water, fen and reed bed. The site attracts important numbers of water birds in winter, and the waterways support an outstanding assemblage of aquatic invertebrates, particularly beetles. The boundary of the SPA/Ramsar is shown in **Figure 2.4** and its constituent SSSIs are shown on **Figure 2.5**.

The Somerset Levels and Moors SPA and Ramsar site details are presented in **Appendix B**.

2.3.1 Reasons for Designation

The Somerset Levels and Moors SPA qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance, in particular over wintering Bewick's Swan and Golden Plover. The Site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of over wintering migratory species of Teal and Lapwing. In addition, the Site qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl, with 72,000 overwintering waterfowl being the 5 year peak mean between 2001/02 - 2005/06. The details and populations are presented in **Appendix B**, and recent bird counts are presented in **Table 1** in **Appendix B**.

The Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar supports the following qualifying criteria (which are presented in **Table 5** in **Appendix B**):

- It supports 17 species of British Red Data Book invertebrates; and
- The bird assemblages of international importance, including species such as Bewick's Swan, Teal, and Lapwing.

2.3.2 Condition of the Sites

As described in **Section 2.3.1**, the majority of the data available for assessing European Site condition relates to the nature conservation interests of the component SSSIs and not to the condition of the specific features for which a European Site has been designated. The Site conditions for the SSSIs underlying the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA and Ramsar are outlined in **Table 2** in **Appendix B**. As shown in the table, the predominant reasons for unfavourable condition of the various features of the Sites are agriculture drainage, fertiliser use, pesticide/herbicide use, inappropriate cutting/mowing, inappropriate ditch management, inappropriate water levels, inappropriate css/esa prescription, overgrazing, peat extraction, public access/disturbance, undergrazing, vehicles, water pollution - agriculture/run-off.

Figure 2-4 Locations of Somerset Levels and Moors SPA / Ramsar

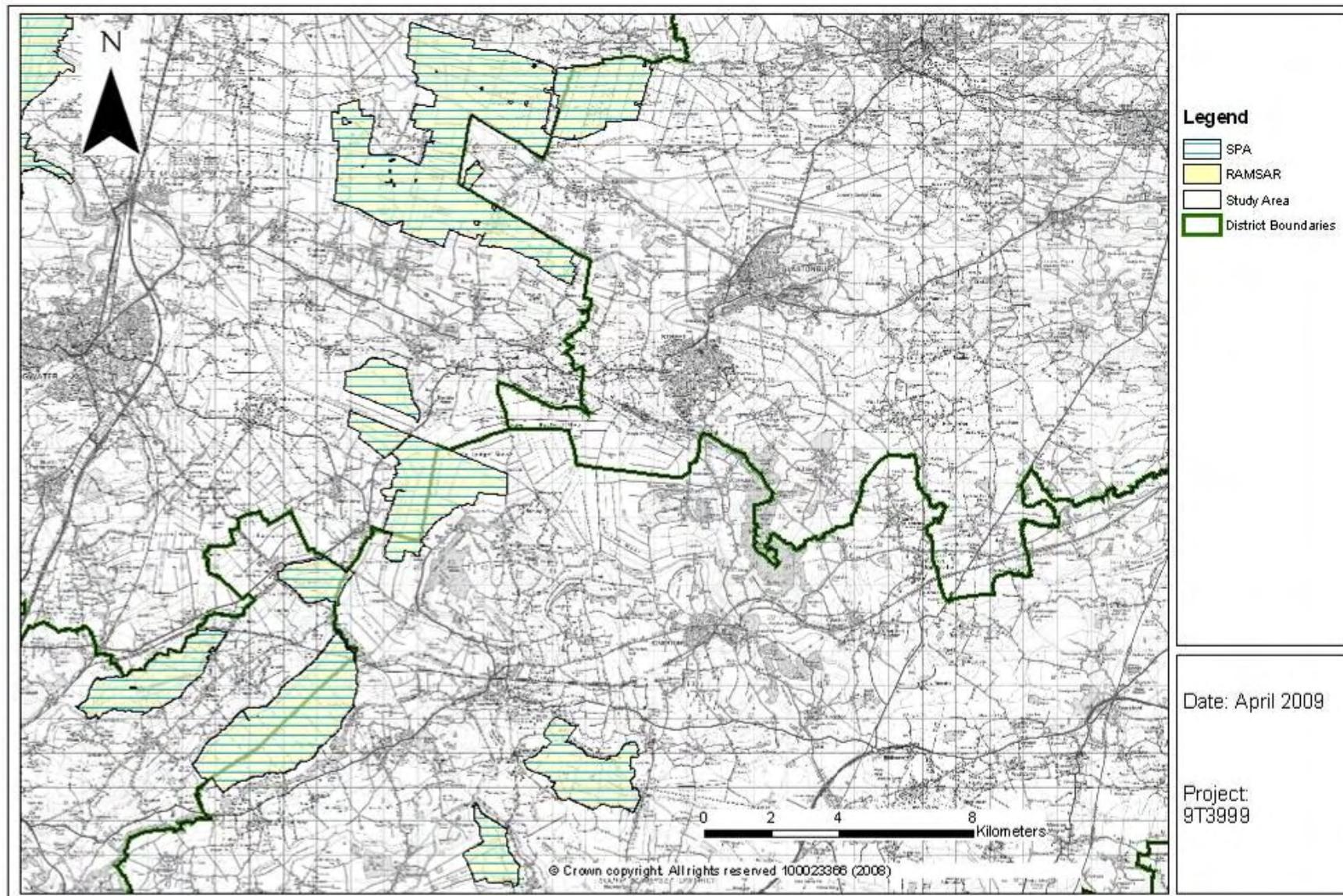
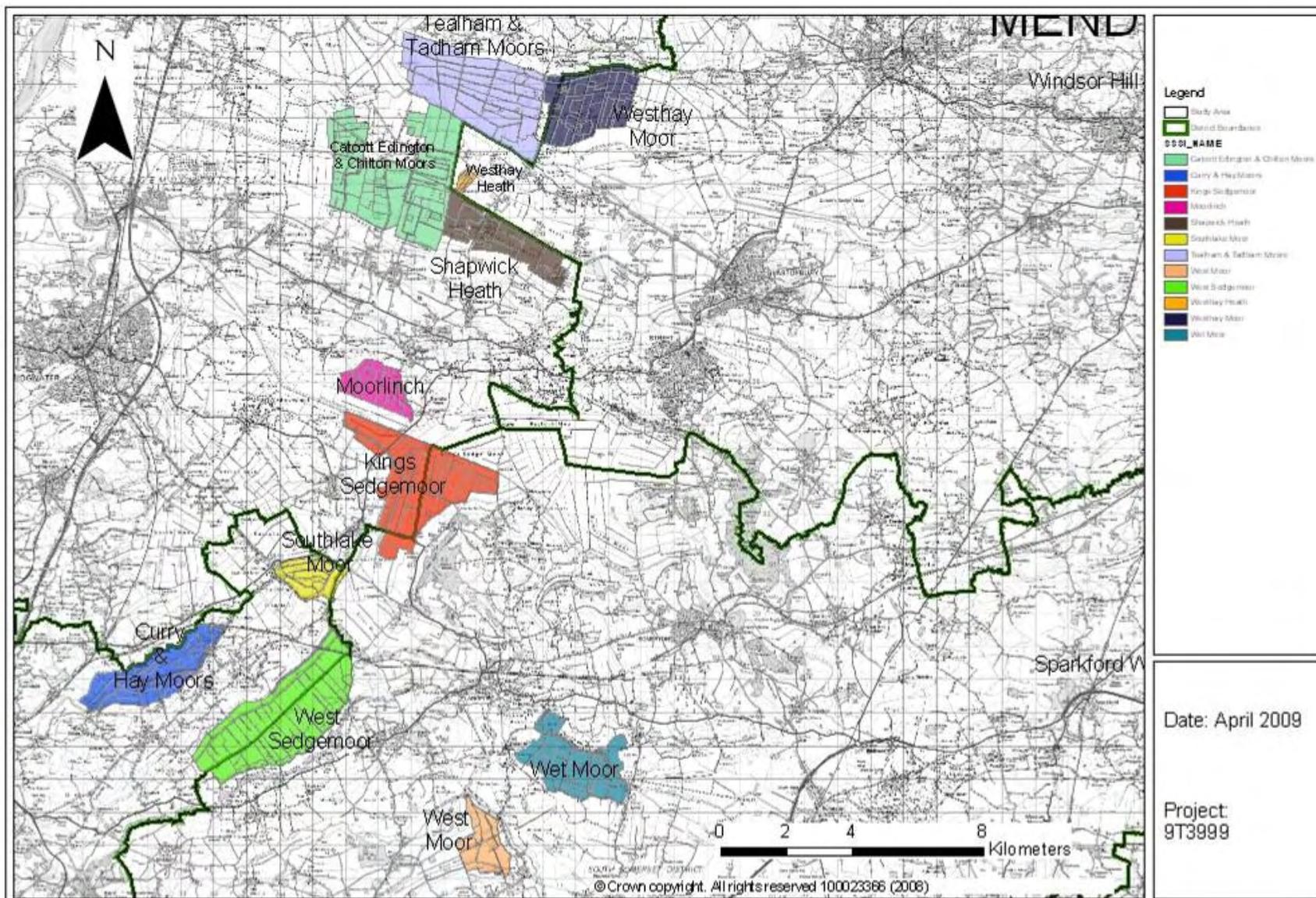


Figure 2-5 Locations of Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/ Ramsar Component SSSIs



The Somerset Levels and Moors SPA comprise the following SSSIs:

- Catcott Edington and Chilton Moors;
- Curry and Hay Moors;
- King's Sedgemoor;
- Moorlinch;
- Shapwick Heath;
- Southlake Moor;
- Tealham and Tadham Moors;
- West Moor;
- West Sedge Moor;
- Westhay Heath;
- Westhay Moor; and
- Wet Moor.

2.3.3 The Site's Conservation Objectives

For the SPA, Natural England has provided a series of conservation objectives which relate to the features for which the Site was designated, and these are listed in **Table 3 in Appendix B**. The policies and associated land allocations for future development contained in the Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies must therefore be considered and assessed with regard to their likely impacts on the features and objectives listed in **Appendix B**. The features are the habitats and species identified in **Section 2.3.1**, and the objectives relate to the overall extent, type, variety, and populations of the various habitats and species.

As described in **Section 2.2.3**, Ramsar features do not themselves have conservation objectives, it should be stressed that conservation objectives for the SPA and SSSI features have been produced to broadly protect the underlying habitat and environmental conditions required by the qualifying habitats and species. Thus, given the close correspondence between Ramsar and SPA/SSSI features, the conservation objectives for the SPA features are generally adequate to protect Ramsar features. Nonetheless, where Ramsar features need consideration over and above those of European features, the high level generic conservation objective for European Sites will be applied to Ramsar sites and their features, that is: subject to natural change, to maintain in favourable condition the Ramsar features and their supporting habitats.

2.3.4 Hydrology

Water levels in the Somerset Levels and Moors are managed by the Somerset Internal Drainage Board using penning structures to minimise the flood potential, improve the conservation value and provide wet fencing for agriculture. The Environment Agency's CAMS (Environment Agency 2006b) do not include the Somerset Levels and Moors due to their artificial nature.

In the wider area the Brue, Axe and Mendip CAMS (Environment Agency 2006b) has 4 management units which lie within the study area (1, 2, 3 and 6). All units are classified as having no water available.

The Environment Agency's Water Resource team is currently reviewing all permissions that were granted before the Habitats Regulations came into force. They have prioritised EU sites for review on the basis of potential risk by Environment Agency regulated activities. The Environment Agency aims to complete the review of all sites by March 2010. We will contact the Environment Agency to obtain relevant data at stage 2 of the project.

Wessex Water has recently completed an investigation into the effects of treated sewage effluent on the Somerset Levels and Moors. At present this data is not available, we hope to obtain this data for stage 2 of the project.

