

**West Berkshire Local Plan**  
**Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document Submission**

**Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report**

**April 2016**

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## Executive summary

European legislation and government regulations introduce the need to carry out a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) on Development Plan Documents (DPDs) to protect the integrity of internationally important nature conservation sites.

These internationally important sites, collectively known as Natura 2000 sites, include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Within West Berkshire there are three designated SACs:

- Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC
- River Lambourn SAC
- Kennet Valley Alderwoods SAC

Within 2km of the boundary of West Berkshire there are an additional two SACs:

- Hartslock Wood SAC in South Oxfordshire
- Hackpen Hill SAC in the Vale of White Horse

Whilst there is no SPA within the boundary of West Berkshire, the south eastern area of the district falls within the 5km boundary of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

The 5km boundary has been determined by Natural England as a buffer area to regulate development near the SPA (although large scale proposals between 5 – 7km from the boundary will also be individually assessed).

A HRA of the Core Strategy was prepared in parallel to the production of the DPD. It considered all Natura 2000 sites within the district or those within 5km of its boundary. The HRA assessed the likely impacts of the possible effects of the Core Strategy policies on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site, including possible 'in combination' effects with other plans and projects.

The HRA concludes that the Core Strategy, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, will not affect the integrity of any of the European sites within the district or within 5km of the district boundary.

The Core Strategy sets the framework for the Housing Site Allocations (HSA) DPD that is being prepared as part of the Local Plan and to which this HRA has regard. The HSA DPD is in general conformity with the Core Strategy and allocates specific smaller scale housing sites adjacent to the existing settlement boundaries of settlements within the settlement hierarchy to meet the remainder of the 'at least' 10,500 housing figure identified in the Core Strategy. Sites and an area of search for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are also provided in the DPD, as are housing in the countryside policies, a review of the settlement boundaries for those settlements within the settlement hierarchy and a residential parking policy for new development.

This HRA screening report for the submission Housing Site Allocations DPD demonstrates that the allocations and policies within the DPD do not result in impacts and effects divergent to those assessed for the Core Strategy.

This HRA screening report concludes that the housing site allocations, proposed sites and an area of search for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, amendments to settlement boundaries, housing in the countryside policies, as well as a policy on residential

parking standards will not introduce impacts that would lead to a significant negative effect on the Natura 2000 sites of relevance.

The Council consulted with the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) on the HRA Screening Report prepared at the preferred option stage (2014). Only Natural England made submissions on this and they agreed with the Council's conclusions. They suggested some minor changes which have been incorporated into this HRA screening report. The Environment Agency and BBOWT did not respond.

As part of the Duty to Cooperate on the preparation of the Housing Site Allocations DPD a meeting was held with Natural England in April 2015. The outcomes of the meeting have been incorporated into this HRA screening report.

The HRA Screening Report was updated at the proposed submission stage, and the Council consulted the Environment Agency and Natural England on this. The Environment Agency advised that they had no comments to make whilst Natural England suggested amendments to the wording of the general site policy GS1 contained within the DPD and which is referenced within the avoidance and mitigation measures in the HRA.

On consideration of the suggested changes, the Council has decided to amend the final bullet point of the general site policy GS1 to provide further clarification, and amend three of the individual site policies – HSA5, HSA20 and HSA21. Natural England has confirmed that the changes are acceptable, and references to the proposed minor modifications are made within the avoidance and mitigation measures set out within this HRA.

## 1. Introduction

### Requirement for Habitat Regulations Assessment

- 1.1 Under the provisions of European Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (the Habitats Directive)<sup>1</sup>, transposed into British law by Regulation 102 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010<sup>2</sup>, a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required to assess the potential effects of a land-use plan against the conservation objectives of any European sites designated for their importance to nature conservation. These sites form a system of internationally important sites throughout Europe and are known collectively as the 'Natura 2000 network'. Article 2 of the Directive requires the maintenance or restoration of habitats and species of interest to the EU in a favourable condition.
- 1.2 European sites provide valuable ecological infrastructure for the protection of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species of exceptional importance within the EU. These sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPA), designated under European Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive)<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 118<sup>4</sup> requires that sites designated under the Ramsar Convention (The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat) are treated as if they are fully designated European sites for the purpose of considering development proposals that may affect them.
- 1.3 Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states that local authorities have a duty to ensure that all the activities they regulate have no adverse effect on the integrity of any of the Natura 2000 sites. Therefore, a HRA must assess the possible effects of proposed plans on any Natura 2000 sites. This includes screening for potential impacts on European sites. If there is a probability or a risk that there will be significant effects on site integrity, alone, or in-combination with other relevant plans or projects, (having regard to the site's conservation objectives) then the plan or project must be subject to an Appropriate Assessment of its implications on the site.
- 1.4 Depending on the outcome of the HRA, the local authority may need to amend the plan to eliminate or reduce potentially damaging effects on the European site. If adverse effects on the integrity of sites cannot be ruled out, the plan can only be adopted where there are no alternative solutions that would have a lesser effect and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest sufficient to justify adopting the plan despite its effects on the European sites.
- 1.5 There are four stages to the Habitats Regulations Assessment as outlined in Table 1.1 below:

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:31992L0043>

<sup>2</sup> Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/490/regulation/41/made>

<sup>3</sup> European Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive): <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32009L0147>

<sup>4</sup> National Planning Policy Framework: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf)

Table 1.1: HRA stages

Habitat Regulation Assessment - stage	Purpose
1. Screening exercise	The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 or Ramsar site(s), either alone or in combination with other projects or plans and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant
2. Appropriate Assessment	The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the site(s), either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts should be provided
3. Assessment of alternative solutions	The process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 and Ramsar site(s)
4. Compensatory measures	An assessment of the compensatory measures where, in light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest, it is deemed that the plan should proceed. This is not a standard part of the process and will only be carried out in exceptional circumstances.

1.6 This document constitutes stage 1 of the assessment and screens the potential of the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) for its likely effects, either alone or in combination.

### **What is the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document?**

1.7 The Housing Site Allocations DPD will form part of the Local Plan alongside the Core Strategy (which was adopted in July 2012), the remaining saved policies of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies, 2007) and the Minerals and Waste DPD (which is anticipated for adoption in 2016). It will allocate the remainder of the 'at least' 10,500 housing figure identified in the Core Strategy by allocating specific smaller scale housing sites for development as non strategic extensions adjacent to existing settlement boundaries (the main strategic urban extensions have been identified in the Core Strategy). Sites and an area of search for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are also provided in the DPD, as are a review of settlement boundaries of those settlements within the settlement hierarchy, policies for housing in the countryside and a residential parking policy for new development.

1.8 The aim of the Housing Site Allocations DPD is to ensure that residential development is delivered when it is needed and in a way that achieves the key delivery outcomes of the Core Strategy.

1.9 The Housing Site Allocations DPD was subject to a formal stage (proposed submission plan) of consultation between 9 November and 24 December 2015. This stage of

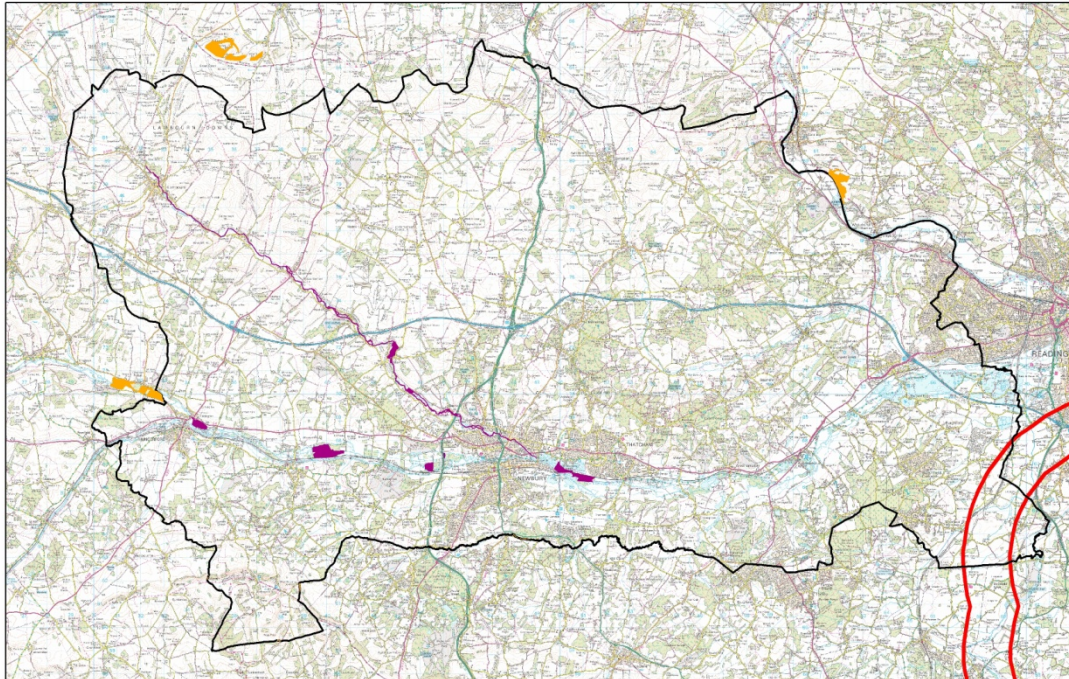
consultation allowed for representations to be made on the proposed submission version of the Plan.

- 1.10 The Housing Site Allocations DPD will be submitted for public examination together with the outcomes of the consultation and supporting documentation to the Secretary of State in April 2016. Examination is anticipated for the summer of 2016, and adoption in November 2016.

### **Natura 2000 sites within West Berkshire**

- 1.11 Within the boundary of West Berkshire there are three designated SACs, and within 5km of the boundary of West Berkshire, there are two SACs. While there is no SPA within West Berkshire, the south-eastern area of the District falls within the 5km boundary of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. The 5km boundary has been determined by Natural England as a buffer area to regulate development near the SPA.
- 1.12 The **Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC** is a composite site of approximately 114 hectares located within West Berkshire and Wiltshire. The cluster of sites selected in the Kennet and Lambourn valleys support one of the most extensive known populations of Desmoulin's whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*) in the UK. The conservation objective related to the sites' designation is to maintain in favourable condition, the habitat for the population of Desmoulin's whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*).
- 1.13 The **River Lambourn SAC** is a site of approximately 27 hectares located wholly within West Berkshire and consists of the River Lambourn water body. The Lambourn represents bullhead *Cottus gobio* populations inhabiting chalk streams in central southern England. Good water quality, coarse sediments and extensive beds of submerged plants provide an excellent habitat for the species. The presence of Brook lamprey is also a qualifying feature of the site.
- 1.14 The **Kennet Valley Alderwoods SAC** consists of two sites of approximately 56 hectares in total located within West Berkshire in the Kennet floodplain. Its general site characteristic is of broad leaved deciduous woodland. The woodlands are the largest remaining fragments of damp, ash-alder woodland in the Kennet floodplain area. The conservation of the site is dependent upon maintaining a constantly high groundwater level.
- 1.15 **Hartslock Wood** is a SAC located just outside the West Berkshire boundary in South Oxfordshire. **Hackpen Hill** is a 35.8 hectare SAC site located in the Vale of White Horse approximately 2km north of West Berkshire's border.
- 1.16 The **Thames Basin Heaths SPA** is a composite site covering an area of some 8,274 hectares, consisting of 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) scattered from Hampshire in the west, to Berkshire in the north, through to Surrey. The site supports important breeding populations of a number of birds of lowland heath, especially Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*), Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*) and Dartford Warbler (*Sylvia undata*). None of the SPA is located within the borders of West Berkshire; however the 5km buffer outlined by Natural England covers a small portion of West Berkshire's eastern area. The only settlement in West Berkshire that is within the 5km buffer is the village of Beech Hill (which is outside the District's settlement hierarchy where development will be focused). There are no additional settlements within the 5-7km buffer.
- 1.17 The 5km and 7km boundaries of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA are both shown on the map below, in addition to the three SACs within West Berkshire.





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## 2. Habitats Regulations Assessment of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) DPD

2.1 A HRA of the West Berkshire Core Strategy was undertaken in parallel to the document's production. The Core Strategy was adopted in July 2012 and sets out the long term vision for West Berkshire and translates this into spatial terms setting out proposals for where development will go and how this development will be built. The Core Strategy sets the framework for the Housing Site Allocations DPD which needs to be in conformity with it.