2.3.5 Site Sensitivities

The Somerset Levels and Moors SPA and Ramsar Sites and their features are sensitive to a wide range of activities, some of which could be influenced by changes to the development priorities and options of the Somerset Plans. The following potential impacts relate to the sensitivities of the Sites, and the features likely to be sensitive are summarised in **Table 2.2**, and the sensitivities are detailed in **Tables 4** and **6 in Appendix B**:

1. **Loss of supporting habitat:** Since European sites are protected from direct (footprint) development, land take could prevent adaptation of habitats (SACs) in response to sea level rise.
2. **Fragmentation of supporting habitat:** Predominantly related to wetland invertebrate communities, but also to areas of land that could provide adaptation for habitats in response to sea level rise, which could be fragmented by development.
3. **Proximity impact:** Where development in close proximity to European Sites could cause a number of potential impacts. Proximity impacts are particularly disturbing to bird species. The likely activities are:
 - a. Disturbance (noise and lighting) during construction (maximum possible radius for noise disturbance – 1km).
 - b. Increased traffic impact during construction (maximum possible radius for road traffic noise – 500m).
 - c. Increased human disturbance in the long-term, i.e. post construction, i.e. recreational disturbance (including walking, dog-walking, cycling, horse-riding, and wildfowling) if development is closer to Sites or if increased populations expand current recreational areas or pressures.
4. **Hydrological impacts:** Changes to level of water, water flow, water quality, and alteration to sedimentation and erosion patterns in watercourses can affect habitats and their associated floral and faunal communities. These are broken down into:
 - a. Surface water run-off could increase with development (where SUDS not specified) which could result in altered flow patterns or increased volumes of water run-off particularly during storm events. These could affect wetland habitats.
 - b. Water supply to new development and increased population could lead to reduced water within or entering water-related habitats, particularly of significance during low (summer) flow conditions.
 - c. Increased development and populations can result in increased loads on STW and potential increases in pollutant discharges from the STW, which can affect vegetation and invertebrate communities.

- d. Increased flood risk as a result of development could potentially alter the in-channel flow conditions, water levels, and patterns of sedimentation and erosion within and downstream of watercourses.
5. **Impacts from increased roads:** Increased development would lead to increased road traffic from those commuting to and from work, as well as other journeys throughout the area, this could result in additional pressure on sites in the following ways:
- a. Increased road traffic from new development could result in disturbance to bird species (SPAs) due to road traffic noise. Noise disturbance would be limited to distances of up to 250m; however, a precautionary 500m (maximum) buffer can be used to exclude areas for assessment. Predominantly it is visual disturbance that affects birds, and they are less likely to be affected by vehicles than people.
 - b. Increased road traffic from new development could result in deterioration to water quality in wetland habitats from road traffic emissions to air that are then deposited within a Site. Emissions to air are rarely felt beyond 250m, so this (maximum) buffer can be used to exclude areas for assessment.
6. **Renewable energy:** Increased wind energy could affect SPA populations particularly along flight lines.

Table 2-2 The Sensitivity of the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA and Ramsar Sites and their Features to Likely Effects from the Somerset Authorities Plans

Site / Feature	Impact	Fragmentation of intermediate habitat	Proximity impacts			Hydrological impacts				Increased road traffic impacts		Renewables
			Construction disturbance	Construction traffic	Recreational disturbance	Increased surface water run-off	Increased abstraction	Decreased water quality from STWs	Flow change due to flood risk	Increased noise	Increased emissions to air	
Somerset Levels and Moors SPA												
Bewick's Swan		Yellow	Red	Red	Red	White	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	White	Red
Teal		Yellow	Red	Red	Red	White	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	White	Red
Lapwing		Yellow	Red	Red	Red	White	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	White	Red
Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar												
17 species of British Red Data Book invertebrates		Yellow	White	White	White	Red	Red	Red	Red	White	Red	White
Bird assemblage		Yellow	Red	Red	Red	White	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	White	Red

Key

	Site or feature is likely to be directly affected as a result of this impact
	Site or feature is likely to be indirectly affected as a result of this impact

2.4 Consultation

Consultation with Natural England and the Environment Agency identified a number of key issues experienced by or affecting the Severn Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar, and the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA and Ramsar sites. A summary of the consultation is presented in **Table 2.3**.

Table 2-3 Summary of Consultation Responses

Consultee	Key Comments
Environment Agency	<p>The EA consider that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green infrastructure development may provide alternative greenspace which would reduce recreational pressure on the European Sites. • Flood risk is not currently an issue within the Somerset Levels and Moors or Severn Estuary catchments. • Direct impacts to European Sites can be screened out over 5km for housing/business development, 10km for industrial estates and > 15km for major industrial developments that may require a stack. These are assuming there is no direct pathway between the development and the European Site. • None of the rivers in the study area are designated for salmonids; however the River Tone is known to support small populations of Sea Trout and Lamprey. Twaite Shad are present in the tidal Parrett but are not known to spawn. • The Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar site is affected by a lack of water and diffuse point source pollution, both of which are monitored by the Environment Agency. It is assumed that the PSA review of the SSSIs will reduce these factors.
Natural England	<p>Somerset Levels and Moors key issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving the Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets through the Water Level Management Plans (WLMP). • Providing support to the farming community through Higher Level Stewardship and the Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme and phasing out the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. This only concentrates on SSSIs. • Water quality, there are concerns over sewage treatment works within the catchment. • Water quality, farming practices can have an impact on water quality within the SPA. This is being addressed by Catchment Sensitive Farming projects on the River Tone and River Brue. • Prolonged spring and summer flooding with climate change could cause habitats to shift from grassland to fen and swamp. • Recreational disturbance is a low level problem. NE works to welcome people into the countryside. Targeted recreational

Consultee	Key Comments
	<p>facilities are provided at Shapwick Heath and Greylake. The rural nature of the levels and moors makes it not easily accessible for recreation other than dog walking out of these reserves. Any projects which increase access along watercourses would be of concern.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angling is not considered to be a problem on the Somerset Levels and Moors. • Wildfowling is managed through the establishment of refugia, therefore is not considered to be a problem. • Increased access could also encourage the spread of alien invasive species such as marsh pennywort and <i>Lemna minutia</i>. • Drove maintenance is not carried out and this is becoming a problem for access for farming. • Greater commuter traffic could create noise impacts to the Somerset Levels and Moors. • Abstraction has been assessed through the review of consents and is thought to pose no problem. • Peat extraction is undergoing a Reg 50 review by SCC. <p>Severn Estuary key issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising sea level and impact of global warming resulting in intertidal habitats becoming subtidal. • Poor sea defences, particularly at Steart and Bridgwater, these are planned to be addressed through managed realignment and the surge barrier respectively. • Hinkley Point C and D power stations. • As a whole bird numbers on the Severn are decreasing. The cause is not known, NE are currently trying to get to the bottom of this. • Recreational disturbance is currently a low level issue. Increased development at Burnham on Sea, Highbridge Taunton and Bridgwater will contribute to this.

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3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction to Appropriate Assessment

The methodology for this exercise has been developed in accordance with the guidance of the DCLG and Natural England, as well as utilising the RSPB guidance. Additionally, Appropriate Assessment methodologies devised for large scale developments have been evaluated to ensure that the approach provided here is based on actual practical implementation of the Habitats Regulations. The approach developed has also been tailored to ensure that the requirements of the Habitats Regulations and supporting guidance are met. The need to ensure that the assessment is actually ‘appropriate’ to the evaluation of policy and strategic allocation of land for future development has also been recognised. As stated in **Section 1.1**, Appropriate Assessment is a four stage process, as outlined in **Table 3.1**. A summary of the methodology is illustrated in **Figure 3.1**, which shows the manner in which the overall assessment progresses, and how key tasks relate to one another.

Table 3-1 Stages in the Appropriate Assessment Process

Stage	Description	Comments
Screening	The initial evaluation of a plan’s effects on a European Site. If it cannot be concluded that there will be no significant effect upon any European Site an Appropriate Assessment will be required. At the end of this process a screening decision is made by the Competent Authority as to whether Appropriate Assessment is triggered.	This stage has been partly undertaken by Somerset County Council on behalf of all of the Somerset Local Authorities (See Appendix C).
Scoping	Preparation for the Appropriate Assessment where screening has shown that likely significant effects could occur to a European Site. It identifies what impacts the AA should cover and should address any gaps in knowledge to ensure the AA is complete and accurate.	This report comprises the screening and scoping stages together. It determines which policy options have likely significant effect and which therefore will be subject to Appropriate Assessment (final report).
Appropriate Assessment	Evaluating the evidence gathered on impacts and considering whether changes to the plan are need to ensure that it will not have an adverse effect on a European Site. Normally the AA process will stop here and the plan can be adopted.	The methodology for this stage is set out in Sections 3.3.1 - 3.3.3 .
Consideration of alternatives	The plan-making authority must demonstrate that its policy or allocation is the least damaging way of meeting the need identified in the plan.	This stage may not be required. Further details are set out in Section 3.3.4 .

Significant effects have been screened using the RSPB guidance (2007) which states that a significant effect is triggered when:

- There is the **probability or a risk** of a plan or project having a significant effect on a European Site;
- The plan is **likely to undermine** the site’s conservation objectives; and
- A significant effect **cannot be excluded** on the basis of objective information.

3.2 Scoping Methodology (Stage 1)

3.2.1 Existing Policy Suite

In the context of this study, the policy suite for evaluation is defined as the policies within the following plans (the full policy suite is listed in **Appendix D**):

- Mendip District Core Strategy;
- South Somerset District Core Strategy;
- Sedgemoor District Council Core Strategy; and
- Taunton Deane Borough Local Plan and Emerging Allocations (2009).

As yet there are no issues and options reports available for the Taunton Deane Plan, as the change in requirements has resulted in the intent of Taunton Deane Borough Council issuing their preferred options (Regulation 25) in 2009/2010. Consequently, this assessment has been focussed on the existing Local Plan policies, taking into account the housing and employment allocations in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), and emerging allocations for residential and employment land provided by Taunton Deane Borough Council (R Willoughby-Foster, *pers. comms.*, 2009).

Where possible, the RSS and other existing literature have been used to make an initial assessment as to the likelihood of policies and land allocation for future development to affect the Natura 2000 sites. It should be noted that this approach is based on the worst case scenario; therefore impacts may be estimated to be of greater magnitude than they actually will be.

Consultation with the Environment Agency Fisheries, Recreation and Biodiversity team was undertaken in October 2008 to determine buffer zones from proposed development types. The zones that have been used are 5km for business/housing development, 10km for trade industry (i.e. trading estates) and 15km for industrial proposals that may require an air stack. The buffer zones assume that there is no direct pathway between the development and the European Site.

These buffer zones have been used to screen out direct impacts to European Sites. The majority of development is anticipated to lie more than 5km from the Natura 2000 sites and therefore is not expected to have a direct impact to these sites.

Some developments may occur within 5km of Natura 2000 sites and these will be carried forward into the Appropriate Assessment. These are expected to be at: Langport/Huish Episcopi, Somerton and Martock, (South Somerset) Bridgwater, Highbridge and Burnham on Sea, Westonzoyland, Woolavington and Ashcott, Cannington, Pawlett, Puriton and Wedmore (Sedgemoor) Street, Glastonbury, Wells, Meare and Westhay, Walton, and Bleadney (Mendip), North Curry, Creech St Michael, and Monkton Heathfield (Taunton Deane).

Of the developments which are anticipated to occur over 5km from the Natura 2000 sites, those at South Petherton, Yeovil, Chard, Crewkerne, Ilminster and Ansford/Castle Cary (South Somerset), West Greenway (TA3), East Greenway (TA2), Priorswood Nerrols (TA5), Killams (TA10), Staplegrove (TA7), Comeytrove (TA4), Bishops Hull (TA8), and Ford Farm (TA9) (Taunton Deane) are hydrologically linked to the Somerset Levels and Moors. Any works at these locations is expected to have downstream (indirect) effects on the

Natura Somerset Levels and Moors. Other developments are not predicted to have downstream effects on the Somerset Levels and Moors or Severn Estuary; although there may be impacts from increased air quality and recreational pressure.

Policies for employment allocation within 10km of the Somerset Levels and Moors and Severn Estuary are identified for Bridgwater (Sedgemoor), Yeovil (South Somerset) and Taunton (Taunton Deane). At present there are no policies that identify the need for heavy industry including air stacks.