2.2 The HRA screening exercise of the Core Strategy concluded that there was the possibility of significant adverse effects on the three SAC's within the boundary of West Berkshire:

- Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC
- River Lambourn SAC and
- Kennet Valley Alderwoods SAC

2.3 Each of these three SACs was individually assessed through an Appropriate Assessment. These Assessments all concluded that the Core Strategy, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, will not affect the integrity of any of the European sites<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> HRA of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (August 2010):  
<http://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=36470&p=0>

- 2.4 The overall conclusion from the HRA was that the Core Strategy<sup>6</sup>, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, will not affect the integrity of any of the European sites within the District or those within 5km of the District boundary.
- 2.5 The conclusions of the HRA did flag up that the Appropriate Assessment does not preclude the need for consideration to be given to potential impacts on the Natura 2000 sites in an assessment of individual planning applications, as there is always a risk that insensitively designed schemes could result in harm.
- 2.6 The Housing Site Allocations DPD builds on the Core Strategy and therefore the conclusions and major issues of the HRA of the Core Strategy, relating to the three SACs, have informed the approach to the screening of the housing site allocations and policies of the Housing Site Allocations DPD in Section 3 of this report.

### **3. Identifying potential effects**

- 3.1 This HRA screening report considers whether the matters proposed for the Housing Site Allocations DPD will raise any issues that were not previously dealt with in the Core Strategy HRA, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects within West Berkshire or neighbouring areas. If the matters reflect those that were previously identified, then further more detailed assessment is not considered necessary. If potential effects are identified or if there is uncertainty regarding potential effects, beyond those previously considered, then further more detailed Appropriate Assessment is required.

#### **Compliance with the Core Strategy**

##### *Allocated housing sites*

- 3.2 The Housing Site Allocations DPD will sit alongside the Core Strategy as part of the Local Plan when adopted and will allocate the remaining dwelling requirement identified in the Core Strategy reflecting the locations and quantum identified within it. Therefore, all planning applications relating to specific site allocations will need to comply with the policies within the Core Strategy. The implications of the Housing Site Allocations DPD on European sites within West Berkshire are therefore regarded as being consistent with the Core Strategy.

##### *Allocated sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and an area of search for future Gypsies and Travellers*

- 3.3 The Core Strategy, in policy CS7 (Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople), sets out criteria to be used when identifying sites. This formed the basis of the site selection work. National Planning Policy for Traveller Sites seeks to restrict Gypsy and Traveller sites within open countryside that is away from existing settlements or areas allocated for housing in the development plan.
- 3.4 All planning applications for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople sites will need to comply with the Core Strategy.

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<sup>6</sup> West Berkshire Core Strategy (July 2012): <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=28782>

### *Changes to Settlement Boundaries*

- 3.5 The settlement boundaries around those settlements within the settlement hierarchy identified in the Core Strategy have been re-drawn within the Housing Site Allocations DPD to include the developable areas of the site allocations, additional sites which are too small to be housing allocations (typically those below 5 dwellings), and areas that comply with the settlement boundary review criteria.
- 3.6 Settlement boundaries identify the main built up area of a settlement within which development is likely to be considered acceptable in principle, however this is subject to other policy considerations. Therefore, any development proposals for areas within the re-drawn settlement boundary areas will need to comply with the policies within the Core Strategy. The implications of the amendments to the settlement boundaries on European sites within West Berkshire are therefore regarded as being consistent with the Core Strategy.

### *Parking policy for new residential development*

- 3.7 The existing residential parking standards are contained within the saved policies of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies (September 2007). The supporting text to Core Strategy policy CS13 (Transport) notes at paragraph 5.92 that standards for parking provision will be related to all levels of accessibility. The basis for this will be established through the Local Transport Plan and subsequently a SPD will be prepared. The policy contained within the submission DPD has been prepared in line with the Local Transport Plan. The standards also take into account national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

### *Housing in the Countryside Development Management Policies*

- 3.8 To consider what was required from a new set of policies to manage housing development in the countryside and protect against harmful development, local and national policy and guidance was taken into account as well as local distinctiveness issues. The changes to permitted development rights were also taken into consideration.
- 3.9 Key to informing the new set of policies was local distinctiveness. 90% of West Berkshire is rural in character and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers 74% of the District. The importance of the AONB designation to local distinctiveness is fully recognised in the Core Strategy (policy ADPP5) which also reflects the legal 'Duty of Regard' to the purpose of designation.
- 3.10 The importance of local distinctiveness across the district is recognised in Core Strategy policy CS19 which seeks to conserve and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of the landscape character. The proposed submission DPD policies emphasise the importance of landscape considerations and the fact that the different elements of landscape need to be considered in policy decisions. The policies are in conformity with the Core Strategy.

### **Identifying further issues**

- 3.11 The allocations, policies and amendments to the settlement boundaries of the settlement hierarchy of the Housing Site Allocations DPD (including the policies for housing in the countryside) have been prepared in conformity with the Core Strategy. However, it is necessary to determine whether there are any aspects of the document which have not previously been considered in the earlier parts of the HRA. It then needs

to be determined whether or not any identified issues might give rise to new issues in need of testing for likely effects on protected habitats or species.

#### *Allocated housing sites*

3.12 Three of the housing sites fall adjacent to SACs, however all three sites and their developable area are physically detached from the boundaries of the SACs. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 below consider the potential impacts of development in these locations and highlight the avoidance and mitigation measures for each of the three SACs. The mitigation measures are derived from the Core Strategy HRA, and advice from the Council's Ecologist, in addition to advice provided by Natural England in a Duty to Cooperate meeting held on 28 April 2015 (see Duty to Cooperate Statement) and comments made on the proposed submission Housing Site Allocations DPD HRA Screening Report.

3.13 Comments made by Natural England on the proposed submission Housing Site Allocations DPD HRA Screening Report requested changes to the general sites policy GS1 contained within the DPD and which is referenced under the avoidance and mitigation measures for three sites that are within close proximity of SACs. These changes suggest strengthening the wording regarding the need for developments to connect to mains sewers for foul water and providing clarity on the references to 'compensation measures' for European sites. See Appendix 5 for the Natural England's response.

3.14 The Council has looked again at the references to 'compensation measures' for European sites and it is agreed that further clarification in both the HRA and DPD would be beneficial. It is therefore proposed to amend the last bullet point of the general site policy GS1 to read:

'All adverse impacts on habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and other biodiversity will be ~~mitigated~~ addressed through avoidance, appropriate buffering, on-site mitigation and where applicable, off-site compensation measures'

3.15 In addition, the Council proposes to amend requirement within the individual site policies for sites HSA5, HSA20 and HSA21 to read:

'Development will be informed by an extended phase 1 habitat survey together with further detailed surveys arising from that as necessary. Appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures will need to be implemented to ensure any protected habitats and species are not adversely affected'

3.16 In response to the concern that there should be a strengthening of the wording regarding the need for developments affecting European sites to connect to mains sewers for foul water; in general terms the Council is content that the general site policy GS1 already adequately covers this issue. It is however agreed that further clarification could be provided to the individual site policies for the three sites affected by this issue (HSA5, HSA20 and HSA21) to assist with this concern:

HSA5 - *add additional bullet point to read:* 'Development on the site will connect to the mains sewerage system and an integrated water supply and drainage strategy would be particularly useful for this site.'

HSA20 and HSA21 - *amend existing bullet point to read:* 'Development on the site will connect to the mains sewerage system. Infiltration from groundwater into the

network has been identified as a strategic issue within Lambourn; therefore an integrated water supply and drainage strategy would be particularly useful for this site.'

- 3.17 Natural England has confirmed that it would find these changes acceptable.
- 3.18 At the Duty to Cooperate meeting (28 April 2015) Natural England expressed concern about potential abstraction and discharge issues from the River Kennet SSSI and River Lambourn SSSI/SAC. It was content if these issues had already been addressed in the Core Strategy HRA, but if not then the HRA of the HSA DPD would need to be clear on these issues. The Council agreed to ask the Environment Agency and Thames Water to update, as necessary, the information they supplied for the Core Strategy HRA regarding abstraction and discharge licenses.
- 3.19 The Core Strategy HRA stated that Thames Water had confirmed within its Revised Draft Water Resources Management Plan that the level of planned development within West Berkshire to 2026 can be accommodated without the need for further water resource schemes to be implemented. The Core Strategy HRA also noted that the Environment Agency also concluded from its Habitats Directive "Review of Consents" process, that none of the abstraction licenses or discharge consents held by Thames Water will have an adverse effect, either alone or in-combination, on the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC (once Asset Management Plan improvements at Speen and Thatcham Reedbeds have been implemented) or River Lambourn SAC.
- 3.20 Following the Duty to Cooperate meeting with Natural England on 28 April 2015, Thames Water has confirmed that sites can be delivered within existing abstraction and discharge licenses. The Environment Agency has been contacted; however they have not provided a response. Nonetheless, when consulted on the proposed submission Housing Site Allocations DPD HRA Screening Report, the Environment Agency advised that they did not have any comments to make (see Appendix 6 for response).
- 3.21 The supporting text to Core Strategy policy CS17 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) at paragraph 5.113<sup>7</sup> highlights that a 5km buffer has been determined by Natural England as a buffer area to regulate development near the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Certain types of development up to 7km away from the boundary of the SPA could have an impact upon the SPA. None of the potential site allocations fall within the 5km and 7km boundaries.
- 3.22 Plans of the allocated housing sites (with developable areas annotated) in relation to any SAC and SPA are included in Appendix 1 of this HRA Screening Report.

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<sup>7</sup> Supporting paragraph 5.113 to Core Strategy Policy CS17 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity): <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=36371&p=0>

Table 3.1: Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC

Site description	A cluster of sites in the Kennet and Lambourn Valleys. Parts of the site lie adjacent to the Newbury bypass but the road has been designed to reduce spray and runoff, intending to mitigate direct damage to the site. Public access is not restricted as floodplain is located close to urban settlements and villages.
Conservation objective	To maintain in favourable condition, the habitat for the population of European importance of Desmoulin's whorl snail ( <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> ).
Housing site allocations adjacent to the SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• THA025: land at Lower Way, Thatcham (development potential: approximately 85 dwellings). The site is located c. 466m from the SAC.</li> </ul>
Summary of potential impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative impact upon the hydrology of the site, particularly in relation to wastewater discharge and abstraction</li> <li>• Increase in disturbance and vandalism due to increased visitors originating from nearby new developments</li> <li>• Negative impacts upon the management of the site, such as increased costs associated with remediation and protection.</li> </ul>
Avoidance and mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Strategy policy CS17 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) seeks to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity assets across the District. The Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain will receive the highest level of protection under this policy because of its internationally important designation as a Special Area of Conservation</li> <li>• Core Strategy policy CS5 (Infrastructure) co-ordinates infrastructure delivery to protect environmental quality. The Council maintains an infrastructure delivery plan identifying the key water and wastewater infrastructure projects required to support the delivery of the Core Strategy.</li> <li>• Core Strategy policies CS14 (Design Principles), CS15 (Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency) and CS16 (Flooding) ensure there are minimal impacts on hydrology through sustainable design and development, and resisting development in areas liable to flood.</li> <li>• Core Strategy policy CS18 (Green Infrastructure) ensures the effects of disturbance and vandalism are minimal by providing adequate open space in new development.</li> <li>• Core Strategy policies ADPPP5 (North Wessex Downs AONB) and CS19 (Historic Environment and Landscape Character) will ensure protection of the natural and functional components of the landscape and the conservation and enhancement of the AONB, within which the SAC is located.</li> </ul> <p>Following advice from the Council's Ecologist and Natural England during the preparation of the DPD, the site specific policy for site THA025, policy HSA5, includes the following requirements (proposed minor modifications to the policy are in blue text and underlined):</p> <p><u>THA25:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development will be informed by an extended phase 1 habitat survey together with further detailed surveys arising from that as necessary. Appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures will need to be implemented to ensure any protected <u>habitats and</u> species are not adversely affected.</li> <li>• Development on the site will not adversely affect the adjacent SSSI and SAC to the south of the site. A HRA will be required to accompany any future planning application.</li> <li>• <u>Development on the site will connect to the mains sewerage system</u></li> </ul>

and an integrated water supply and drainage strategy would be particularly useful for this site.