Figures 3.2 to 3.5 identify all proposed development locations for each Competent Authority and details whether the development location has been screened in or out of the Appropriate Assessment. It should be noted that the development locations are potential locations; the exact locations of development have not been confirmed at this stage. The distinction between a small development and a large development was made subjectively based on the figures given in the Core Strategy documents.

Figure 3-1 Appropriate Assessment Methodology

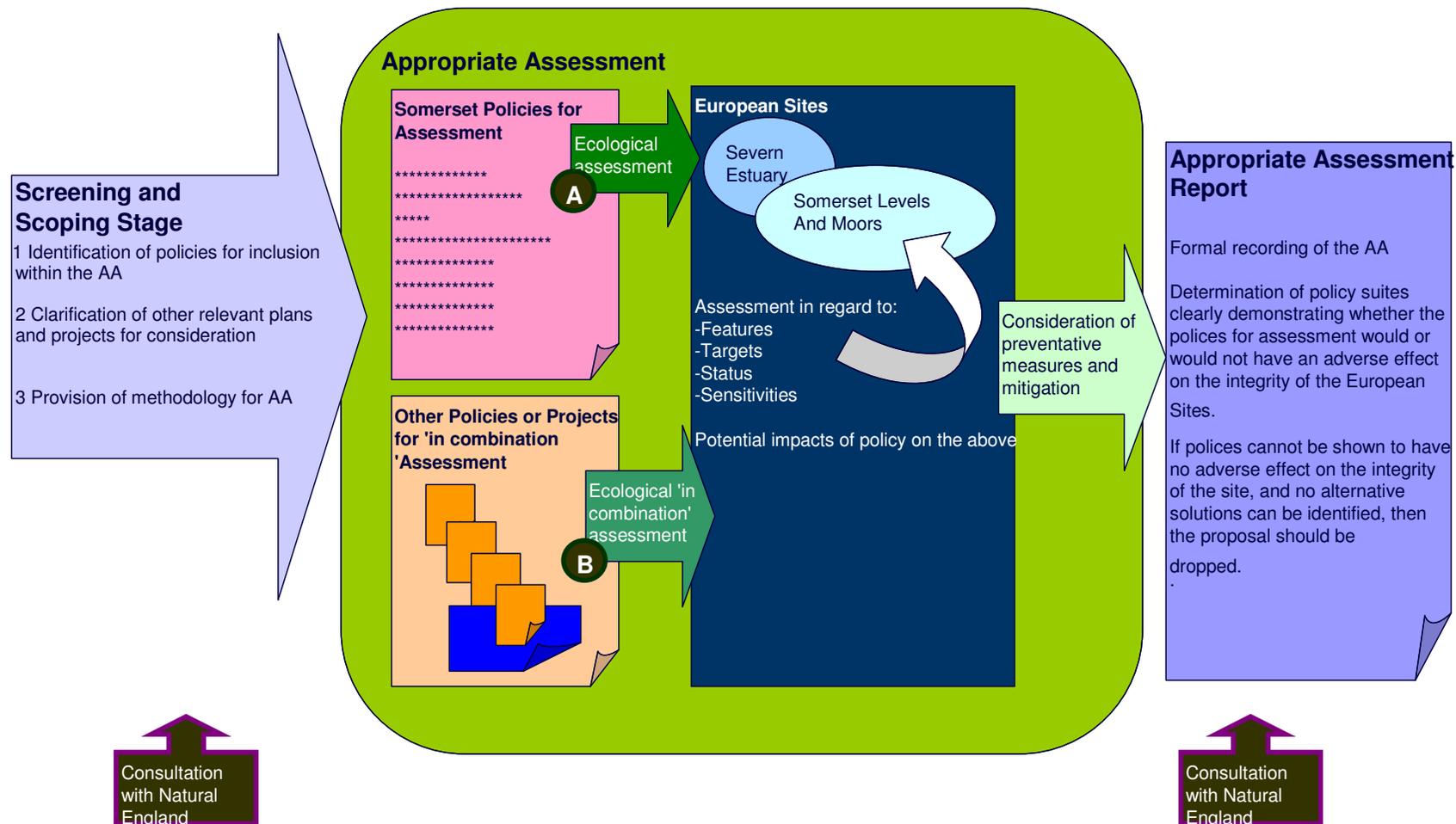


Figure 3-2 Proposed Development Locations in Mendip

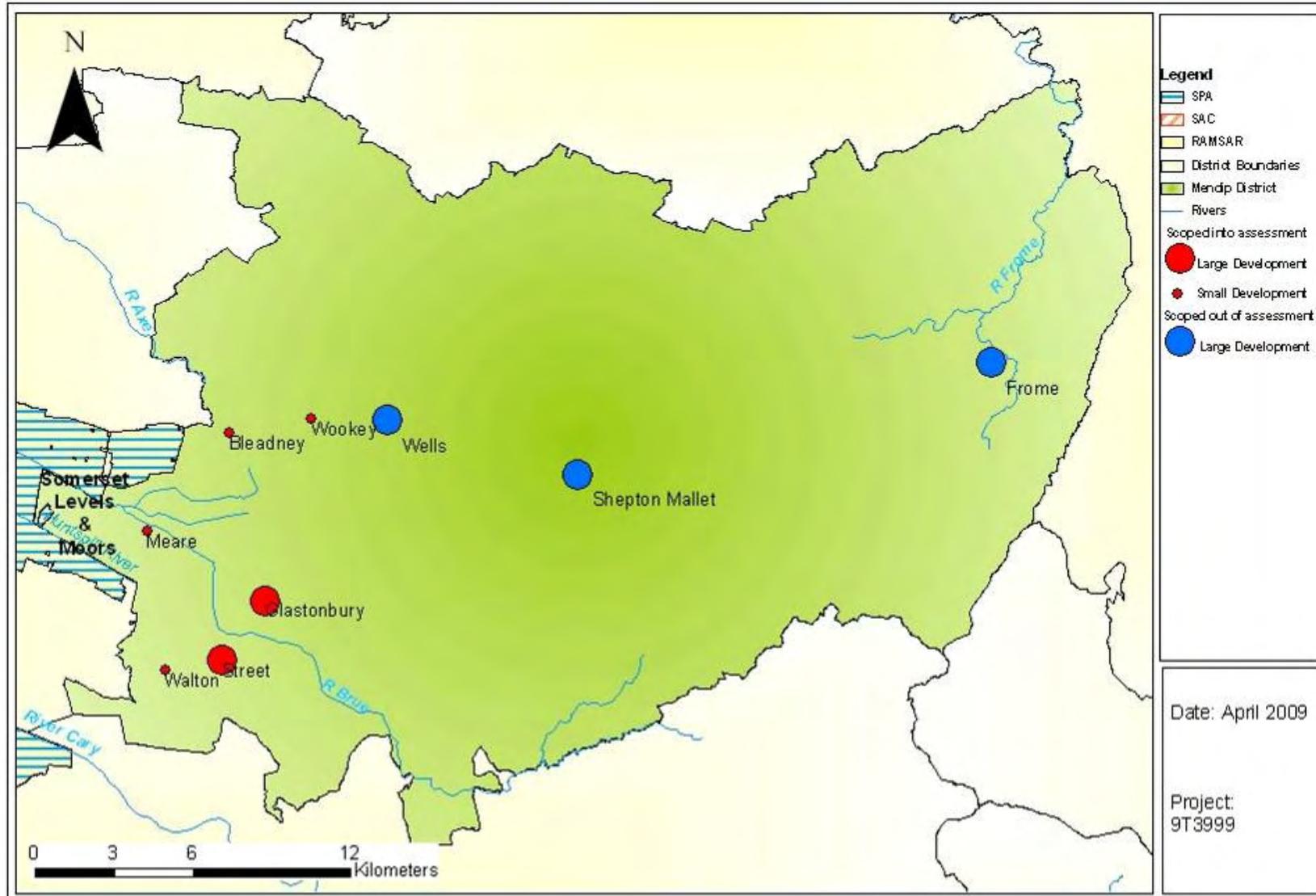


Figure 3-3 Proposed Development Locations in Sedgemoor

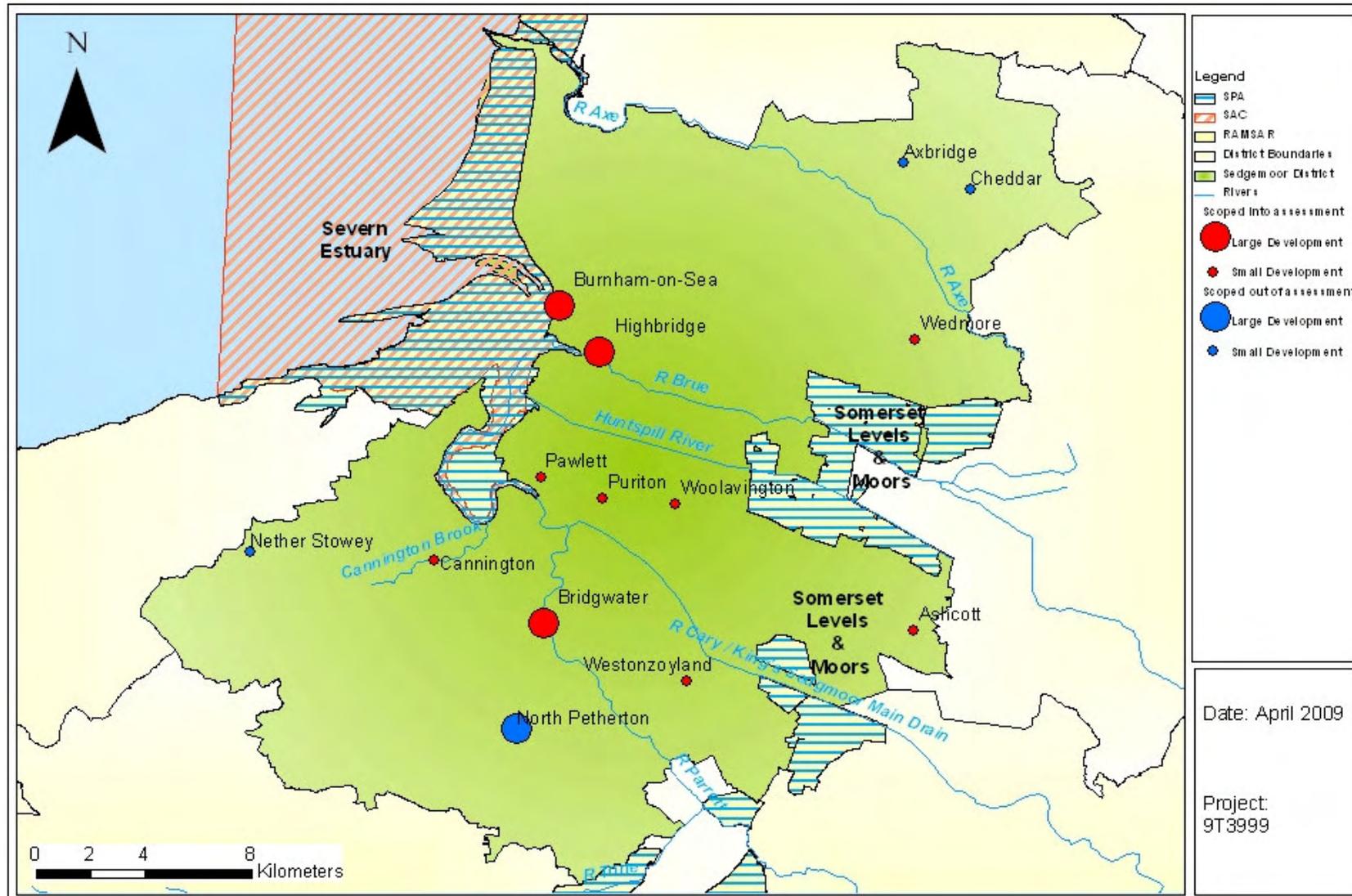


Figure 3-4 Proposed Development Locations in South Somerset

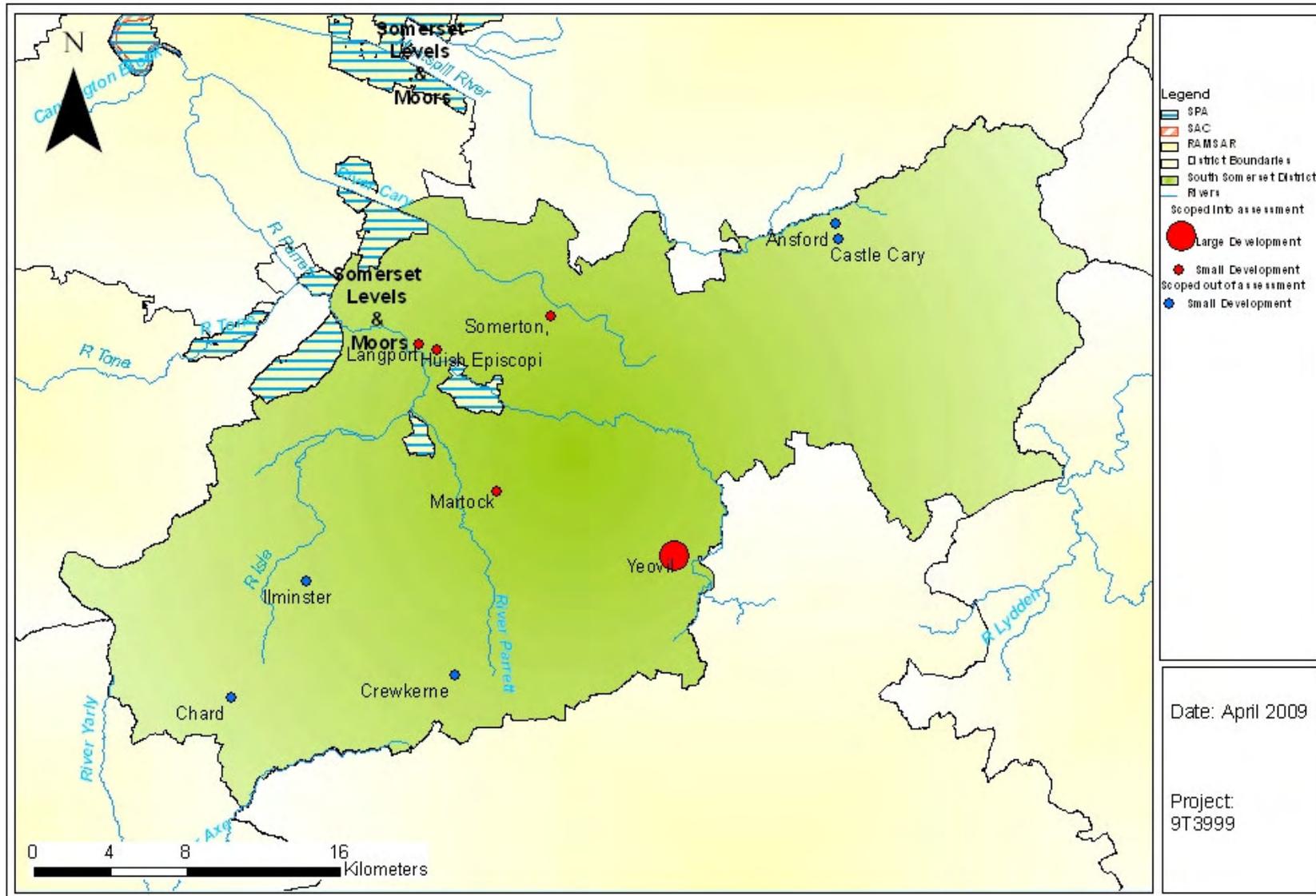
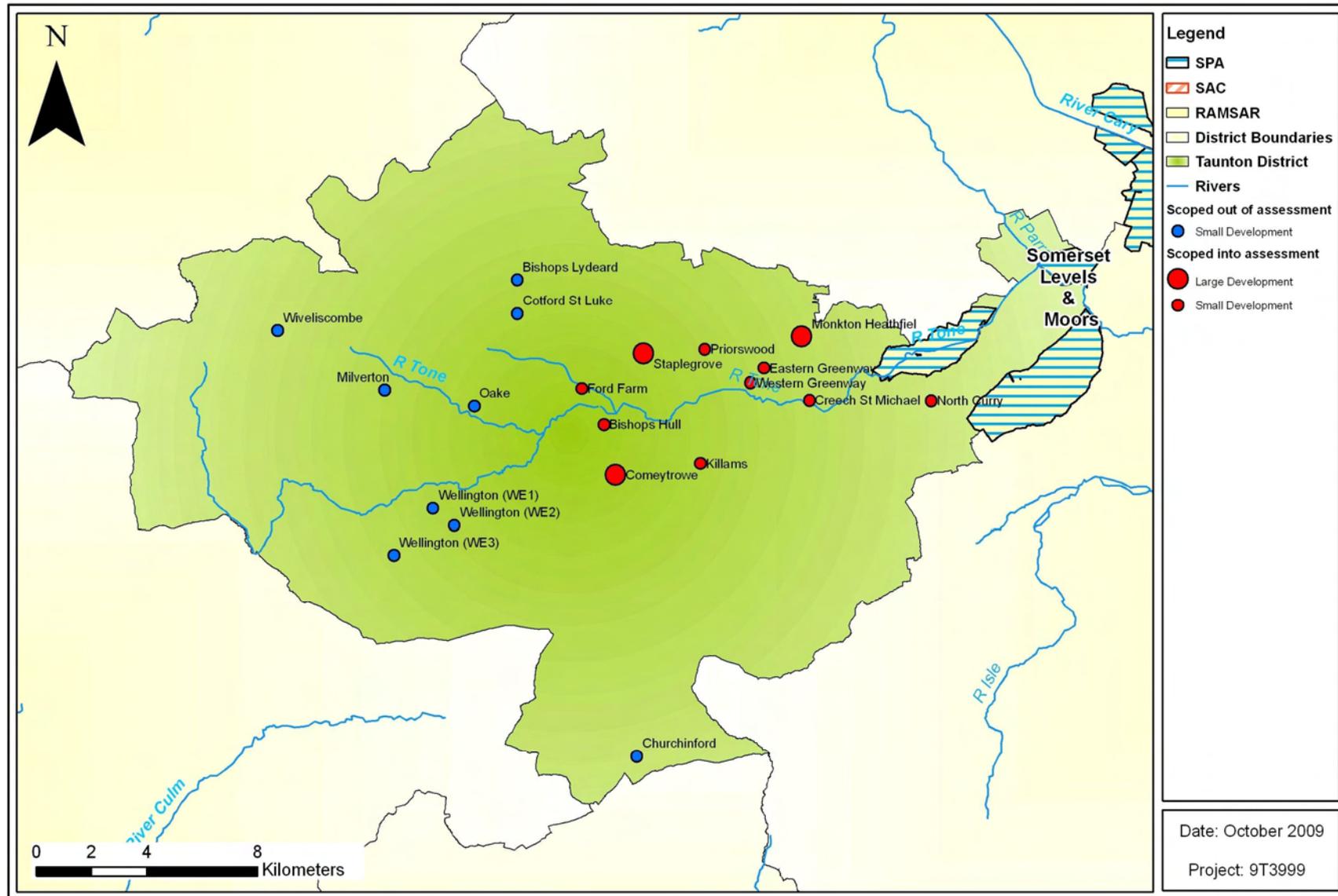


Figure 3-5 Proposed development locations in Taunton



3.2.2 Policy Screening

Only those policies which are likely to have a significant effect on European Sites need to be considered within the Appropriate Assessment. The identification of these policies is therefore essential to provide the scope for more detailed assessment. Policies that will have 'no effect' on the features of European Sites have been identified and excluded from the assessment. The box below sets out those criteria that have been used as a first step to exclude the policies, which would clearly have no likely significant effect either individually or in combination, from the appropriate assessment process. These Criteria have been applied to the policies listed in **Appendix D**.

- A. Policies that will not lead to the development of land (for example policies that propose sustainable transport solutions in town centres etc, but do not provide a trigger for development);
- B. Policies that actively seek to prevent impacts on European Sites or the wider environment (for example policies which seek to ensure that development is focussed on areas well away from European Sites); and
- C. Policies intended to improve the existing natural or built environment of specific areas, but which do not specify levels of development (for example policies which propose the reuse of manufacturing land for housing development where it is clear such a policy cannot result in development in or near to Natura 2000 sites, or where the policy or its affects are likely to result in a significant effect).

In addition to the process described above, a further policy screening determination was established on the basis of the guidance offered in Natural England's HRGN Number 3 (English Nature, 1999). A series of criteria were derived, which provided the filters to determine whether it could be concluded that the Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies will or will not have a likely significant effect on the above sites. These criteria are as follows:

1. Causing change to the coherence of the site or to the Natura 2000 series (e.g. presenting a barrier between isolated fragments, or reducing the ability of the site to act as a source of new colonisers);
2. Causing reduction in the area of habitat or of the site;
3. Causing direct or indirect change to the physical quality of the environment (including the hydrology) or habitat within the site;
4. Causing ongoing disturbance to species or habitats for which the site is notified;
5. Altering community structure (species composition);
6. Causing direct or indirect damage to the size, characteristics or reproductive ability of populations on the site;
7. Altering the vulnerability of populations etc. to other impacts;
8. Causing a reduction in the resilience of the feature against external change (for example its ability to respond to extremes of environmental conditions); and
9. Affecting restoration of a feature where this is a conservation objective.

These criteria were considered for each policy to determine whether there is likely to be an impact on the Somerset Levels and Moors and Severn Estuary Natura 2000 sites (see **Appendix D**). Whilst this process established that some policies could be excluded from Stage 2, it could not be concluded that all policies would not have a likely significant effect on the features of the European Sites in Somerset region. It is therefore necessary, at this scoping stage, to carry these policies into Stage 2 and undertake Appropriate Assessment.

3.3 Proposed Methodology for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2)

3.3.1 Appropriate Assessment of the Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies

Where the Core Strategy is not available, the assessment will be made on the existing Local Plan policies for that area, taking the housing and employment figures set out in the RSS. Each Competent Authority will be subject to Appropriate Assessment and individual reports will be produced.

The assessment of the Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies policies and land allocations for future development will be supported by a tabulated account, based on an adaptation of the Favourable Condition tables for the SSSIs that underpin the European Sites. An illustrative table is provided below, which will form the basis of how the assessment will be recorded (see **Table 3.2**). The appropriate assessment will consider direct, indirect, secondary, cumulative and in-combination impacts.

Each policy within the assessment will be evaluated and tabulated against each feature in regard to the potential effects of the policy and mitigation measures that could be taken if an adverse effect is identified, and commentary on this evaluation provided. On the basis of this work, an assessment can then be provided with regard to the effects of each policy on the integrity of the European Site. Where appropriate, the outcomes of the assessment process will also be supported by relevant ecological data.

Table 3-2 Suggested Table Format to Record the Appropriate Assessment

Policy -						
Sub Feature	Attribute	Target	Potential effect of policy	Preventative Measures	Mitigation	Implications for the integrity of the site
Site Feature - E.g. Ringed Plover						

The level of assessment undertaken will be at an 'appropriate' level, commensurate with a policy based assessment, and in recognition of the fact that further assessment would be undertaken at the proposal stage. Paragraph 1.7.1 of the Natural England Guidance document (English Nature, 2006) acknowledges the need to provide a level of assessment that is 'appropriate' and refers to the European Court of Justice ruling where the Advocate General's opinion was that the assessment for policy should be as rigorous as can reasonably be undertaken.

The key areas of analysis have been determined through the stages set out in **Section 3.2.2**. These are identified in **Table 6.1**. Consultation will be undertaken with RSPB, Natural England, Wessex Water, South West Water and the Environment Agency to gather additional data. This will allow us to ascertain existing recreation in development area and likelihood of increased recreation at the European Sites. We will also assess water quality deterioration (from diffuse pollution and STW discharges, using water quality data and STW capacity data).

It will be necessary to undertake further data collection to inform Stage 2 (Appropriate Assessment). A list of data requirements is provided in **Section 6.2**.

3.3.2 Provision of an 'In Combination' Assessment

The 'in combination' assessment will build on the assessment of individual policies and the summary tables provided in the previous stage. The impacts of any Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies policy or land allocation for future development will be considered in combination with other policies or approved projects yet to be implemented, which can be identified as having similar mechanisms as the policy being considered for potential impact on site integrity.

Conclusions from the 'in combination' assessment will be provided alongside the summary for each Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies policy, so that the impacts of the policy or land allocation for future development alone and 'in combination' with other plans and projects is clearly and fully expressed.