A general policy that applies to all allocated sites includes the following requirements (proposed minor modifications to the policy are in blue text and underlined):

- An integrated water supply and drainage strategy will be provided in advance of development to ensure the provision of adequate and appropriate infrastructure for water supply and waste water, both on and off site. Development will be occupied in line with this strategy. All sites that are not connected to the mains sewerage system will ensure there are no deleterious effects to SACs and river and wetland SSSIs.
- All adverse impacts on habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and other biodiversity will be ~~mitigated~~ addressed through avoidance, appropriate buffering, on-site mitigation and where applicable, off-site compensation measures

Table 3.2: River Lambourn SAC

Site description	Originates near the village of Lambourn and joins the Kennet River near Newbury. Located in a mostly rural catchment, there are no large settlements on its banks. Considered one of the least modified catchments in Southern England, with high water quality and quantity.
Conservation objective	To maintain, in a favourable condition, the floating formations of water crowfoot ( <i>Ranunculus</i> ) of plain and sub-mountainous river; and to maintain, in favourable condition, the habitats for the population of Brook lamprey ( <i>Lampetra planeri</i> ) and Bullhead ( <i>Cottus gobio</i> ). The site is currently in unfavourable condition due to siltation, inappropriate weirs and dams, invasive freshwater species and polluting agricultural run-off.
Site allocations adjacent to the SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LAM005: land adjoining Lynch Lane, Lambourn (development potential: approx. 60 dwellings). The site does not physically adjoin the SAC.</li> <li>• LAM015: land at Newbury Road, Lambourn (development potential: approx. 5 dwellings). The site is located c. 67m from the SAC.</li> </ul>
Summary of potential impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative impact upon the hydrology of the site, particularly in relation to wastewater discharge and altered drainage.</li> <li>• Negative impacts upon the management of the site, such as increased costs associated with remediation and protection.</li> </ul>
Avoidance and mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Strategy policy CS17 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) seeks to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity assets across the District. The River Lambourn will receive the highest level of protection under this policy because of its internationally important designation as a Special Area of Conservation.</li> <li>• Core Strategy policy CS5 (Infrastructure) seeks to co-ordinate infrastructure delivery to protect environmental quality. The Council intends to maintain an infrastructure delivery plan identifying the key water and wastewater infrastructure projects required to support the delivery of the Core Strategy.</li> <li>• Core Strategy policies CS14 (Design Principles), CS15 (Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency) and CS16 (Flooding) will ensure there are minimal impacts on hydrology through sustainable design and development, and resisting development in areas liable to flood.</li> <li>• Core Strategy policies ADPPP5 (North Wessex Downs AONB) and CS19 (Historic Environment and Landscape Character) will ensure protection of the natural and functional components of the landscape and the conservation and enhancement of the AONB, within which the SAC is located.</li> </ul> <p>Following advice from the Council's Ecologist and Natural England during the preparation of the DPD, the site specific policies for sites LAM005 (policy HSA20) and LAM015 (policy HSA21) include the following requirements (proposed changes to the policies are made in blue text and underlined):</p> <p><u>LAM005:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development will not adversely affect the adjacent SSSI/SAC and a HRA will be required to accompany any future planning application.</li> <li>• Development will need to ensure the retention of the existing riverside vegetation and the provision of a significant buffer/stand-off between the woodland and adjacent River Lambourn SSSI/SAC and any development. In light of a Phase 1 Habitat Survey it is considered that no development shall take place within 15m of the outer edge of Flood Zone 2, allowing a buffer/stand-off from the SAC/SSSI of 38m</li> </ul>



	<p>(max.88m).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development will be informed by an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey together with further detailed surveys arising from that as necessary. Appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures will need to be implemented to ensure any protected <a href="#">habitats and</a> species are not adversely affected.</li> </ul> <p><u>LAM015:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scheme will be informed by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) which will take account of all potential sources of flood risk, including groundwater emergence. As part of the FRA consideration will also be given to the provision of SUDS on the site, along with appropriate mitigation measures to protect the River Lambourn SSSI/SAC.</li> <li>• A SUDS scheme would need to be provided as part of any planning application, along with appropriate mitigation measures to protect the River Lambourn SAC/SSSI e.g. possibly petrol/oil receptors.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Development on the site will connect to the mains sewerage system.</a> Infiltration from groundwater into the network has been identified as a strategic issue within Lambourn; therefore an integrated Water Supply and Drainage Strategy would be particularly useful for this site.</li> </ul> <p>A general policy that applies to all allocated sites includes the following requirements (proposed minor modifications to the policy are in blue text and underlined):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An integrated water supply and drainage strategy will be provided in advance of development to ensure the provision of adequate and appropriate infrastructure for water supply and waste water, both on and off site. Development will be occupied in line with this strategy. All sites that are not connected to the mains sewerage system will ensure there are no deleterious effects to SACs and river and wetland SSSIs.</li> <li>• All adverse impacts on habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and other biodiversity will be <del>mitigated</del> <a href="#">addressed</a> through avoidance, appropriate buffering, on-site mitigation and <a href="#">where applicable</a>, off-site compensation measures</li> <li>• <a href="#">Development on the site will connect to the mains sewerage system.</a> Infiltration from groundwater into the network has been identified as a strategic issue within Lambourn; therefore an integrated Water Supply and Drainage Strategy would be particularly useful for this site.</li> </ul>
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*Site Allocations and Area of Search for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites*

3.23 Within the DPD there is one site allocation for Travelling Showpeople, Longcopse Farm, Enborne (GTTS2; 24 plots). This site is located south of Newbury in Enborne and does not fall within or adjacent to a SAC or SPA. A plan of the site in relation to the SACs and SPA 5-7km zone is included in Appendix 2.

3.24 Within the DPD there is one allocated site for Gypsies and Travellers, New Stocks Farm, Paices Hill, Aldermaston (GTTS5; 8 permanent pitches to replace 8 existing transit pitches. An area of search is also allocated for up to 9 Gypsy and Traveller pitches from 2021 onwards at Clappers Farm, Beech Hill (GTTS6).

3.25 One of the allocated Gypsy and Traveller sites, Clappers Farm area of search falls within the 5-7km boundary of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Table 3.3 considers the potential impacts of this site on the SPA.

Table 3.3: Thames Basin Heaths SPA

Site description	Large area of dry and west heathland, mire, oak, birch acid woodland, gorse scrub and acid grassland with areas of rotational conifer plantation.
Conservation objective	To maintain at, or restore to, favourable conservation status, the natural habitats and/or the populations of nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler.
Site allocations within the SAC 5-7km boundary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clappers Farm area of search (GTTS6)</li> </ul>
Summary of potential impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further fragmentation of habitat</li> <li>Predation from cats and dogs</li> <li>Disturbance to bird species</li> <li>Trampling of vegetation</li> </ul>
Avoidance and mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Core Strategy policy CS17 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) seeks to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity assets across the District. The Thames Basin Heaths will receive the highest level of protection under this policy because of their internationally important designation as a Special Area of Conservation. The supporting text to CS17 seeks that proposals must not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA.</li> <li>Core Strategy policy CS19 (Historic Environment and Landscape character) will ensure the effects of disturbance and vandalism are minimal by providing adequate open space in new development.</li> <li>Core Strategy policy CS7 (Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople) will ensure that proposals include space for play and residential amenity.</li> <li>Policy ADPP6 (East Kennet Valley) requires residential development of over 50 dwellings located between 5 and 7km of the boundary of the SPA to be subject to screening to assess whether it will have a likely significant effect on the SPA. Where a significant effect exists or cannot be excluded, an Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 should be undertaken.</li> <li>The secondary screening of the Core Strategy policies in the HRA of the Core Strategy commented that as there is envisaged to be very little development within either the 5km buffer or the 5-7km buffer around the SPA, the potential impact on the SPA is considered minimal. It was therefore concluded that an AA for the SPA was not required. It could therefore be argued that the provision of up to 9 pitches within the 5-7km buffer would cause minimal impact, particularly as a screening assessment is only required for 50 dwellings or more in the 5-7km boundary. The Housing Site Allocations DPD contains a general traveller policy (TS4) which all proposals for traveller sites needs to comply with.</li> </ul>

### *Changes to Settlement Boundaries*

3.26 Within the Housing Site Allocations DPD settlement boundaries around those settlements within the settlement hierarchy have been re-drawn around the developable area of the housing site allocations, additional housing sites too small to allocate (less than 5 dwellings), and areas that comply with the settlement boundary review criteria. Settlement boundaries identify the main built up areas of settlements within which development is likely to be considered acceptable. Some of the amendments to the

settlement boundaries are either adjacent to or in close proximity to SACs. None fall within the Thames Basin Heaths SPA 5-7km buffer zone.

3.27 Tables 3.1 and 3.2 in sub-section 'Allocated housing sites' above, consider the potential impacts of the allocated housing sites that lie adjacent to or are in close proximity of SACs and highlight the avoidance and mitigation measures.

3.28 There is one site (HUN021) that is too small to allocate, but has been included within the settlement boundary and lies very close to the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC. In addition, there is an area to the south east of Lambourn which complies with the settlement boundary review criteria and has been included within the settlement boundary. This area is very close to the River Lambourn SAC. Tables 3.4 and 3.5 below consider the potential impacts and highlight the avoidance and mitigation measures on both the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC and River Lambourn SAC. The mitigation measures are derived from the Core Strategy HRA and advice from the Council's Ecologist.

Table 3.4: Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC – changes to settlement boundaries

Site description	A cluster of sites in the Kennet and Lambourn Valleys. Parts of the site lie adjacent to the Newbury bypass but the road has been designed to reduce spray and runoff, intending to mitigate direct damage to the site. Public access is not restricted as the floodplain is located close to urban settlements and villages.
Conservation objective	To maintain in favourable condition, the habitat for the population of European importance of Desmoulin's whorl snail ( <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> ).
Settlement boundary adjustment adjacent to a SAC	<p>Settlement boundary adjusted to include site HUN021. The development capacity of the site was assessed to have a development capacity of 2 dwellings (the site has planning permission for two dwellings).</p> <p>Although not adjacent to the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC, site HUN021 (land behind The Lamb Inn, Hungerford) lies within close proximity to the SAC (c.125m).</p>
Summary of potential impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative impact upon the hydrology of the site, particularly in relation to wastewater discharge and abstraction</li> <li>• Increase in disturbance and vandalism due to increased visitors originating from nearby new developments</li> <li>• Negative impacts upon the management of the site, such as increased costs associated with remediation and protection.</li> </ul>
Avoidance and mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Strategy policy CS17 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) seeks to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity assets across the District. The Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain will receive the highest level of protection under this policy because of its internationally important designation as a Special Area of Conservation</li> <li>• Core Strategy policy CS5 (Infrastructure) co-ordinates infrastructure delivery to protect environmental quality. The Council maintains an infrastructure delivery plan identifying the key water and wastewater infrastructure projects required to support the delivery of the Core Strategy.</li> <li>• Core Strategy policies CS14 (Design Principles), CS15 (Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency) and CS16 (Flooding) ensure there are minimal impacts on hydrology through sustainable design and development, and resisting development in areas liable to flood.</li> <li>• Core Strategy policy CS18 (Green Infrastructure) ensures the effects of disturbance and vandalism are minimal by providing adequate open space in new development.</li> <li>• Core Strategy policies ADPPP5 (North Wessex Downs AONB) and CS19 (Historic Environment and Landscape Character) will ensure protection of the natural and functional components of the landscape and the conservation and enhancement of the AONB, within which the SAC is located.</li> <li>• The Council's Ecologist has advised that there should be an 8m wide buffer adjacent to the River Dun which was requested by the Environment Agency. It is important to note that this development has already taken place.</li> </ul>

Table 3.5: River Lambourn SAC – changes to settlement boundaries

Site description	Originates near the village of Lambourn and joins the Kennet River near Newbury. Located in a mostly rural catchment, there are no large settlements on its banks. Considered one of the least modified catchments in Southern England, with high water quality and quantity.
Conservation objective	To maintain, in a favourable condition, the floating formations of water crowfoot ( <i>Ranunculus</i> ) of plain and sub-mountainous river; and to maintain, in favourable condition, the habitats for the population of Brook lamprey ( <i>Lampetra planeri</i> ) and Bullhead ( <i>Cottus gobio</i> ). The site is currently in unfavourable condition due to siltation, inappropriate weirs and dams, invasive freshwater species and polluting agricultural run-off.
Settlement boundary adjustment adjacent to a SAC	Settlement boundary altered to south east of Lambourn to include existing development at Francomes Field.  Although not adjacent to the SAC, the edge of the revised settlement boundary is c. 50m from the SAC.
Summary of potential impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative impact upon the hydrology of the site, particularly in relation to wastewater discharge and altered drainage.</li> <li>• Negative impacts upon the management of the site, such as increased costs associated with remediation and protection.</li> </ul>
Avoidance and mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Strategy policy CS17 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) seeks to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity assets across the District. The River Lambourn will receive the highest level of protection under this policy because of its internationally important designation as a Special Area of Conservation.</li> <li>• Core Strategy policy CS5 (Infrastructure) seeks to co-ordinate infrastructure delivery to protect environmental quality. The Council intends to maintain an infrastructure delivery plan identifying the key water and wastewater infrastructure projects required to support the delivery of the Core Strategy.</li> <li>• Core Strategy policies CS14 (Design Principles), CS15 (Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency) and CS16 (Flooding) will ensure there are minimal impacts on hydrology through sustainable design and development, and resisting development in areas liable to flood.</li> <li>• Core Strategy policies ADPPP5 (North Wessex Downs AONB) and CS19 (Historic Environment and Landscape Character) will ensure protection of the natural and functional components of the landscape and the conservation and enhancement of the AONB, within which the SAC is located.</li> </ul> <p>It is important to note that this development has already taken place.</p>

3.29 Plans of the settlement boundary changes in relation to any SAC and SPA are included in Appendix 3 of this HRA Screening Report.