3.3.3 Consideration of Preventative Measures and Mitigation

If it can be concluded that all of the Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies policies alone or 'in combination' with other plans or projects would not have an adverse effect on the European sites in question, then the assessment would finish at this stage. A recommendation would then be made, stating that the Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies be implemented in their current form.

However, if following completion of the above stages, policies or land allocations remain that could have an adverse effect on the integrity of any of the European Sites, consideration will then need to be given to how such effects could be avoided or mitigated. Working with the Planning Department of each of the Somerset Authorities, available guidance and best practice would be used to determine feasible approaches and measures in respect of this.

The intent of work at this stage would be to ensure that suggested measures are acceptable in the planning context and in regard to the impacts of given policies or land allocation for future development. Following this collaborative process, a series of measures would be specified that would clearly demonstrate how adverse impacts can be mitigated or avoided for each relevant policy or land allocation.

It should be recognised at this stage, that at a policy level, preventative measures can be provided by the provision of additional supporting policy to offset adverse impacts. For example, it may be considered that site specific housing allocations may lead to additional recreational disturbance on SPA and / or Ramsar bird species. In this instance supporting policy could be developed that requires enhanced levels of recreational space to be provided with housing allocations, to prevent any increase in recreational disturbance of designated European features, where there is clear evidence for the use of the alternative as opposed to continued or increased pressure on existing sites through the use of obstruction/exclusion methods. It should be noted, however, that if policies remain for which preventative measures or mitigation cannot be established, then alternatives must be considered.

3.3.4 Determination of Alternative Solutions and Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest

If policies or land allocation for future development have been identified that could have adverse impacts on the integrity of the site(s) and preventive measures or mitigation are not adequate or appropriate, such policies will then need to be reconsidered. This consideration would follow a two stage process.

Firstly, alternative solutions should be considered. Can the policy in question be replaced by a policy which will meet the requirements of the wider Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies and yet avoid potential impacts on European Sites? In the case of housing allocation policy, this may relate to whether a specific site allocation can be replaced with a location elsewhere, where potential impacts on European Sites could be avoided or would be acceptable. The consideration of policy alternatives will require the combined efforts of the Appropriate Assessment project team, Natural England and the policy planning officers from each of the Somerset Authorities considered in this review.

Secondly, if a policy lacks a viable alternative, then the matter of whether the policy is required in the interests of overriding public interest will need to be considered.

It should be noted that the DCLG Guidance (August 2006) states that:

“After mitigation measures have been exhausted on an emerging option and it is shown to still have a potentially negative effect on the integrity of a European site, and in absence of any other alternative solution, as a rule the option should be dropped.

In the exceptional circumstance and as an exception to that rule, if the pursuit of the option is justified by ‘imperative reasons of overriding public interest’, consideration can be given to proceeding in the absence of alternative solutions (see the Box 1 below). In these cases compensatory measures must have to be put in place to offset negative impacts”.

Box 1: Imperative reasons of overriding public interest and compensatory measures

In the exceptional event where the Local Planning Authorities proceed with a plan despite a negative assessment, it must be demonstrated that this is for ‘imperative reasons of overriding public interest’ and must provide strong justification to support their case. In these circumstances the relevant Government Office should be informed from the outset in these circumstances. They should show that there were no possible mitigation measures and/or alternative solutions to cancel out the negative effects on the integrity of the European site, along with either of the following:

- that the plan is being undertaken for reasons relating to human health, public safety or beneficial consequences of primary importance to the environment; and/or
- that the plan is being undertaken for imperative reasons or overriding public interest.

Local Planning Authorities when proceeding with a plan which is likely to cause negative impacts on a European site must also carry out compensatory measures. These must be taken to ensure that the overall coherence of the network of European sites is protected. The relevant Government Office must be consulted.

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government will inform the European Commission about the compensatory measures adopted.

3.4 Provision of an Appropriate Assessment Report

At the conclusion of the assessment a full account of the analysis for each Core Strategy will be provided in the form of an Appropriate Assessment Report. In addition to the analysis, the report will also include records of consultation with Natural England, their response and any actions subsequent to this. The Appropriate Assessment Report will then be provided to Natural England for consultation. Following consultation, any required amendments will be made, and a finalised report including recommendations will be provided to Somerset Authorities. Within this report, agreed actions for policy amendment, replacement or modification (if required) will be presented.

The likely contents list for the appropriate assessment report will include:

- Introduction;
- Methodology;
- Consultation – anticipated to be with Natural England, Environment Agency, RSPB and Somerset Wildlife Trust;
- Assessment of Impacts (direct, indirect, secondary and cumulative);
- Consideration of Mitigation; and
- Conclusions.

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4 APPRAISAL OF SOMERSET AUTHORITIES CORE STRATEGY DOCUMENTS

4.1 Policies Which Have Been Screened Into Appropriate Assessment

The filters and criteria identified in **Section 3.3.1** were applied to all of the policies identified in the Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies to give an indication of whether there is likely to be an impact to the Natura 2000 sites from each policy. This is detailed in **Appendix D**, those policies which are considered likely to have a significant impact are highlighted in red and summarised in **Tables 4.1 to 4.4**. Following this screening exercise, a more technical assessment has been made for each policy, considering their relevance with regard to having a likely significant effect on European Sites against the conservation objectives for each of the Natura 2000 sites. This can be found in **Appendix E**.

At this scoping stage, the policies shown in **Tables 4.1 to 4.4** have been selected where the direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the development relating to these policies will be either likely to have a significant effect or the potential to have a significant effect. Policies have been categorised in this manner to ensure that the selection of the final list of policies for inclusion within the Appropriate Assessment (post scoping) is determined on the most informed basis.

It is proposed at this stage, that the policy suite provided in **Tables 4.1 to 4.4** will provide the basis for the subsequent Appropriate Assessment.

4.1.1 Key Issues

Key issues have been identified from the literature review of the Sites' favourable condition status, as well as other sources including the Regional Spatial Strategy and its Appropriate Assessment.

Additional housing development will have inevitable water resource demands, with the potential to impact on European Sites as a result of the increased abstraction on watercourses which could impinge on low flows particularly in summer, and resulting obstruction to fish and other aquatic fauna movements. Fish migration in particular could be affected as the migratory signals are triggered by flow and water levels. Advice has been sought from the Environment Agency on the current water availability on European Sites in relation to any threshold values specified in Favourable condition tables, and the potential impacts of projected housing demand.

Similarly, additional demands on the waste-water treatment system will be made by additional housing. This has the potential for eutrophication impacts on European Sites. Again, advice will be sought from the Environment Agency on potential eutrophication impacts as a secondary impact of housing. Consultation and information will also be sought from South West Water in relation to WWTW capacity and discharges.

Diffuse recreational impacts represent a particular challenge to predict. As well as reviewing available literature on the subject, Royal Haskoning will examine any relationship between ongoing declines in SPA and / or Ramsar bird numbers in the Severn Estuary (Bridgwater Bay) sites with the extent of recreational activity in the areas experiencing the declines.

Table 4-1 List of Policies Considered Likely to Have a Significant or Potentially Significant Effect within the Mendip Core Strategy Issues and Options Report

Mendip Core Strategy Issues and Options Report December 2008
Option 1a - The first option is that the Core Strategy simply makes provision for 415 net additional homes per annum in Mendip over the period 2006 - 2026.
Option 1b - The second option is to make provision for 450 net additional homes per annum.
Option 4a - The Preferred Option previously consulted on sought to balance housing and employment growth at Glastonbury. In balancing future jobs and homes, and assuming unemployment falls as job opportunities increase, this gave rise to a need for an additional 850 homes.
Option 4b - In light of the marginal shortfall in land supply, the Core Strategy should set out the need for a small employment site which will be allocated in a subsequent Local Development Framework document in 2 or 3 years time.
Option 4d - This option proposes that the modest 1.6 hectares of land which is needed in Glastonbury is added to the 5.5 hectares required at Street to create a more viable employment site. Discussion of how this land might be accommodated is set out in the section relating to Street.
Option 5a - That the 2000sqm of additional retail space required in the plan period is focused entirely in the town centre through extensions to existing stores, the redevelopment of existing areas to provide more space, or the earmarking of new areas around the town centre for retail development.
Option 5b - This option recognises that there is a concentration of existing retail warehousing which could be supplemented with stores offering particular types of goods which most local residents currently purchase elsewhere.
<p>Option 6a - The Preferred Option previously consulted on was described as the "moderate growth in Street" in response to the good access to jobs and services including those in near-by Glastonbury, rather than as a catalyst for major regeneration of the town.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the district-wide housing requirement is set at 415 homes per annum, 1500 net additional homes would be directed to Street under this option. • If the district-wide housing requirement is set at 450 homes per annum, 1600 net additional homes would be directed to Street under this option. <p>Under this option, it will be necessary to accommodate about 500 - 600 homes on strategic sites, depending upon the level at which the district-wide housing requirement is set.</p>
Option 6b - The first alternative option put forward previously was a high-growth option.
Option 6c - The second alternative option consulted upon previously was a low growth option of 1000 homes.
Option 7a - That 5.7 hectares of employment land be provided as part of a mixed use development including housing and community infrastructure as part of one of the strategic sites identified later in this consultation paper.
Option 7b - That the existing allocated site at Gravenchon Way is extended westwards to provide one single 11 hectare employment area.
Option 7c - That land for a new 5.7 hectare standalone business park is identified elsewhere around Street.
Option 7d - That the currently undeveloped Gravenchon Way site is set aside and a single new 11 hectare standalone business park is identified elsewhere around Street.

Mendip Core Strategy Issues and Options Report December 2008
Option 12a) - Only allow development in those villages with a wide range of local services and facilities.
Option 12b) - Restrict development to those villages with 'Core Facilities'.
Option 12b) i) - Supplement Option 12b with an additional group of villages where new development would be dependent upon the delivery of an absent core facility.
Option 12b) ii) - Supplement Option 12b with an additional group of villages where affordable housing need is greatest.
Option 12b) iii) - Supplement Option 12b) with an additional group of villages where local employment levels are highest.
Option 12b) iv) - Supplement Option 12b) with an additional requirement for new employment development in villages where local employment is relatively low.
Option 12b) v) - Supplement Option 12b with a number of settlements in more isolated parts of the district where services and employment opportunities could be extended.
Option 12c) i) - Allow development in all 56 villages as identified in the current Local Plan.
Option 12d) - Allow development in all 56 villages identified in the current Local Plan with higher levels of development in 28 serviced villages which have a school, a daily bus service to a nearby town and either a shop or a village hall.