*Parking policy for new residential development*

3.30 The policy will not have an effect on the SACs and SPA because the policy in itself will not lead to new development as it relates to qualitative criteria for development.

*Housing in the Countryside Development Management Policies*

3.31 The analysis below in Table 3.6 confirms that the potential effects of the Housing in the Countryside policies will not give rise to further issues, principally on the basis of the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy ensures that appropriate measures are in place to mitigate against/avoid potential significant effects on SACs and the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

- 3.32 Natural England, in their response to the HRA Screening Report Addendum which covered the Housing in the Countryside development management policies, noted that the conclusions are agreeable to Natural England. They went on to note that provided as and when development comes forward in sensitive areas (such as SACs in particular) the correct level of assessment is carried out at the project level, then Natural England would be agreeable to the approach taken.
- 3.33 Two of the policies (Policies 4 and 7) include a criterion requiring the impact on any protected species to be assessed with measures proposed to mitigate such impacts. Policy 3 requires evidence alongside proposals to demonstrate the impact on protected species and the mitigation measures being taken. Policy 1 restricts against development that would have an adverse cumulative impact on the environment, whilst the supporting text to Policy 5 highlights of the potential for impacts on biodiversity so explicitly states that the requirements on the Core Strategy policies which have regard to biodiversity/geodiversity and historic landscape character/landscape character are applicable.

Policy	Is there potential for a significant effect on an SAC or the SPA?								Commentary	Avoidance and mitigation
	Fragmentation	Predation	Hydrology	Disturbance	Vandalism	Fire	Air pollution	Management		
Policy 1 – Location of New Housing in the Countryside	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	<p>The Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC and the River Lambourn SAC are located within several of West Berkshire's settlement boundaries (Lambourn, Great Shefford and Newbury). A small area of the settlement boundary of Thatcham is located adjacent to the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC, and the Kennet Valley Alderwoods SAC lies adjacent to the settlement boundary of Hungerford. There is therefore the potential for new development to be located in close proximity to a SAC. However, in combination with Core Strategy policies ADPP5, CS5, CS14, CS15, CS16, CS17, CS18 and CS19, the impact would either be mitigated against or avoided. Furthermore, Policy 1 states that planning permission will not be granted where development would have an adverse cumulative impact on the environment.</p> <p>There are no settlement boundaries that fall within the 5-7km buffer of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA (which has been set by Natural England to regulate development).</p>	<p>All development proposals will need to be assessed within the context of the development plan for West Berkshire. The adopted Core Strategy which forms part of the development plan, includes the following policies that would help to mitigate and restrict against harm as a result of development in close proximity of the SACs and Thames Basin Heaths SPA 5-7km buffer zone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Core Strategy policy CS17 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) seeks to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity assets across the District. The Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain will receive the highest level of protection under this policy because of its internationally important designation as a Special Area of Conservation</li> <li>Core Strategy policy CS5 (Infrastructure) co-ordinates infrastructure delivery to protect environmental quality. The Council maintains an infrastructure delivery plan identifying the key water and</li> </ul>
Policy 2 – Rural Housing Exceptions Policy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	<p>There is potential for new rural exception sites to be located in close proximity to a SAC or within the 5-7km buffer zone of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. In combination with Core Strategy policies ADPP5, CS5,</p>	

Policy	Is there potential for a significant effect on an SAC or the SPA?								Commentary	Avoidance and mitigation
	Fragmentation	Predation	Hydrology	Disturbance	Vandalism	Fire	Air pollution	Management		
									CS14, CS15, CS16, CS17, CS18 and CS19, the impact would either be mitigated against or avoided.	<p>wastewater infrastructure projects required to support the delivery of the Core Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Core Strategy policies CS14 (Design Principles), CS15 (Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency) and CS16 (Flooding) ensure there are minimal impacts on hydrology through sustainable design and development, and resisting development in areas liable to flood.</li> <li>Core Strategy policy CS18 (Green Infrastructure) ensures the effects of disturbance and vandalism are minimal by providing adequate open space in new development.</li> <li>Core Strategy policies ADPPP5 (North Wessex Downs AONB) and CS19 (Historic Environment and Landscape Character) will ensure protection of the natural and functional components of the landscape and the conservation and enhancement of the AONB, within which parts of the SACs are located within.</li> </ul>
Policy 3 – Design of Housing in the Countryside	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	The policy relates to design and other qualitative criteria that will be used to enhance the built environment. Development would not occur as a result of the policy itself. Nonetheless, the supporting text to Policy 3 states that verifiable evidence must be submitted in support of a proposal to demonstrate the impact on any protected species and the measures being taken to mitigate such impact.	
Policy 4 – Conversion of Existing Redundant Buildings in the Countryside to Residential Use	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	<p>The buildings to be converted could be located in close proximity to a SAC or within the 5-7km buffer zone of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, but this is small scale development that in combination with Core Strategy policies ADPP5, CS5, CS14, CS15, CS16, CS17, CS18 and CS19, the impact would either be mitigated against or avoided.</p> <p>Policy 4 includes a criterion that the impact on any protected species is assessed with measures proposed to mitigate such impacts.</p>	
Policy 5 – Housing Related to Rural Workers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	There is potential for new housing related to provision for rural workers to be located in close proximity to a SAC or within the 5-7km buffer zone of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. In combination with Core Strategy policies ADPP5, CS5, CS14, CS15, CS16, CS17, CS18 and CS19, the impact would either be mitigated against or avoided.	



Policy	Is there potential for a significant effect on an SAC or the SPA?								Commentary	Avoidance and mitigation
	Fragmentation	Predation	Hydrology	Disturbance	Vandalism	Fire	Air pollution	Management		
									The supporting text to policy 5 acknowledges that the Council is mindful of the potential impacts on biodiversity, particularly where the provision of housing involves the conversion of an existing building and states that the requirements within Core Strategy policies CS17 Biodiversity and Geodiversity and CS19 Historic Environment and Landscape Character will therefore apply.	In considering applications for extensions, supporting evidence will be required under Core Strategy policy CS17 on the impact on any protected species and the measures being taken to mitigate such impact.  Core Strategy policy CS16 requires development to manage surface water in a sustainable way through Sustainable drainage methods (SuDs).
Policy 6 – Extension of Existing Dwellings within the Countryside	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	There is the potential that the existing houses being extended are located in close proximity to a SPA or within the 5-7km buffer zone of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, but this is small scale development that in combination with Core Strategy policies ADPP5, CS5, CS14, CS15, CS16, CS17, CS18 and CS19, would result in the impact being either mitigated against or avoided.	
Policy 7 - Replacement of existing dwellings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	The policy will not result in a net increase of dwellings; however the dwelling to be replaced could be located in close proximity a SAC or within the 5-7km buffer zone of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. However, this is small scale development that in combination with Core Strategy policies ADPP5, CS5, CS14, CS15, CS16, CS17, CS18 and CS19, would result in the impact being either mitigated against or avoided.  Policy 7 includes a criterion that the impact on any protected species is assessed and measures proposed	

Policy	Is there potential for a significant effect on an SAC or the SPA?								Commentary	Avoidance and mitigation
	Fragmentation	Predation	Hydrology	Disturbance	Vandalism	Fire	Air pollution	Management		
									to mitigate against such impacts.	
Policy 8– Extension of Residential Curtilages	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	There is the potential for the curtilage being extended to be located in close proximity to a SAC or within the 5-7km buffer zone of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Any new hard surfacing or landscaping could impact upon a SAC or the SPA, however this would be small scale and in combination with Core Strategy policies ADPP5, CS5, CS14, CS15, CS16, CS17, CS18 and CS19, any impact would either be mitigated against or avoided.	

## **Assessment outcomes**

3.34 The above analysis confirms that the potential effects of the housing site allocations and other policies in the Housing Site Allocations DPD will not give rise to further issues, principally on the basis of the Core Strategy which ensures that appropriate measures are in place to mitigate against/avoid potential significant effects on SACs and the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

### **4. In combination effects**

4.1 The HRA of the Core Strategy identified other relevant plans and projects, and discussed the potential for them to have in combination effects on a European site. The HRA concluded that the integrity of the European sites within the district and those within 5km of the district boundary would not be affected.

4.2 The Housing Site Allocations DPD will facilitate the delivery of housing in locations consistent with the spatial strategy set out in the Core Strategy and all applications forthcoming on allocated sites (including those for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites) must comply with relevant policies in the Development Plan. With regard to the Housing in the Countryside development management policies, development proposals will still need to be assessed against the Core Strategy.

### **5. Summary**

5.1 The potential effects of the West Berkshire Core Strategy have previously been considered by screening policies against the existing European Sites. Using the findings of this work, it can be demonstrated that the housing allocations, allocated sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, policies for housing in the countryside as well as a policy on residential parking standards will not have any adverse effects on the integrity of European sites.

5.2 The Housing Site Allocations DPD will facilitate delivery of housing in locations consistent with the spatial strategy set out in the Core Strategy and all applications forthcoming on allocated sites (including those for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites) and on sites/areas now included within the settlement boundary must comply with relevant policies in the development plan; these allocations are judged to not have adverse impacts on European Sites, either alone or in combination.

5.3 The effects of the Housing in the Countryside development management policies will not result in further issues to SACs or the Thames Basin Heaths SPA because development proposals will need to be assessed against the Core Strategy which includes measures to mitigate/avoid potential significant effects on SACs and SPA.

5.4 The policy on residential parking standards will not result in new development and is therefore considered not to have an effect on any Natura 2000 sites.

5.5 The Council sought determination from Natural England on the HRA screening report at the preferred options stage that no further investigation, or Appropriate Assessment, was required under the Habitat Directive for the site allocations and policies contained within the Housing Site Allocations DPD. Natural England concurred with the conclusions of the HRA screening report that no further investigation or Appropriate Assessment was required. The response from Natural England is included at Appendix 4.

5.6 In respect of the Housing in the Countryside development management policies, Natural England concurred with the Council's conclusions, provided that as and when

development comes forward in areas which are sensitive (such as SACs in particular) the correct level of assessment is carried out at the project level. Suggested wording has therefore been incorporated into the Housing Site Allocations DPD. Natural England's response is included in Appendix 4.

- 5.7 The Council consulted with the Environment Agency and BBOWT (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust) on the HRA Screening Report at preferred options however no comments were received at this stage.
- 5.8 At a Duty to Cooperate meeting with Natural England in April 2015 Natural England raised concerns about potential abstraction and discharge issues from the River Kennet SSSI and River Lambourn SSSI/SAC. Natural England requested that this HRA take this matter into account. Thames Water has since confirmed that no additional abstraction or discharge licenses are required.
- 5.9 At the same meeting, Natural England also advised that a HRA screening at the planning application stage will need to be undertaken for the sites within close proximity to SACs. This requirement has been incorporated into the relevant site specific policies in the Housing Site Allocations DPD.
- 5.10 The HRA screening report was updated at the proposed submission stage and comments were sought from both Natural England and the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency responded that they had no comments to make, whilst Natural England suggested changes to the wording of the general sites policy GS1 contained within the Housing Site Allocations DPD and which is referenced as an avoidance and mitigation measure within Tables 3.1 and 3.2 of this HRA Screening Report. The responses from the Environment Agency and Natural England are set out within Appendices 5 and 6 respectively.
- 5.11 The Council has subsequently made proposed minor changes to the general sites policy GS1 in addition to the individual site policies for three sites. Natural England has advised that it would find these changes acceptable. These minor changes have been incorporated into Tables 3.1 and 3.2 of this HRA.

## **Appendices**

- 1 Maps of allocated housing sites in relation to the SACs and SPA**
- 2 Maps of allocated Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites in relation to the SACs and SPA**
- 3 Maps of Settlement Boundary Changes in relation to the SACs and SPA**
- 4 Natural England response on the preferred options Housing Site Allocations DPD HRA Screening Report**
- 5 Natural England response on the proposed submission Housing Site Allocations DPD HRA Screening Report**
- 6 Environment Agency response on the proposed submission Housing Site Allocations DPD HRA Screening Report.**

## **Appendix 1**

### **Maps of allocated housing sites in relation to the SACs and SPA**

# SAC/SPA (Housing Allocations)



**Legend**

- Allocated Sites
- District Boundary
- SAC
- Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer Buffer
  - 5km
  - 7km

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## **Appendix 2**

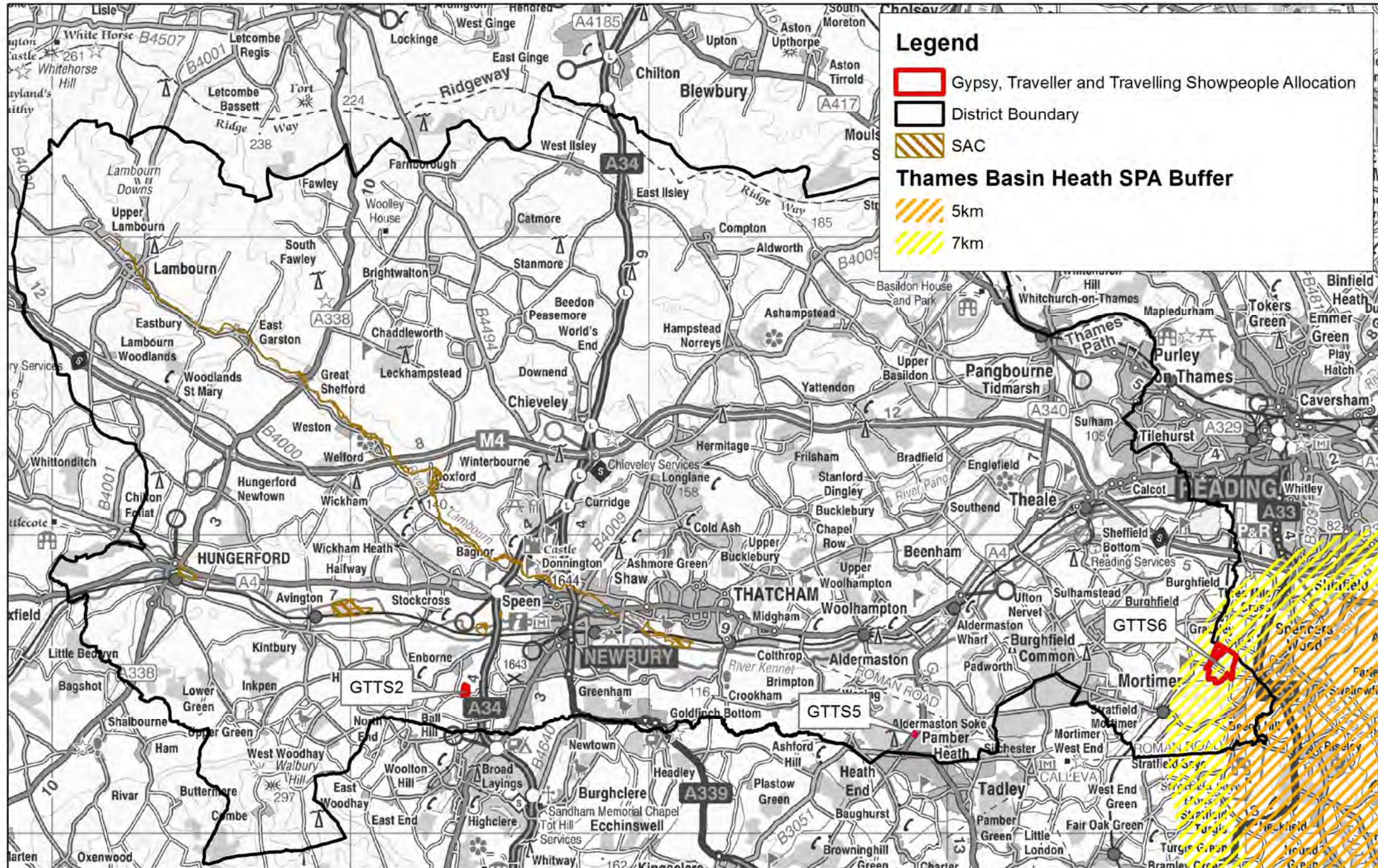
### **Maps of allocated Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites in relation to the SACs and SPA**



# SAC/SPA (Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Sites)

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**Legend**

- Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Allocation
- District Boundary
- SAC

**Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer**

- 5km
- 7km

## **Appendix 3**

### **Maps of Settlement Boundary Changes in relation to the SACs and SPA**

# Bradfield Southend proposed settlement boundaries



## Legend

Proposed settlement boundaries



Existing settlement boundaries



SAC



Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer

Buffer



5km



7km

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# Burghfield Common proposed settlement boundaries



### Legend

- Proposed settlement boundaries
- Existing settlement boundaries
- SAC
- Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer Buffer
  - 5km
  - 7km

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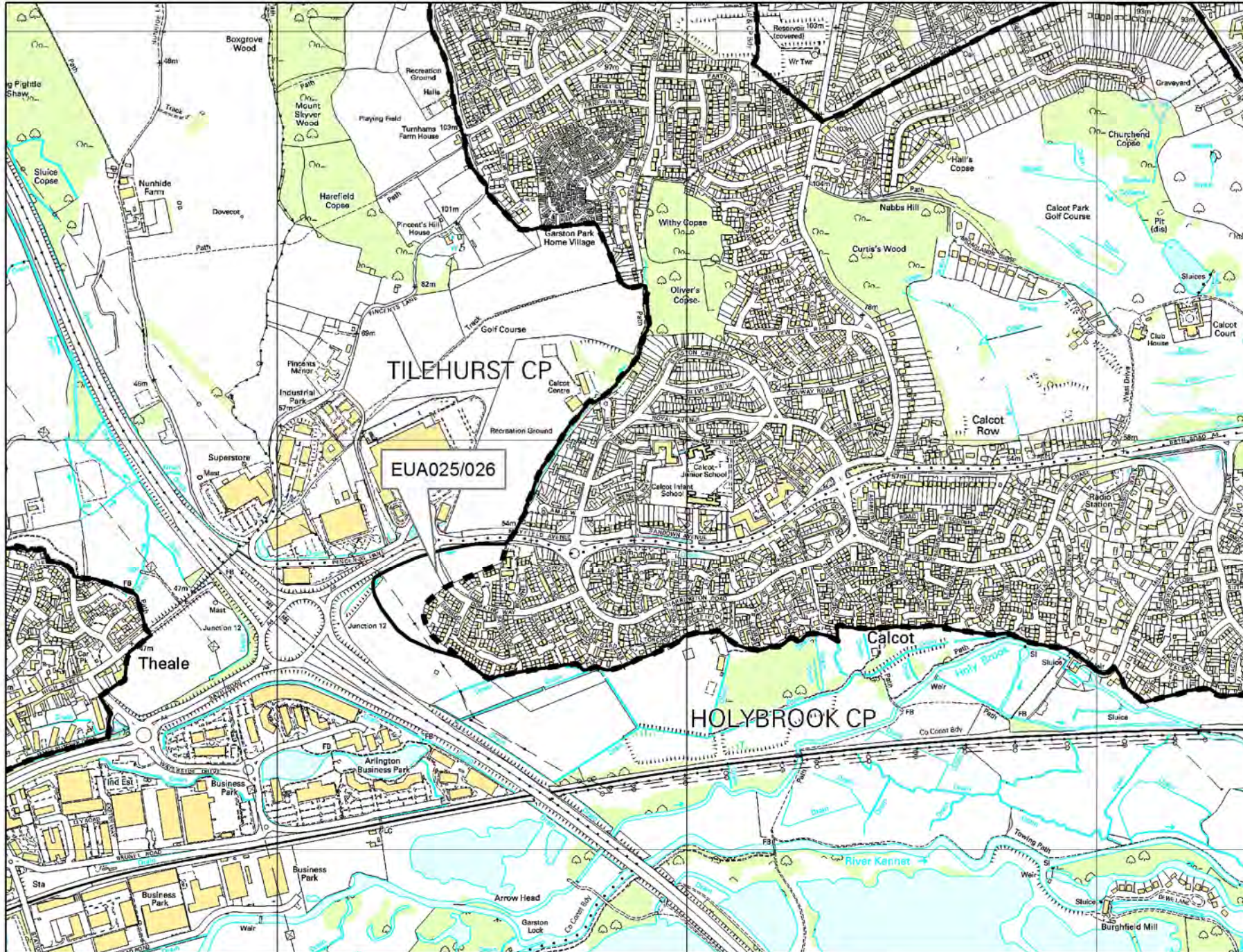
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# Calcot proposed settlement boundaries



### Legend

- Proposed settlement boundaries
- Existing settlement boundaries
- SAC
- Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer
  - Buffer 5km
  - 7km

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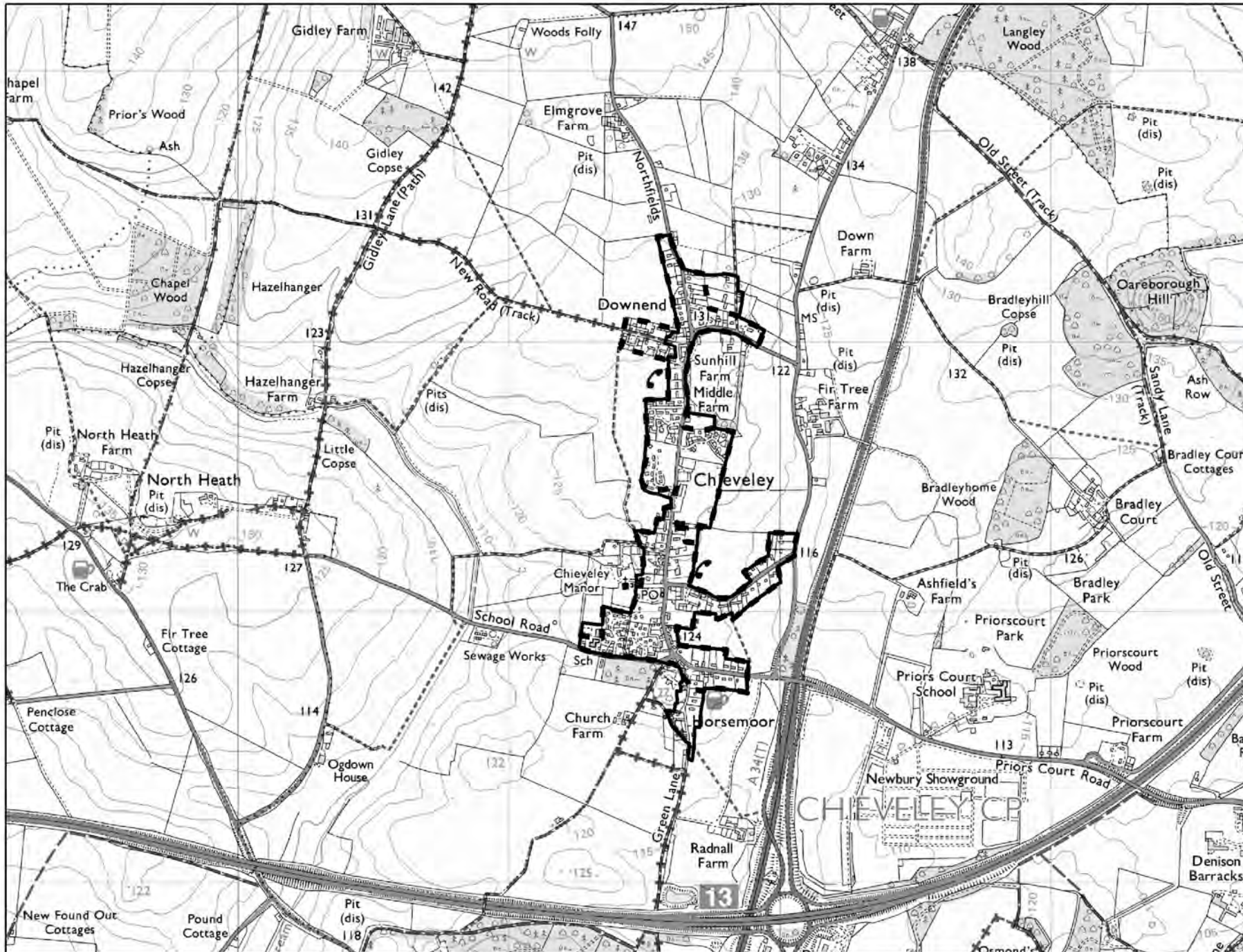
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19/10/2015