Table 4-2 List of Policies Considered Likely to Have a Significant or Potentially Significant Effect within the Sedgemoor Issues and Options Report

Sedgemoor Issues and Options Report June 2007
Option SS1 - Spatial Strategy for Sedgemoor (Distribution of Growth). How should the levels of growth set out in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy be distributed across the District? (Please select one option)
Option 1 - (Town Strategy)
Option 2 - (Towns and Key Rural Settlements Strategy)
Option 3 - (Dispersal Strategy)
Option 4 - (Alternative Strategy)
SS2 - Spatial Strategy for Sedgemoor (Additional Levels of Growth). If the housing requirement of the draft RSS is increased to the levels suggested by the household projections (ONS) or greater, which of the spatial strategy principles below would you consider most appropriate? (Please select one option)
A - Town Strategy
B - Town and Key Rural Settlements Strategy
C - Dispersal Strategy
D - Alternative Strategy
BW1 - Development Options for Bridgwater (Areas of Search for Housing). Please rank the following broad locations in the order that you consider them to be the most appropriate to be identified as having potential to accommodate an urban extension at Bridgwater? (With 1 being the most preferred and 8 being the least)
A - Little Sydenham Farm (Mixed Use)
B - Cokerhurst Farm, Wembdon
C - Bower Lane
D - Somerset Bridge (Mixed Use)
E - South Bridgwater
F - Durleigh
G - Follets Farm, Dunwear
H - Other Options (please state)

Sedgemoor Issues and Options Report June 2007	
<p>BW2 - Development Options for Bridgwater (Areas of Search for Employment). Please rank the following broad locations in the order that you consider them to be the most appropriate to potentially accommodate a strategic employment site for Bridgwater (with 1 being the most preferred and 7 being the least)</p>	<p>A - Little Sydenham Farm (Mixed Use) B - Royal Ordnance Factory, Puriton** Royal Ordnance Factory at Puriton has been included within the area of search although it is not adjacent to Bridgwater's urban area it is physically related to the town. C - Huntworth D - Somerset Bridge (Mixed Use) E - North of Express Park F - North and East of the A38 G - Other Option (please state)</p>
<p>BH1 - Development Options for Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge (Areas of Search for Housing). Please rank in order of preference the following broad locations that you consider to be the most appropriate to potentially accommodate an urban extension at Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge (with 1 being the most preferred and 4 being the least).</p>	<p>A - South of the River Brue B - Alstone C - North of Former Radio Station D - Other Options (please state)</p>
<p>BH2 - Development Options for Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge (Employment Provision). Please rank in order of preference the following approaches for providing adequate employment opportunities in Burnham & Highbridge (with 1 being the most preferred and 4 being the least).</p>	<p>B - Promote the extension of existing sites C - Promote the allocation of an additional greenfield employment site D - Other Options (please state)</p>
<p>BH3 - Development Options for Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge (Areas of Search for Employment). Please rank in order of preference the following broad locations that you consider to be the most appropriate to potentially accommodate an additional employment site at Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge (with 1 being the most preferred and 4 being the least).</p>	<p>A - Land to North of Isleport and A38 B - Land to North East of Isleport C - Land to the East of Isleport D - Other Options (please state)</p>

Table 4-3 List of Policies Considered Likely to Have a Significant or Potentially Significant Effect within the South Somerset Core Strategy Issues and Options Report

South Somerset Core Strategy Issues and Options Report, March 2008	
Option S1.	Levels of Development Based on the above information, which of the following housing supply scenarios do you consider we should plan for and why?
	A -Draft RSS EiP Panel Report recommendation of 19,700 dwellings, of which 6,400 should be within the existing area of Yeovil and 5,000 should be within an area of search for urban extension of Yeovil, and 8,300 should be elsewhere in the South Somerset Housing Market Area (district) outside Yeovil.
	B - ONS: 16,600 dwellings within South Somerset District Housing Market Area of which 7,400 dwellings to be provided for at Yeovil.
	C - Department of Communities & Local Government projection: 19,700 dwellings within South Somerset District Housing Market Area of which an undefined number of dwellings to be provided for at Yeovil;
	D - Draft RSS EiP Panel Report recommendation of 19,700 dwellings, of which 6,400 should be within the existing area of Yeovil and 5,000 should be within an area of search for urban extension of Yeovil, and 8,300 should be elsewhere in the South Somerset Housing Market Area (district) outside Yeovil;
	E - Growth in excess of 19,700 reflecting the Government's Housing Green Paper "Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable", July 2007.
Option S3	- Accepting your answer to Question S1 above, how should the residual (non-Yeovil) requirement of dwellings be provided for?
	A - Distribute the residual dwellings and commensurate jobs infrastructure etc to only Development Policy B settlements.
	B - Distribute the residual dwellings and commensurate jobs, infrastructure etc to only some Development Policy B (Market Towns) and C Small Towns & Villages) settlements.
	C - Distribute the residual dwellings and commensurate jobs, infrastructure etc to all Development Policy B and C settlements.
	D - An alternative option.
Option EP1	- Based on the RSS housing figures, do you agree that we should be:
	A - Planning to provide for the 9,100 jobs in the Yeovil travel to work area, which equates to somewhere in the region of 7,800 – 10,700 jobs in the district by 2026?
	B - An alternative option. Please provide evidence supporting the figure you identify.
Option TA2 - Walking and Cycling.	In order to promote walking and cycling, the Core Strategy should (tick all that apply):
	B - Provide cycle and pedestrian routes to link new development with new/existing services.
Option EQ4 - Renewable energy.	What approach should the Core Strategy take to a policy on proposals for large scale renewable energy schemes:
	A - Set out broad locations that would be appropriate for large scale renewable energy uses.
	B - Include a criteria-based policy for considering proposals for renewable energy generation within the Development Management policies.
	C - Both A and B.
	D - An alternative option. (please give details).

Table 4-4 List of Policies Considered Likely to Have a Significant or Potentially Significant Effect within the Taunton Deane Adopted Local Plan (2004) and the Emerging Allocations (2009)

Taunton Deane Emerging Allocations 2009		
Monkton Heathfield	TA1	3,000 dwellings with employment and schools with district centre
E & W of Greenway	TA2 & 3	1,000 dwellings
Priorswood/Nerrols	TA5	1,000 dwellings
Comeytrove	TA4	3,000 dwellings (but total potential capacity of between 6 and 8,000) including employment, schools and local centres
Staplegrove	TA7	1,250 dwellings with employment, school and local centre
Bishops Hull	TA8	500 dwellings
Ford Farm N.Fitz.	TA9	600 dwellings with employment
Killams	TA10	600 dwellings
North Curry		50 dwellings
Creech St Michael		50 dwellings
Other villages		75 dwellings

Taunton Deane Adopted Local Plan 2004
S9 - Within Taunton town centre, development proposals that enhance its sub-regional role and the quality and character of its surrounding environment will generally be supported.
EC1 - Business, industrial and warehousing development will be permitted within the defined limits of settlements.
EC2 - Proposals by existing firms to expand onto land subject to restrictive policies will be permitted where relocation to a more suitable site is unrealistic, and where the economic benefit of the proposal outweighs any harm to the objectives of the relevant policy. Mitigating measures will be sought to reduce any environmental impact to a minimum.
EC10 - Taunton and Wellington town centres will be the priority location for major retail development and other key town centre uses. Where such facilities cannot be located within these town centres, preference for site selection will be as follows:
i - edge-of-town centre sites.
iv - out-of-centre sites in locations that are (or can be made) accessible by a choice of means of transport.
EC24 - Static caravan sites and holiday chalet developments will be permitted.
EC25 - Touring caravan and camping site development will be permitted.

Taunton Deane Adopted Local Plan 2004	
C3 - Proposals involving the loss of recreational facilities, including allotments, public, private and school/college playing fields, sports grounds, indoor sport and recreational facilities, areas for informal public recreation and children's play areas will not be permitted unless:	
C - equivalent provision in a convenient location is made to at least an equal standard and with equal community benefit.	
C4 - In the event of the increased demand for open space not being met by existing facilities, developers of new housing, on sites of six or more dwellings, will provide landscaped and appropriately equipped recreational open space in accordance with the following standards:	
D - in the case of small groups of housing where the site is too small for provision of playing fields or children's play space on-site, or where it is physically unsuitable, off-site provision will be sought.	
C5 - Proposals for new or significantly improved or extended sports facilities will be permitted where:	
C - in the case of sites outside but adjoining the defined limits of settlements, there is a clear and demonstrable need to use a site in the countryside.	
T2 - Sites within the Tangier area as shown on the Proposals Map are proposed for major mixed-use redevelopment to include a food superstore, retail warehousing, offices, leisure and residential.	
T3 - Sites within the Firepool area as shown on the Proposals Map are proposed for a major mixed-use redevelopment to include retail warehousing, offices, industry, warehousing and distribution, leisure and residential.	
T4 - Sites at Norton Fitzwarren as shown on the Proposals Map are proposed for a major development site including housing, employment, community facilities and associated developments as set out in more detail in policies T5-T7 .	
T5 - The following sites are allocated for housing development as part of the Norton Fitzwarren major development site:	
A - Taunton Trading Estate incorporating Pring's Mobile Home Park	14.8 hectares.
B - Matthew Clark Cider Factory	3.9 hectares.
C - MoD Land, Cross Keys	0.9 hectares.
T6 - The following sites are allocated for employment facilities for business, industrial and warehousing development as part of the Norton Fitzwarren major development site:	
A - Taunton Trading Estate	7.5 hectares gross (5.2 hectares net).
B - Matthew Clark Cider Factory.	0.7 hectare gross (0.5 hectare net).
T7 - The following sites are allocated for community uses as part of the Norton Fitzwarren major development site:	
A - Matthew Clark Cider Factory and Mill House; Local Centre including local shopping and other commercial and community uses	1.7 hectares.
B - west of Stembridge Way; playing fields	4.3 hectares.
C - along the course of the Halse Water and elsewhere within the housing areas; linear public open space.	
D - Norton Fitzwarren Primary School, Blackdown View; school extension. In addition, a new school playing field to meet the needs of the expanded primary school will be required on a site to be agreed by the school and Education Authority.	
E - Norton Fitzwarren Hill Fort; public open space	5.6 hectares.

Taunton Deane Adopted Local Plan 2004	
T8	Sites at Monkton Heathfield are proposed for a major comprehensive development including housing, employment, community facilities and associated developments
T9	A site of 50 hectares east of Monkton Heathfield is allocated for a mixed-use development
T10	A site of 4.8 hectares north of Aginghill's Farm as shown on the Proposals Map is allocated for residential development. Affordable housing will be sought on this site in accordance with policies H9 and H10 .
T11	A site of 10 hectares south of Langaller is allocated for B1 light industry and B8 warehousing development.
T13	A site of 3.6 hectares east of Silk Mills Lane as shown on the Proposals Map is allocated for a minimum of 80 dwellings.
T14	A site of 3.3 hectares at Priorswood Road SWEB west depot as shown on the Proposals Map is allocated for a mixed residential and commercial development.
T15	The following sites as shown on the Proposals Map are allocated for residential development:
A	Hamilton Road 0.6 ha
B	Princess Margaret School, Middleway 1.4 ha
C	St James Street Garage 0.2 ha
D	Somerset Place 0.7 ha
E	Dabinett Close, Norton Fitzwarren 0.3 ha
F	52/55 Upper High Street 0.03 ha
G	Gatchell House, Trull 1.5 ha
H	The Uppers Playing Field, Greenway Road 2.1 ha
T16	A site of 9.4 hectares is allocated as an extension of Crown Industrial Estate.
T17	A site of 1.8 hectares south of the former Priorswood Concrete Works as shown on the Proposals Map is allocated for offices and light industry.
T18	A site of 0.8 hectare west of Courtlands Farm as shown on the Proposals Map is allocated for low density employment uses with small buildings designed to respect the setting of Norton Camp Hill.
T23	A site of 1.7 hectares at The Crescent as shown on the Proposals Map is allocated for a major retail development scheme, to include food and drink, leisure and entertainment facilities.
T24	A site of 1.4 hectares at Wood Street as shown on the Proposals Map is allocated for mixed-use town centre redevelopment, to include residential and one or more of the following uses: retail, food and drink, offices, leisure and/or entertainment facilities.
T28	Park and Ride sites are proposed at:
A	East Taunton; and
B	East of Silk Mills.
T32	The following major highway schemes are proposed:
A	Inner Relief Road, with associated works at Wellington Road/Castle Street and Bridge Street/Wood Street junctions;
B	Silk Mills Bridge.

Taunton Deane Adopted Local Plan 2004
CSL1 - Development will be permitted in accordance with the agreed Development Guide and Master Plan for Cotford St Luke up to a limit of approximately 850 dwellings.
CM1 - A site of 1.1 hectares at Hyde Lane as shown on the Proposals Map is allocated for not less than 35 houses.
CM2 - Other than on the site allocated in policy CM1, new housing development will be restricted to small-scale developments, including infilling, within the defined settlement limits.
HB1 - Land west of Station Road is proposed for housing development.
HE1 - A site of approximately 10 hectares is proposed for employment uses (Classes B2 and B8) east of Henlade Concrete Works.
KM1 - A site of 0.65 hectare at Hill Farm as shown on the Proposals Map is allocated for a minimum of 20 houses.
OK1 - A site of 0.5 hectare is proposed for approximately 15 houses east of Saxon Close.
WV1 - A site of 2.7 hectares north of Style Road is allocated for not less than 50 dwellings.
WV3 - A site of 5.6 hectares south of Taunton Road, as shown on the Proposals Map, is allocated for Class B1, B2 or B8 employment uses, with a maximum of 3.0 hectares to be developed within the Plan period.