1:12784



# Chieveley proposed settlement boundaries



### Legend

- Proposed settlement boundaries
- Existing settlement boundaries
- SAC
- Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer
  - Buffer
  - 5km
  - 7km

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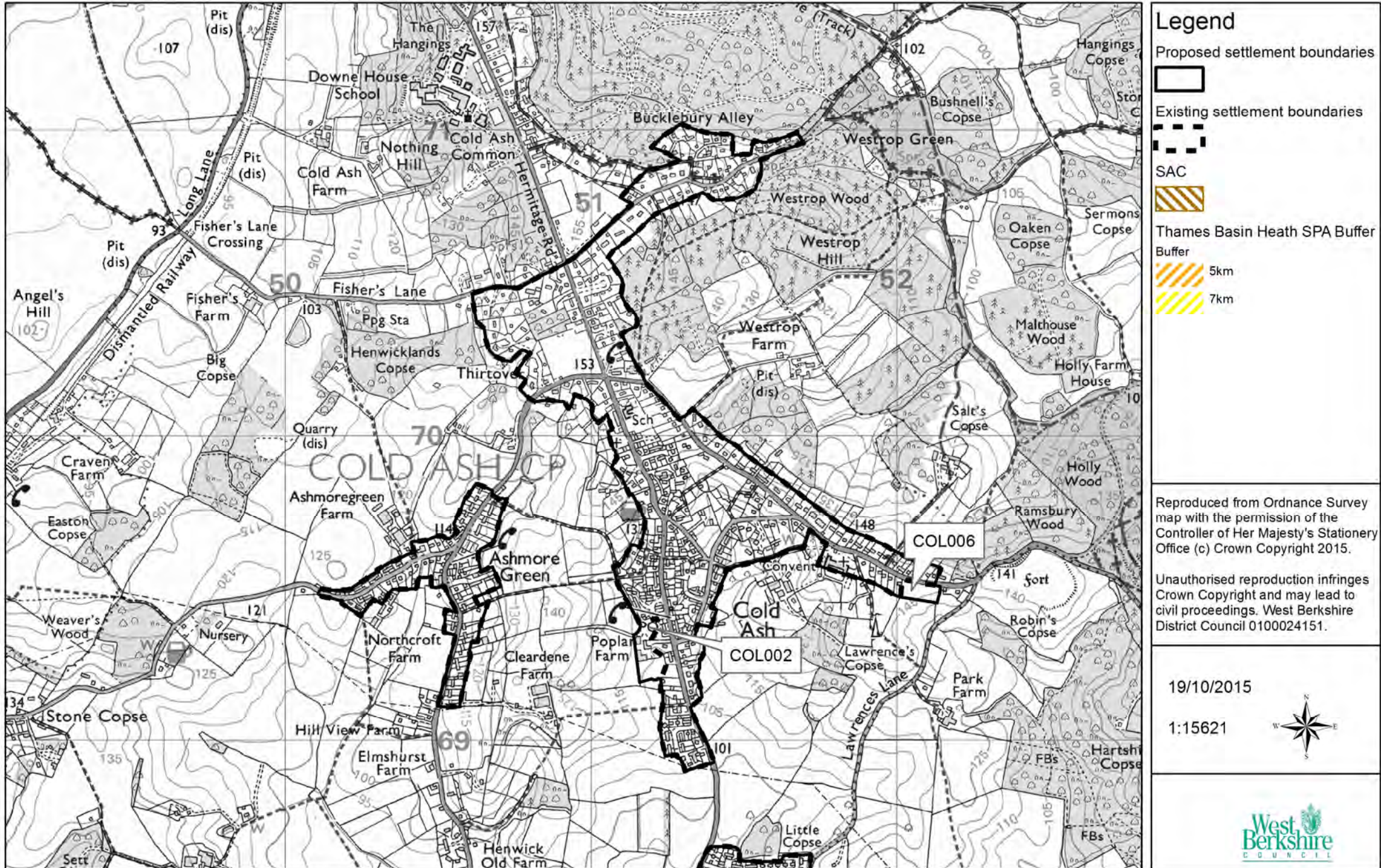
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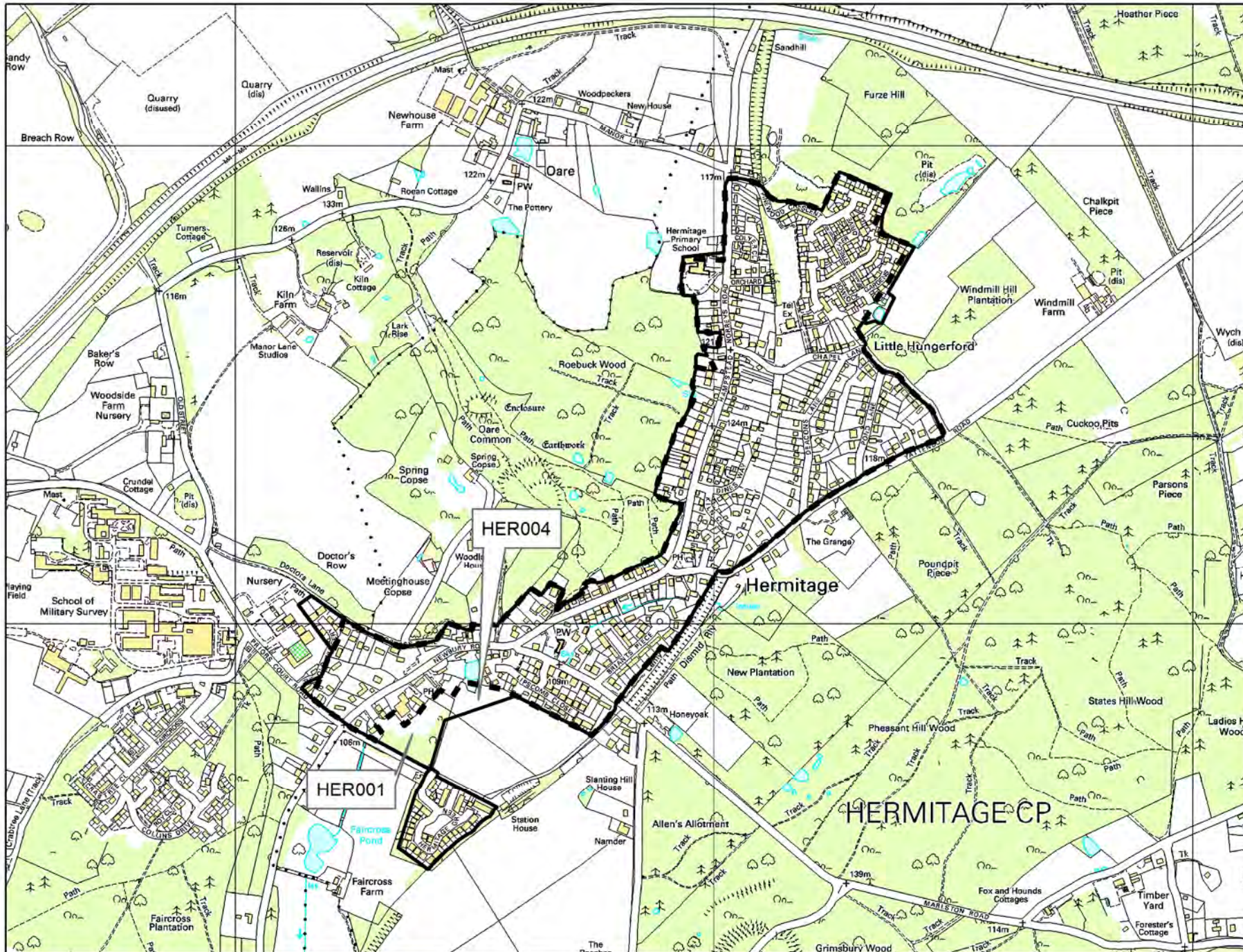
1:19311



# Cold Ash proposed settlement boundary



# Hermitage proposed settlement boundaries



## Legend

Proposed settlement boundaries



Existing settlement boundaries



SAC



Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer

Buffer



5km



7km

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1:10931





# Hungerford proposed settlement boundaries



## Legend

Proposed settlement boundaries



Existing settlement boundaries



SAC



Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer

Buffer



5km



7km

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1:12612



# Kintbury proposed settlement boundaries



## Legend

Proposed settlement boundaries



Existing settlement boundaries



SAC



Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer

Buffer



5km



7km

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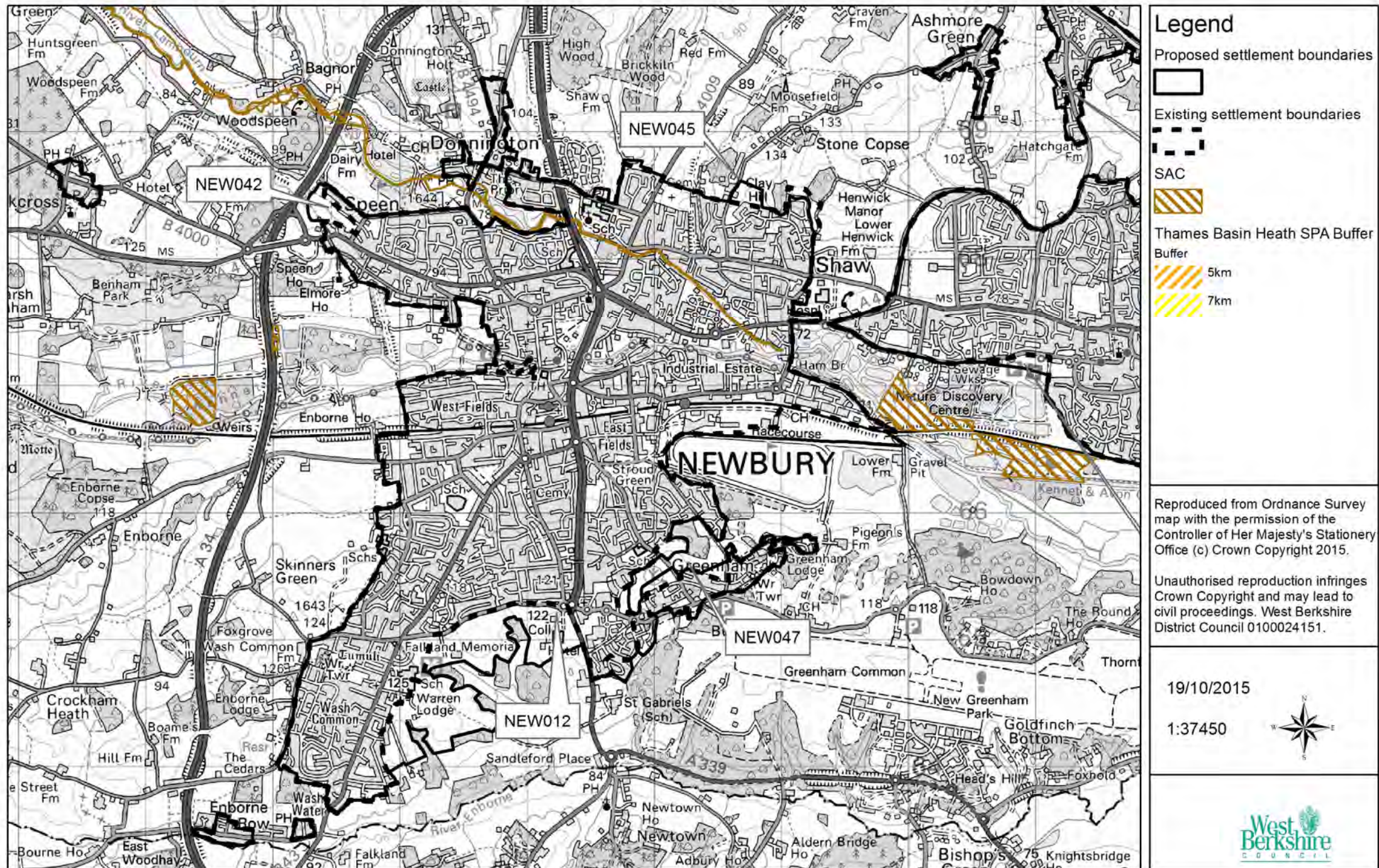
19/10/2015