Where land allocation for future development occurs within areas at risk of flooding, or compounds the risk of flooding elsewhere, this could have adverse effects on European Sites both in terms of the watercourse response, or through the requirement for flood alleviation or protection measures that would need to be implemented which would themselves have the potential to adversely effect the European Sites or their interest features and species. We have examined the Strategic Flood Risk Assessments undertaken for the Local Development Framework to ascertain if there is a potential for adverse effects on the European Sites, and where possible quantify it. Glastonbury and Street are known to have surface water flooding problems which currently impact upon the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/ Ramsar.

Several of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which form the Natura 2000 sites are in unfavourable condition (see **Appendices A and B**). The reasons for unfavourable condition include:

- Fertiliser use;
- Inappropriate water levels;
- Water pollution - agriculture/run off;
- Coastal squeeze;
- Peat extraction;
- Vehicles;
- Grazing,
- Public Access/ Disturbance.

Peat extraction has been carried out in the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar since 1949 and this is considered by Natural England to be a reason for unfavourable condition of some of the SSSIs which form the SPA/Ramsar. Minerals extraction permissions on the Somerset Levels and Moors are reviewed under Regulation 50 of the Habitat Regulations by Somerset County Council. A screening report was produced in April 2009.

Public access/disturbance is listed as a reason for unfavourable condition of SSSIs by Natural England. Consultation with Natural England (see **Table 2.3**) has identified that this is considered to be a low level problem on both the Severn Estuary and Somerset Levels and Moors Natura 2000 sites. Furthermore Natural England has the responsibility to promote access, recreation and public well-being for the benefit of today's and future generations.

4.1.2 Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

To meet the new requirements for the South West of England, a draft RSS (titled the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West) was published (June 2006) and once finalised (estimated June 2009) it will provide the statutory framework for local authorities to produce more detailed local development plans and local transport plans for their areas. In order to meet the requirements of the European Habitat Regulations, a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been produced for the RSS.

Key issues identified in the RSS and HRA include flood risk, ecological integrity, economic growth and housing development, abstraction and minerals extraction. These are outlined in turn below.

Flood Risk (Section 4.0.12)

“The Regional Flood Risk Assessment provides a broad overview of the source and significance of all types of flood risk across the region. It concludes that the areas which are subject to regionally significant flood risk are the Somerset Levels and Moors... Bridgwater, Taunton... At the local level, local planning authorities will prepare Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and will use the sequential test outlined in PPS25 to guide development away from current or future flood risk areas and flood plains. Flood risk will also be managed through the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems”.

Ecological Integrity

Section 4.0.13 states that:

“The integrity of Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites (collectively referred to as N2K sites) should be protected. New development in the region will be facilitated by policy measures that secure effective avoidance, minimisation and mitigation of the potential adverse effects on the ecological integrity of such designated sites. Policy ENV1 identifies the Severn Estuary as particularly vulnerable.

The Habitat Regulations Assessment also identifies the Somerset Levels & Moors SPA and Ramsar (Taunton and Yeovil) as being vulnerable where further protection measures may be necessary depending on the impacts of new development proposed through LDDs or planning applications”.

Policy CO1 seeks to protect the coastal zone and states that *“Within the undeveloped coast there will be a presumption against development unless it:*

- *Does not detract from the unspoilt character and appearance of the coast*
- *Is essential for the benefit of the wider community; or*
- *Is required to improve public access for informal recreation; or*
- *Is required to support the sustainable management of fisheries; and*
- *Cannot be accommodated reasonably outside the undeveloped coast zone.”*

The HRA states that it is possible that nutrient removal may be required at the Taunton sewage treatment works (STW) to protect the integrity of the Somerset Level and Moors SPA and Ramsar site due to the ambitious growth proposed in the Panel Report for Taunton.

Economic Growth and Housing Development

Policy HMA6 (Taunton and Bridgwater), and HMA13 (Yeovil) state that 7,500 jobs will be created in the Bridgwater Travel To Work Area (TTWA), 16,500 in the Taunton TTWA and 9,100 in the Yeovil TTWA.

HMA 6 also states that:

“... action should be taken to improve movement and accessibility for all on the corridor between Bridgwater and Taunton (avoiding the M5). This should comprise:

- *demand management measures*
- *sustainable travel measures; and*
- *if necessary targeted new infrastructure investment to unlock pinch points.”*

Policy HD1 states that provision should be made across the HMAs and LPA areas to deliver the total number of dwellings in the periods between 2006 -2026 as set out in **Tables 4.5** and **4.6**.

Table 4-5 Additional Dwellings to be Built between 2006 and 2026 within Local Regions and the South West of England as a whole (Secretary of State CLG, 2008)

Region	Annual growth 2006-2026	Total
South West Total	29,623	993,720
Mendip	415	8,300
South Somerset	985	19,700
Taunton Deane	1090	21,800
Sedgemoor	510	10,200

Table 4.6 details the proposed housing and employment allocations from the RSS for the Strategically Significant Cities and Towns Bridgwater, Taunton and Yeovil for the period 206-2026.

Table 4-6 SSCT Allocations as Set Out in the RSS

Region	RSS Proposed Allocations 2006-2026
Mendip	8,300 homes to be spread across the district, development will be focussed on Street & Glastonbury, Frome, Wells and Shepton Mallet.
Sedgemoor	6,200 new homes within the existing urban area of Bridgwater 1,500 new homes partly within the existing urban area and partly as an extension to it, to the north of Bridgwater 7,500 jobs in the Bridgwater TTWA including the provision of about 54 ha of employment land.
South Somerset	6,400 new homes within the existing urban area of Yeovil 5,000 new homes in area of search around Yeovil (South Somerset and West Dorset) 9,100 jobs in the Yeovil TTWA including the provision of around 43 ha of employment land.
Taunton Deane	11,000 new homes within Taunton Urban Area. 4,000 new homes to the north east of Taunton. 3,000 new homes to the south west of Taunton 16,500 jobs in the Taunton TTWA including the provision of 34ha of employment land.

The Environment Agency's response to the RSS proposed development allocations states that *"In the Taunton HMA, subject to confirmation from Wessex Water, capacity is available to treat increased sewage flows arising from the proposed development at Taunton, Bridgwater and Wellington whilst continuing to meet environmental quality standards. Nutrient loads in the Tone are currently subject to investigation and in the long term nutrient removal may be necessary at Taunton and Wellington Sewage Works. Sufficient water is available for supply,*

while continuing to meet environmental needs, provided the strategy overall secures higher standards of water efficiency in new homes”.

Abstraction

The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) has identified that the Severn Estuary cSAC, SPA and Ramsar sites are sensitive to increased levels of water abstraction to serve new homes, and the construction of more water efficient homes may be required in the HMAs affecting these sites:

“These sensitivities may necessitate more stringent or innovative water conservation measures dependent upon the identification of sites and specific locations for new development in local development plan documents in order to ensure that there is no adverse effect of the integrity of such sites. Where the abstraction sources for new development sites and locations are hydrologically connected to N2K sites there will be more likelihood of adverse effects occurring. The Government has also committed to bringing forward an amendment to Building Regulations to include a requirement for a minimum standard of water efficiency in new homes as well as a review of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 later in 2008.”

4.2 Summary

It has been established that the Somerset Authorities’ Core Strategies requires an Appropriate Assessment, since it cannot be concluded that the impacts of the provision of housing and employment land allocations, would not have a likely significant effect on the three European Sites being considered in this report.

Given that none of the policies propose development within the boundaries of the European Sites, (and that the nature of these policies relates to activities which are not likely to have a direct impact on such sites), the key issues, to be addressed within the Appropriate Assessment will relate to the secondary impacts of such development, mainly disturbance, water resources, flood risk, water quality and air pollution.

The actual impacts of increased housing numbers, levels of recreational use, transport within and external to the County and the provision of new employment, clearly may have the potential for a likely significant effect on these sites given the sensitivity of bird species to disturbance from passive and active recreation in or adjacent to roosting sites.

The impacts of such policy therefore need to be considered in this context within the Appropriate Assessment. Additionally, such impacts will need to be considered, alone and in combination with other plans and projects (in accordance with the Habitats Regulations). The determination of the other plans and projects which are relevant therefore, needs to be considered at the scoping stage, and this issue is addressed in the following section.

5 CONSIDERATION OF OTHER PLANS AND PROJECTS

5.1 Introduction

The Habitats Regulations provide the requirement for an ‘in combination’ assessment to ensure that the integrity of sites is afforded full protection from the cumulative impacts of development, and to ensure that holistic approaches to assessment are provided. Natural England (in its Habitats Regulations Guidance Notes and its Draft Guidance on The Assessment of RSS and Sub-Regional Strategies) and the DCLG (then ODPM) in Circular 6/2005 have provided guidance with regard to the manner in which ‘in combination’ assessments should be provided and the scope to which other plans or projects should be considered in this process. With regard to the plans and projects that will need to be considered ‘in combination’ with the Somerset Authorities’ Core Strategies, there is a clear need to provide an appropriate scope to ensure that the overall assessment is manageable and effective and meets with the terms of the Habitats Regulations. In order to provide a focus to determine which plans and projects, will be included within this assessment, the following criteria have been applied:

- Projects which have been given consent, but which have not yet been implemented (this could include unimplemented large scale housing developments or proposals);
- Ongoing projects subject to regulatory reviews;
- Other plans which contain policies which may trigger development which may impacts on the sites identified as being relevant to this assessment; and
- Non-statutory plans which may influence development.

On the basis of the above criteria, a review of policy within the District, adjacent to the District, and in the regional context has been undertaken to determine aspects that should be included within the ‘in combination’ assessment. Clearly, the policies which will be relevant in the context of the Appropriate Assessment are quite specific. Such policies, when implemented, may cause similar effects (although the mechanisms maybe different) to the Somerset Authorities’ Core Strategies policies identified as potentially having an effect. For example, the key potential impacts on the SPAs in Somerset have been identified as disturbance from passive or active recreation, water resources, and water quality. Accordingly, non-Somerset Authorities’ Core Strategies policies that may contribute to or interact with these potential impacts will need to be included within the ‘in combination’ assessment. Key policy areas will therefore relate to housing and employment land allocation.

The full Policy, Plan, and Project review is included in **Appendix F**. Those plans and projects that are considered likely to have an in-combination impact with the Somerset Authorities Core Strategies are listed below:

- The Draft Revised Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West Incorporating the Secretary of States Proposed Changes – For Consultation 2008;
- One Wales Delivery Plan 2007-2011
- Responding to Climate Change in Somerset;
- North Devon and Somerset SMP;
- West Somerset Local Plan;
- Somerset Minerals Local Plan 204-2011;
- North Somerset Core Strategy – Issues and Options Report;

- The Parrett Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy;
- River Tone Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy;
- Brue, Axe and North Somerset Streams, Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy
- Bristol Container Port habitat creation scheme;
- Hinkley Point;
- Somerset Local Transport Plan; and
- Somerset Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2006.

In addition, we are aware of the following proposals which could have an in-combination impact with the Somerset Authorities Core Strategies, however at present there are no firm proposals for these schemes. It is too difficult to make an assessment of these schemes; therefore they have been scoped out of the in-combination assessment.

- Severn Tidal Power Proposals;
- River Parrett Surge Barrier;

Finally, it should be noted that the Core Strategies for adjacent districts can also result in in-combination impacts.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This report has provided three basic tasks to determine the scope of the assessment:

1. The identification of the Somerset Authorities' Core Strategies policies which need to be considered within the appropriate assessment (identified in **Tables 4.1-4.4**);
2. Summarised the sites, features and attributes which require consideration (Identified in **Table 6.1**); and
3. Provided an account of the other plans and projects which need to be considered within the assessment (See **Section 5.1**).

The scope of the appropriate assessment for each Core Strategy is identified in **Table 6.1** below. The key issues are considered likely to arise from the policies identified in **Tables 4.1-4.4**.