1:8500





# Newbury proposed settlement boundaries



### Legend

- Proposed settlement boundaries
- Existing settlement boundaries
- SAC
- Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer
  - 5km
  - 7km

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





1:37450



# Pangbourne proposed settlement boundaries



## Legend

- Proposed settlement boundaries 
- Existing settlement boundaries 
- SAC 
- Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer 
- 5km 
- 7km 

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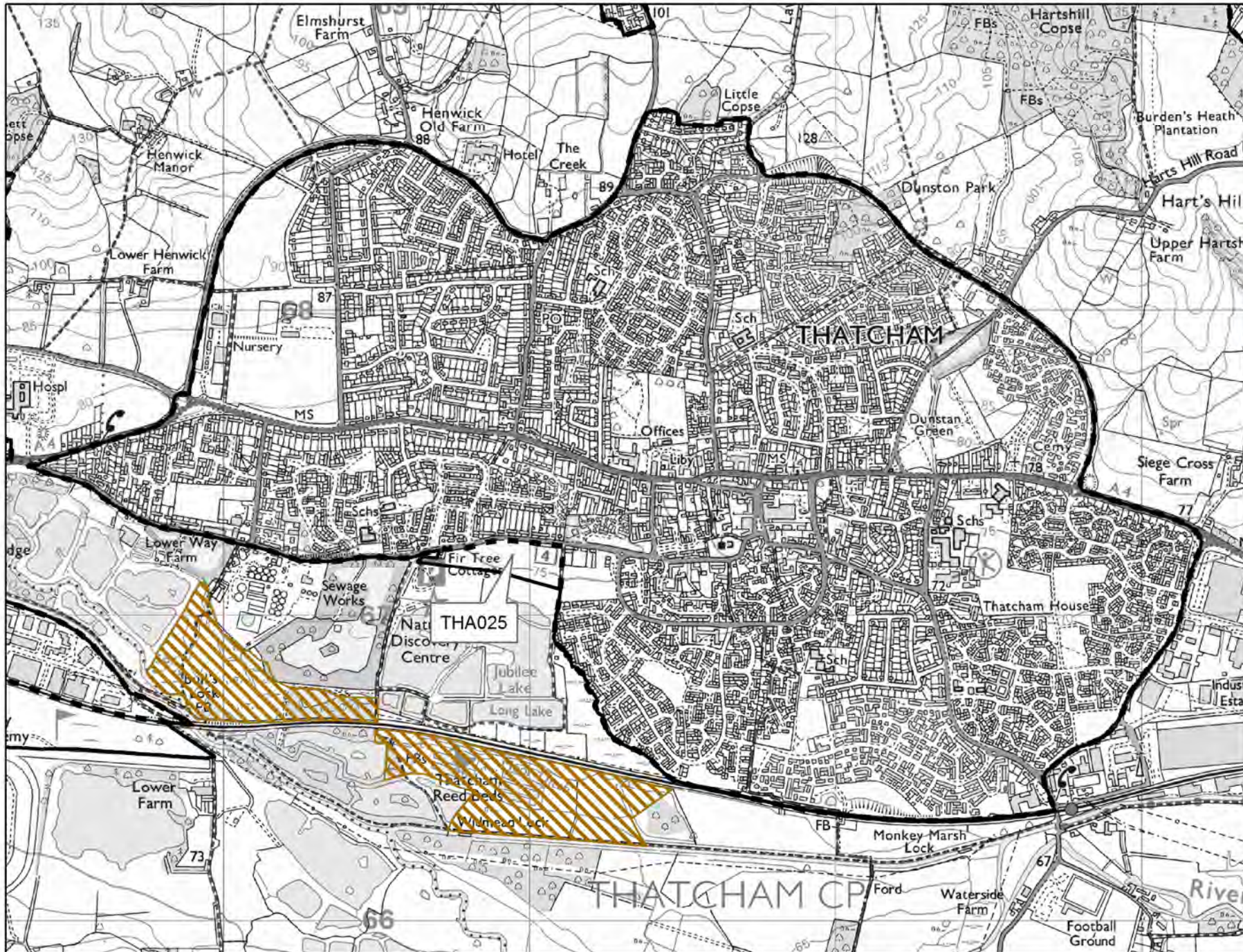
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1:8349



# Thatcham proposed settlement boundaries



### Legend

- Proposed settlement boundaries
- Existing settlement boundaries
- SAC
- Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer
  - 5km
  - 7km

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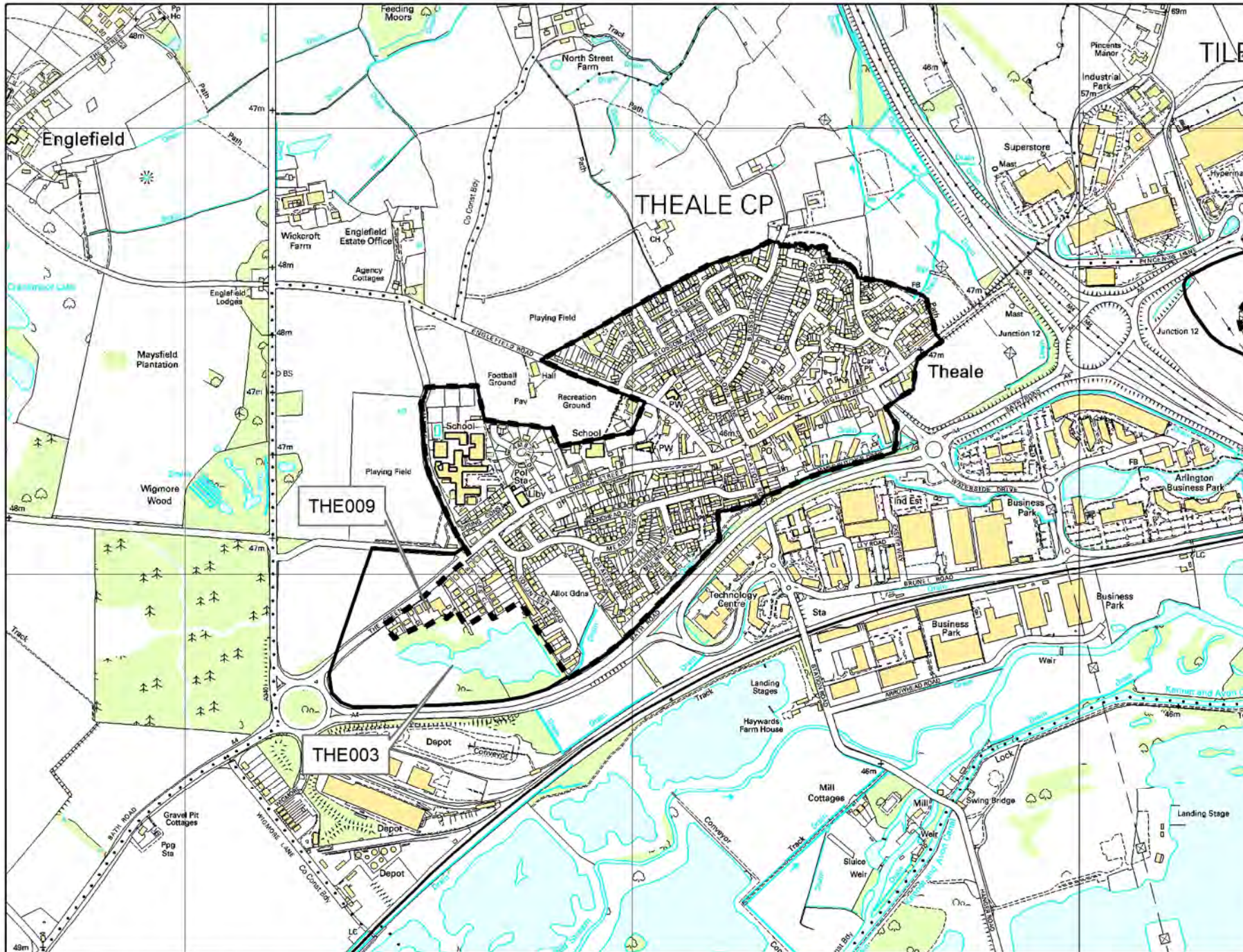
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1:17106



# Theale proposed settlement boundaries



## Legend

Proposed settlement boundaries



Existing settlement boundaries



SAC



Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer

Buffer



5km



7km

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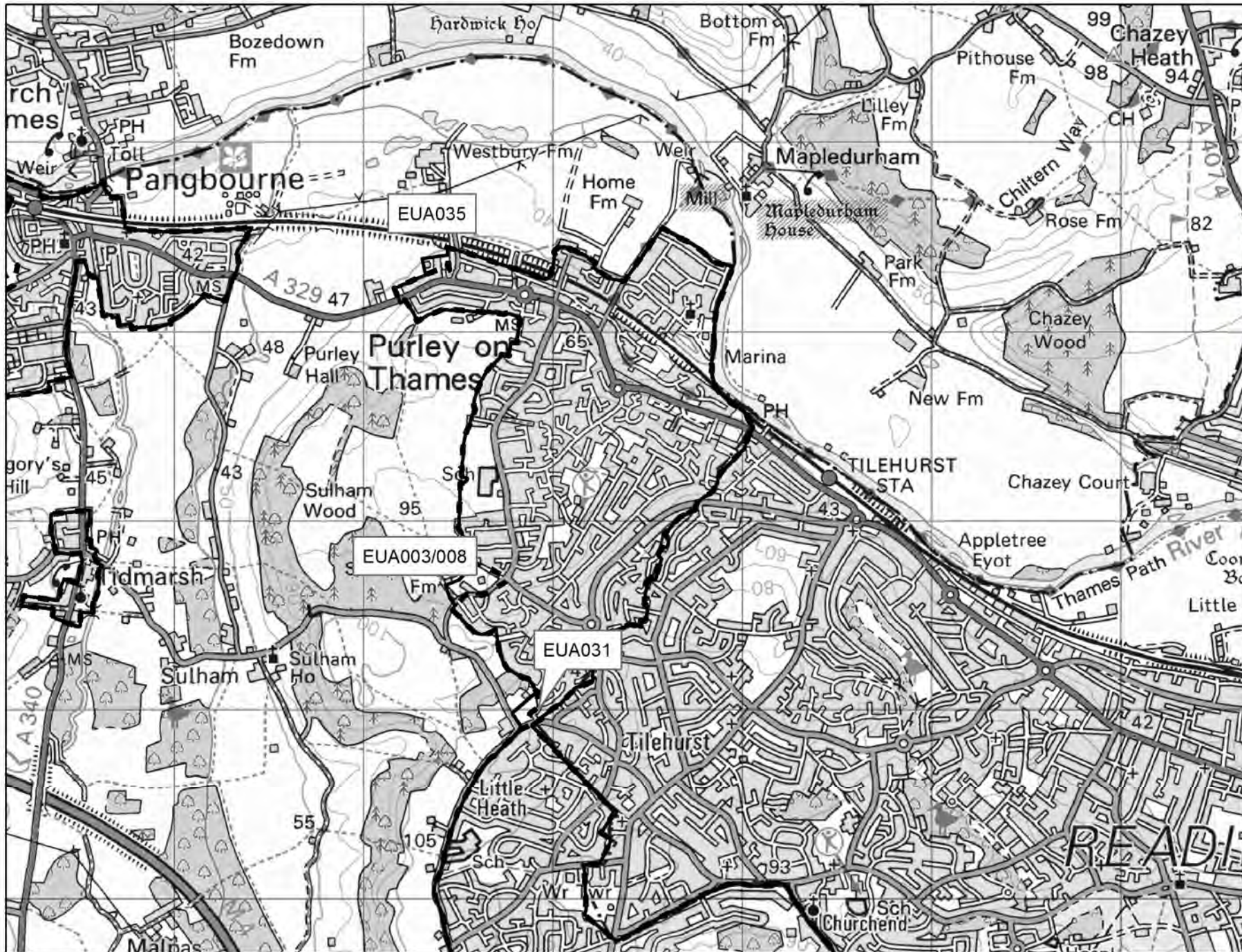
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19/10/2015