Table 6-1 Key Focus of the Appropriate Assessment for each Local Authority

Local Authority	Scoped in	Scoped out
Mendip District Council (Options 1a, 1b, 4a, 4b, 4d, 5a, 5b, 6a-6c, 7a-7d, 12a-12d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased recreational disturbance to birds within the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA due to population growth within the district. Particularly at Street and Glastonbury. • Increased water quality impacts to invertebrates within the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar due to eutrophication from new water treatment facilities and run-off. These are anticipated from developments at Glastonbury and Street and from potential developments at Bleadney, Meare, Walton, Westhay and Wookey. • Increased flood risk to the Somerset Levels and Moors from development at Glastonbury and Street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts to Severn Estuary SPA, cSAC, Ramsar due to distance.
Sedgemoor District Council (Options SS1, SS2, BW1, BW2, BW4 (C) BH1, BH2 (B-D), BH3, BH4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased recreational disturbance to birds within the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA and Severn Estuary SPA due to population growth and increased recreation within the district, particularly at Burnham, Highbridge, Bridgwater, Westonzoyland, Woolavington, and Ashcott, Cannington, Pawlett, Puriton and Wedmore. • Potential development and renewable energy projects in the flyways between the Severn Estuary SPA and the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA affecting birds. • Potential increased recreational disturbance to saltmarsh, sandflat and mudflat habitats within the Severn Estuary SPA and cSAC due to population growth and increased recreation within the district. • Potential development in undesignated areas outside the Severn Estuary SPA which nonetheless support the ecological functioning of bird species, such as for roosting and/or feeding, from the SPA. • Potential to impact upon fish migratory signals (Severn Estuary cSAC and Ramsar species) due to increased levels of abstraction or increased obstruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct impacts to the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar, as there is no hydrological pathway.

Local Authority	Scoped in	Scoped out
South Somerset District Council (Options S1, S3, EP1, TA2 (B), EQ4,)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased recreational disturbance to birds within the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA due to population growth within the district, particularly at Yeovil Increased water quality impacts to invertebrates within the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar due to changes in water quality arising from run-off and increased sewage treatment works that could arise from development at Langport/ Huish Episcopi, South Petherton, Somerton and Martock. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts to Severn Estuary SPA/ cSAC/ Ramsar due to distance.
Taunton Deane Borough Council (Options S9, EC1, EC2, EC10 (i&iv), EC24, EC25, C3 (C), C4 (D), C5 (C), T2-T11, T13-T18, T23, T24, T28, T32, CSL1, CM1, CM2, HB1, HE1, KM1, OK1, WV1, WV3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to impact upon fish migratory signals (Severn Estuary cSAC and Ramsar species) due to increased levels of abstraction. Increased recreational disturbance to birds within the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA due to population growth within the district, particularly North Curry, Creech St Michael, Monkton Heathfield (TA1), West Greenway (TA3), East Greenway (TA2), Priorswood/Nerrols (TA5), Killams (TA10), Staplegrove (TA7), Comeytrove (TA4), Bishops Hull (TA8), and Ford Farm (TA9). Increased water quality impacts to invertebrates within the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar due to eutrophication from new water treatment facilities and surface water run-off from developments at North Curry, Creech St Michael, Monkton Heathfield (TA1), West Greenway (TA3), East Greenway (TA2), Priorswood/Nerrols (TA5), Killams (TA10), Staplegrove (TA7), Comeytrove (TA4), Bishops Hull (TA8), and Ford Farm (TA9). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts to Severn Estuary SPA, and habitats within the Severn Estuary cSAC due to distance.

6.1 Likely Mitigation Measures

At this stage of the process it is not possible to finalise mitigation measures as the steps described in **Section 3.3** need to be undertaken to inform the mitigation strategy. It is possible, however, to highlight likely generic mitigation measures. These are outlined below:

- Land allocations for development should be located to avoid increased abstraction, particularly in those areas identified in the CAMS as no water available;
- Wastewater Treatment Works should be upgraded to ensure there is enough infrastructure to cope with demand, thus avoiding water pollution incidents;
- Alternative recreation areas could be created to reduce recreational pressure within the N2K sites, where there is clear evidence for the use of the alternative as opposed to continued or increased pressure on existing sites through the use of obstruction/exclusion methods;
- Transport Planning should consider the need to avoid increased air quality impacts in the area of N2K sites, and where possible should reduce existing impacts; and
- South Somerset District Council Core Strategy Issues and Options Report Policies S1 and S3 could be reworded to include the statement 'residential development should be located at least 5km distant from, and not on any watercourse which feeds into, the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/ Ramsar'. Development should only go ahead in the 5km zone if it can demonstrate that there will be no adverse effect upon N2K sites.

6.2 Requirements for Stage 2

In order to undertake the Appropriate Assessment it will be necessary to obtain the following data:

- WeBS data for the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA and Severn Estuary SPA;
- Existing population data for towns and villages for each district;
- Sewage Treatment Works capacity, and treatment methods;
- Outcomes of study into impacts of treated sewage effluent on the Somerset Levels and Moors (Wessex Water).
- Existing employment land areas for towns and villages for each district;
- Existing public rights of way routes for each district;
- GIS data showing proposed locations/required for flood defence for each district;
- GIS mapping of watercourses (Environment Agency);
- Water quality data and water quality targets for all relevant rivers (Environment Agency);
- Salmon spawning areas (Environment Agency);
- Rivers at risk of low flows (Environment Agency/ Natural England); and
- Review of consents data for Severn Estuary SPA/cSAC/ Ramsar and Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/ Ramsar (Environment Agency).

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8 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Appropriate Assessment (AA): An appropriate assessment determines whether a likely significant effect will occur as a result of a proposed plan, policy or project. Also referred to as a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP): An agreed plan for a habitat or species, which forms part of the UK's commitment to biodiversity. For further information consult the BAP website: <http://www.ukbap.org.uk>

Birds Directive: European Community Directive (79/409/EEC) on the conservation of wild birds. Implemented in the UK as the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (1994). For further information consult Her Majesties Stationary Office website: http://www.hmso.gov.uk/si/si1994/Uksi_19942716_en_1.htm

Candidate Special Area for Conservation (cSAC): SACs are internationally important sites for habitats and/or species, designated as required under the EC Habitats Directive. A candidate SAC is currently under consideration for its inclusion under the EC Habitats Directive. SACs are protected for their internationally important habitat and non-bird species. They also receive SSSI designation under The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000; and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). For further details refer to the following The Joint Nature Conservation Committee website <http://www.jncc.gov.uk>

Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS): CAMS are strategies for managing water resources locally. They will make more information the allocation of water resources available and balance the needs of abstractors with those of the water environment by consulting with local interested parties.

Catchment Flood Management Plan (CFMP): Catchment Flood Management Plans (CFMPs) are a large-scale strategic planning framework for managing flood risks to people and the developed and natural environment in a sustainable way.

Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF): A partnership between Defra, Natural England and the Environment Agency which aims to reduce the pollution of surface-water bodies caused by farming operations.

Competent Authority: The organisation which prepares a plan or programme subject to the Directive and is responsible for the AA.

Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS): Countryside Stewardship was introduced as a pilot scheme in England in 1991 and operates outside the Environmentally Sensitive Areas. Payments are made to farmers and other land managers to enhance and conserve English landscapes, their wildlife and history and to help people to enjoy them. The scheme has now closed to new applicants and has been superseded by the Environmental Stewardship scheme. Some existing agreements will, however, continue until 2014.

Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG): The department that is responsible for local communities and social issues. For further information please view the website: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/>

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA): The Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme was introduced in 1987 to offer incentives to encourage farmers to adopt agricultural practices which would safeguard and enhance parts of the country of particularly high landscape, wildlife or historic value. The scheme has now closed to new applicants and has been superseded by the Environmental Stewardship scheme. Some existing agreements will, however, continue until 2014.

Habitats Directive: The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992) requires EU Member States to create a network of protected wildlife areas, known as Natura 2000, across the European Union. This network consists of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), established to protect wild birds under the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979). These sites are part of a range of measures aimed at conserving important or threatened habitats and species.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA): An assessment to determine whether a likely significant effect will occur as a result of a proposed plan, policy or project. Also referred to as an Appropriate Assessment (AA).

Higher Level Stewardship (HLS): A land management scheme managed by Natural England.

Housing Market Area (HMA): A geographical area which is relatively self-contained in terms of housing demand; i.e. a large percentage of people moving house or settling in the area will have sought a dwelling only in that area.

Indicator: A measure of variables over time often used to measure achievement of objectives.

Local Authority Development Plans: These statutory land development plans generally cover a 10-year period from when they are adopted. However, the local authorities currently review these plans every five years. A District Council and a Unitary Authority will produce a Local Plan and a County Council produce a Structure Plan. A Structure Plan guides the Local Plans of several District Councils.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP): A local agenda (produced by the local authority) with plans and targets to protect and improve biodiversity and achieve sustainable development.

Local Development Documents (LDD): These documents make up the Local Development Framework (LDF).

Mitigation: Used in this Guide to refer to measures to avoid, reduce or offset significant adverse effects on the environment.

Objective: A statement of what is intended, specifying the desired direction of change in trends.

Plan or Programme: For the purposes of this Guide, the term “plan or programme” covers any plans or programmes to which the Directive applies.

Public Service Agreement (PSA): A government led agreement, in this case this term refers to the target to have 95% of all SSSIs in England in favourable (or recovering) condition by 2010.

Ramsar Site: The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat (1971) requires the UK Government to promote using wetlands wisely and to protect wetlands of international importance. This includes designating certain areas as Ramsar sites, where their importance for nature conservation (especially with respect to waterfowl) and environmental sustainability meet certain criteria. Ramsar sites receive SSSI designation under The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Further information can be located on the Ramsar convention on wetlands website: <http://www.ramsar.org/>

Regional Planning Guidance (RPG): Planning Guidance issued for the South West by the Government Office for the South West Regional Assembly.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS): This will replace the RPG. It sets out a regional framework that addresses the 'spatial' implications of broad issues like healthcare, education, crime, housing, investment, transport, the economy and environment.

Scoping: The process of deciding the scope and level of detail of an AA, including the environmental effects and alternatives which need to be considered, the assessment methods to be used, and the structure and contents of the Appropriate Assessment Report.

Shoreline Management Plan (SMP): Non-statutory plans to provide sustainable coastal defence policies (to prevent erosion by the sea and flooding of low-lying coastal land) and to set objectives for managing the shoreline in the future. They are prepared by us or maritime local authorities, acting individually or as part of coastal defence groups.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 for their flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features. Notification of a SSSI includes a list of work that may harm the special interest of the site. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (provisions relating to SSSIs) has been replaced by a new Section 28 in Schedule 9 of the CROW Act. The new Section 28 provides much better protection for SSSIs. All cSACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites are designated as SSSIs. For further information refer to English Nature's website: <http://www.english-nature.com>

Somerset Authorities: Term used within this document to refer to Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council and Mendip District Council.

Special Protection Area (SPA): A site of international importance for birds, designated as required by the EC Birds Directive. SPAs are designated for their international importance as breeding, feeding and roosting habitat for bird species. The Government must consider the conservation of SPAs in all its planning decisions. SPAs receive SSSI designation under The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). For further details refer to the European Commission: website: <http://europa.eu.int/> and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee website.

Structure Plan: A statutory plan made up of part of the development Plan, prepared by County Councils or a combination of unitary authorities, containing strategic policies that cover main planning issues over a broad area and provide a framework for local planning, including Unitary Development Plans (UDPs).

Sustainability: A concept, which deals with man's effect, through development, on the environment. Sustainable development is 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (Brundland, 1987). The degree to which flood risk management options avoid tying future generations into inflexible or expensive options for flood defence. This usually includes considering other defences and likely developments as well as processes within a catchment. It should also take account of, for example, the long-term demands for non-renewable materials.

Travel to Work Area (TTWA): A category used for labour market analysis based on the criteria that of the resident economically active population, at least 75 per cent actually work in the area, and also, that of everyone working in the area; at least 75 per cent actually live in the area.

Water Level Management Plan (WLMP): Water Level Management Plans (WLMPs) are plans which set out how water levels should be managed to meet the conservation objectives of Special Sites of Scientific Interest set by Natural England (formerly English Nature).

9 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Appropriate Assessment
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
CAMS	Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies
CFMP	Catchment Flood Management Plan
CSF	Catchment Sensitive Farming
CSS	Countryside Stewardship Scheme
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area
HLS	Higher Level Stewardship
HMA	Housing Market Area
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
IROPI	Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
LDF	Local Development Framework
PSA	Public Service Agreement
Ramsar	the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance
RPG	Regional Planning Guidance
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
SAC	Special Area for Conservation
SMP	Shoreline Management Plan
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
STW	Sewage Treatment Works
TTWA	Travel to Work Area
WLMP	Water Level Management Plan

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