1:11707



# Tilehurst & Purley-on-Thames proposed settlement boundaries



## Legend

Proposed settlement boundaries



Existing settlement boundaries



SAC



Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer

Buffer



5km



7km

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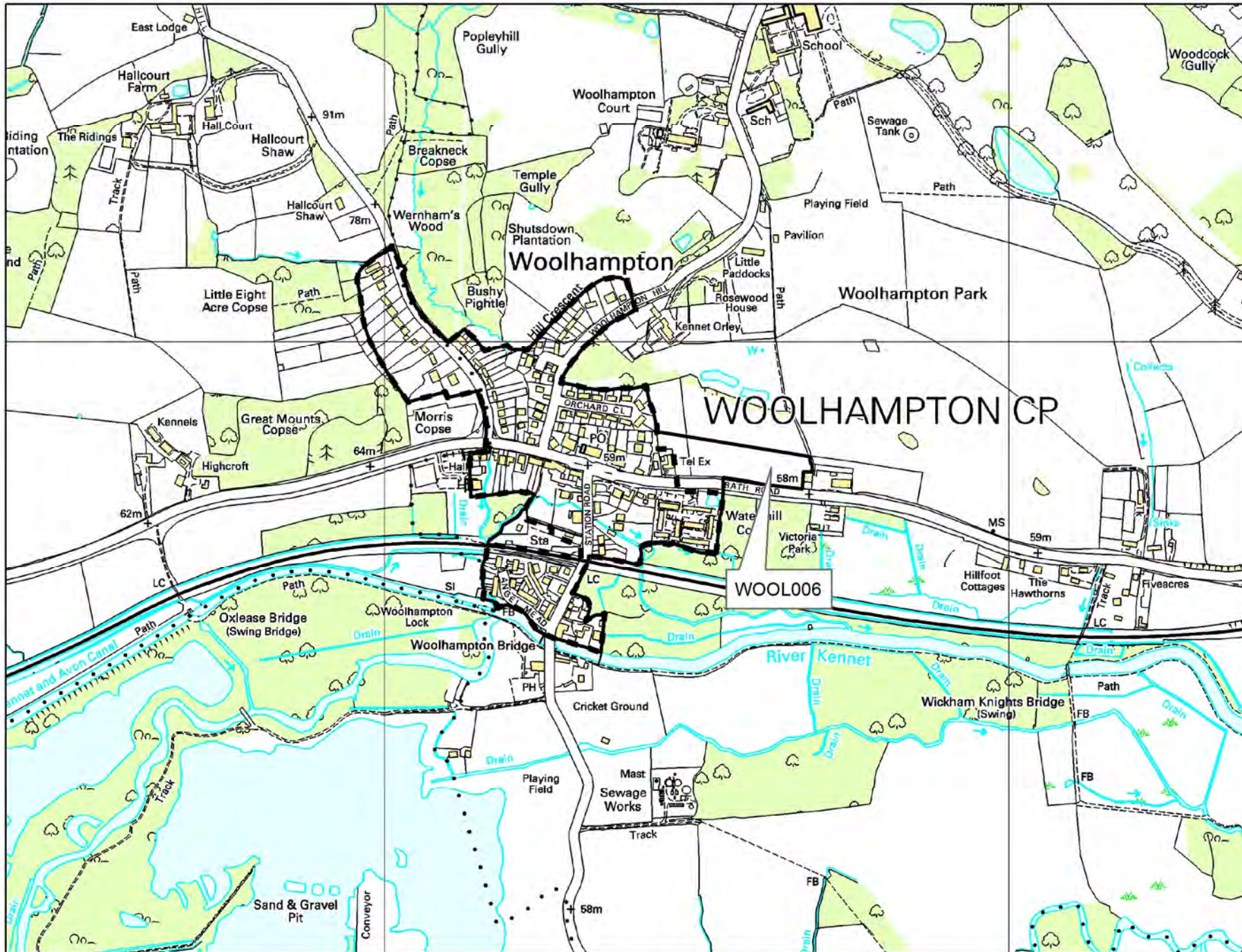
19/10/2015

1:27608





# Woolhampton proposed settlement boundaries



## Legend

Proposed settlement boundaries



Existing settlement boundaries



SAC



Thames Basin Heath SPA Buffer

Buffer



5km



7km

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1:8375



## **Appendix 4**

### **Natural England response on the preferred options Housing Site Allocations DPD HRA Screening Report**

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Our ref: 126880

Your ref:



[planningpolicy@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@westberks.gov.uk)

West Berkshire Council

Customer Services  
Hornbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
Electra Way  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

T <number removed>

Dear Sir/Madam,

## **West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations DPD HRA Screening Report July 2014**

Many thanks for the above consultation. Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

We concur with the report's conclusions that no further investigation, or appropriate assessment, is required for this plan.

For any correspondence or queries relating to this consultation only, please contact Charles Routh on 07990 773630. For any new consultations or issues, please contact [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours sincerely

Charles Routh

Lead Adviser, on behalf of Sustainable Development and Regulation, Thames Valley Team, Natural England.

Date: 30 October 2014  
Our ref: 133159



FAO: <officer name removed>  
Planning &  
Countryside West  
Berkshire Council  
Market Street Newbury  
Berkshire  
RG14 5LD  
**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Customer Services  
Hornbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
Electra Way  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ

T <number removed>

Dear <officer name removed>,

**Planning consultation:** Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report Addendum for Housing in the Countryside Policies.

**Location:** West Berkshire Council.

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 29 September 2014.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

**The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)  
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)**

**HRA of Policies for Housing in the Countryside:**

It is clear that, given the HRA addendum for this set of policies is based on the main HRA for the Site Allocations, that there is already agreement with Natural England over the conclusions that no further assessment is required for that development plan document. Having looked at the 11 policies which are included with this consultation and the points made in relation to which core strategy policies would factor in to help protect various elements of the environment, it would appear that the conclusions which are drawn in this HRA addendum are also agreeable to Natural England.

Provided that as and when development comes forward in areas which are sensitive, such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in particular, the correct level of assessment is carried out at the project level then Natural England would be agreeable to the approach being taken.

The only comment that could be made about the HRA addendum document is that on page 15 at point 4.1 regarding assumptions over no impacts upon Natura 2000 sites both within and beyond the authorities boundary the point doesn't conclude anything and just ends abruptly. This would need to be completed correctly with the appropriate conclusions included in order to ensure that the document is sound and able to be put forward for examination in due course.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Piotr Behnke on <telephone number removed>. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).



Natural England is accredited to the Cabinet Office Service Excellence Standard

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours sincerely,

Piotr Behnke  
Sustainable Development and Regulation  
Thames Valley Team



Natural England is accredited to the Cabinet Office Service Excellence Standard

## **Appendix 5**

### **Natural England response on the proposed submission Housing Site Allocations DPD HRA Screening Report**

**From:** [Planapps](#)  
**To:** [PlanningPolicy](#)  
**Subject:** FW: 2015-12-21 170920 HRA Screening Report - West Berkshire Council Proposed Submission Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (HSA DPD)  
**Date:** 18 December 2015 12:30:01

---

**From:** Tomlinson, Mary (NE) [mailto: <*address removed*>]  
**Sent:** 14 December 2015 11:59  
**To:** Planapps  
**Subject:** RE: 2015-12-21 170920 HRA Screening Report - West Berkshire Council Proposed Submission Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (HSA DPD)

---

Dear West Berks,

Thank you for consulting Natural England on the above.

I note and welcome that the advice provided during our Duty to Co-operate meeting in April 2015 has been duly incorporated.

I have a couple of additional comments below which I would advise the document should be amended to incorporate.

Pages 14 and 15: *'All adverse impacts on habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and other biodiversity will be mitigated through avoidance, appropriate buffering, on-site mitigation and off-site compensation measures.'*

The reference to 'compensation measures' should be removed as this is a European site and would require the route of Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) to be invoked.

Furthermore, I would advise a strengthening of the wording regarding the need for developments to connect to mains sewers for foul water on pages 14 and 15, to wording along the lines of the below:

*All sites must connect to the mains sewerage system to ensure there are no deleterious effects to SACs and river and wetland SSSIs. If this cannot be done, then it must be robustly demonstrated through evidence why not, and a suitable alternative (if applicable) must be proposed along with supporting evidence to demonstrate that there will be no deleterious effects to the designated sites for in-perpetuity.*

I trust this advice is useful.

Yours soincerely,

Mary.

**Mary Tomlinson BSc (Hons) MSc**

**Lead Adviser**

**Sustainable Development and Regulation**

**Thames Valley Team**

Tel: <number removed>

Email: <address removed>

Natural England, Red Kite House, Howbery Park, Crowmarsh Gifford, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 8BD

Please send planning consultations to Natural England by email to: [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk). Or, if it is not possible to consult us electronically then consultations should be sent to the postal address below.

Natural England  
Consultation Service  
Hornbeam House  
Electra Way  
Crewe Business Park  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england)

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**Natural England offers two chargeable services – The Discretionary Advice Service ([DAS](#)) provides pre-application, pre-determination and post-consent advice on proposals to developers and consultants as well as pre-licensing species advice and pre-assent and consent advice. The Pre-submission Screening Service ([PSS](#)) provides advice for protected species mitigation licence applications.**

**These services help applicants take appropriate account of environmental considerations at an early stage of project development, reduce uncertainty, reduce the risk of delay and added cost at a later stage, whilst securing good results for the natural environment.**



## **Appendix 6**

### **Environment Agency response on the proposed submission Housing Site Allocations DPD HRA Screening Report**

**From:** <officer\_name\_removed> on behalf of PlanningPolicy  
**To:** <address\_removed>  
**Subject:** FW: HRA Screening Report - West Berkshire Council Proposed Submission Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (HSA DPD)  
**Date:** 24 November 2015 16:04:36

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**From:** Planning-Wallingford [mailto:planning-wallingford@environment-agency.gov.uk]  
**Sent:** 24 November 2015 15:51  
**To:** PlanningPolicy  
**Subject:** RE: HRA Screening Report - West Berkshire Council Proposed Submission Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (HSA DPD)

Dear <officer\_name\_removed>

Thank you for consulting us on this. We have no comments to make.

Regards

Cathy Harrison

---

**From:** <address\_removed> On Behalf Of PlanningPolicy  
**Sent:** 09 November 2015 09:24  
**To:** Planning-Wallingford  
**Cc:** PlanningPolicy  
**Subject:** HRA Screening Report - West Berkshire Council Proposed Submission Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (HSA DPD)

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report that was prepared at the preferred options stage of the Housing Site Allocations DPD has now been updated to reflect comments made by Natural England at a Duty to Cooperate meeting earlier this year. If you have any comments to make on the attached HRA Screening Report, I would be grateful if you could submit these by Monday 21 December 2015.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries,

Kind regards,

<officer\_name\_removed>

<Officer name removed>

Planning & Countryside | West Berkshire Council | Market Street | Newbury | Berkshire | RG14 5LD  
[www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)



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