



CORE STRATEGY

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

January 2008

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the findings from the initial screening process of an Appropriate Assessment (AA) to identify Natura 2000 sites which could be affected by the East Staffordshire Core Strategy. The purpose of an AA is to assess the impacts of a land use plan against the conservation objectives of a European Site. The assessment must determine whether the plan would adversely affect the integrity of the site in terms of its nature conservation objectives.
- 1.2 The East Staffordshire Core Strategy is currently at issues and options stage and it will shortly reach “Preferred Option” stage. Further appropriate assessment work is likely to be required when the Core Strategy is at a more advanced stage as this will enable a more detailed assessment of likely impacts of the approach.
- 1.3 The requirement for AAs of plans is outlined in Article 6(3) and (4) of the European Communities (1992) Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna (Habitats Directive). These European sites, collectively known as Natura 2000 sites, consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Offshore Marine Sites (OMSs). In October 2005, the European Court of Justice ruled that Appropriate Assessments must be carried out on all land use plans in the UK.
- 1.4 National government guidance in the form of Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2005) requires that listed Ramsar sites receive the same protection as designated SACs and SPAs in terms of policy, and are therefore included in this screening report. It also requires that potential Special Protection Areas and candidate Special Areas of Conservation be considered in the same way.

2. Methodology

- 2.1. In carrying out this screening process guidance produced by Oxford Brookes University (2001) for the European Commission and recent guidance from Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (2006) have been used.
- 2.2. The guidance produced by Oxford Brookes University (2001) “Assessment of Plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC” identifies four main stages involved in completing an Appropriate Assessment. The outcome of each stage indicates whether the next stage will be required.

- 2.3. **Stage 1.** Screening: identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a plan, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant. It has four steps associated with it:
- Step One: Management of the site
 - Step Two: Description of the project or plan
 - Step Three: Characteristics of the site
 - Step Four: Assessment of significance
- 2.4. **Stage 2.** Appropriate Assessment: consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. This has four steps associated with it:
- Step One: Information required
 - Step Two: Impact Prediction
 - Step Three: Conservation Objectives
 - Step Four: Mitigation Measures
- 2.5. **Stage 3.** Assessment of alternative solutions: examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site. This has two steps associated with it:
- Step One: Identifying alternative solutions
 - Step Two: Assessing alternative solutions
- 2.6. **Stage 4.** Assessment where no alternatives exist and where adverse effects remain: assessment of compensatory measures where it is deemed that the plan should proceed. This has two steps associated with it:
- Step One: Identify compensatory measures
 - Step Two: Assessment of compensatory measures
- 2.7. Along with this approach, recent guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) "Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment" (2006) identifies three stages involved in the completion of Appropriate Assessments as follows. These are in line with the stages outlined in the earlier guidance.
- **Stage 1.** Likely significant effects (evidence gathering and screening)
 - **Stage 2.** Appropriate Assessment and ascertaining the effect on site integrity (necessary if there are found to be likely significant effects)
 - **Stage 3.** Mitigation measures and alternative solutions (required when an option has been found to have adverse effects on the integrity of the European Site, these effects should be mitigated)
- 2.8. The first stage involves gathering evidence and screening for likely impacts. This stage is covered in this report, informed by data produced by Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. This screening process determines whether a plan option is likely to have a significant effect on a European site and hence whether the subsequent steps of the AA are required. Once the screening report is complete Natural England will be consulted. The screening report will be made available at the same time as the Sustainability

Appraisal Report for public consultation on the Core Strategy Issues and Options.

- 2.9. The DCLG guidance recommends that AAs should be developed and made available to the community to be consulted on as appropriate on the preferred options at regulation 26 stage (pre-submission public participation). If there are substantial changes to the Core Strategy that may affect the validity of the AA report the AA may need to be revised.

3. Evidence Gathering and Screening

- 3.1. The initial evidence gathering and screening assessment examines the likely effects of the Core Strategy, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, upon Natura 2000 sites. After this stage it may be possible to conclude that the effects will not be significant.
- 3.2. When completing this screening report the first stage is to identify what sites are within the East Staffordshire Borough Boundary. Whilst there are no Natura 2000 sites inside the East Staffordshire Borough Boundary, a number surround it. Within 15km of East Staffordshire boundary there is one Ramsar site, one SPA site and nine SAC sites:
- RAMSAR
 - Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 1
 - SPAs
 - Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1)
 - SACs
 - South Pennine Moors
 - Cannock Chase
 - Cannock Extension Canal
 - Pasturefields Salt Marsh
 - Peak District Dales
 - River Mease
 - West Midlands Mosses Chartley Moss
 - Gang Mine
 - Bees Nest and Green Clay Pits

3.3. Step One: Management of the site

After identifying these sites there is a need to consider whether the Core Strategy is directly related to the management of any of the above sites. The Core Strategy sets out the broad approach to development in the Borough and it is not directly related to the management of any of the Natura 2000 sites. In addition, since none of the sites lie within the administrative boundaries of the borough the Core Strategy is unlikely to be directly related to the management of any of them.

3.4. Step Two: Description of the project or plan

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), prepared by the West Midlands Regional Assembly is part of the statutory development plan for the Borough. The RSS is

currently being reviewed and the Preferred Option stage for Phase 2 has just been submitted to the Secretary of State and will be the subject of an independent examination in the autumn of 2008.

The RSS Preferred Option sets out the figure for the amount of new housing within East Staffordshire between 2006 and 2026. This figure is set at 12,900 net with a proportional split of 11,000 dwellings to be in located in and around Burton upon Trent and 1,900 to be located elsewhere in the Borough. This means that a proportionately larger amount of new dwellings will need to be located in and around Burton upon Trent and broadly sets out the spatial direction that housing development will take place throughout the Borough over the next 20 years. (NB The Secretary of State has intervened to review the overall housing provision of the submitted plan as it is considered too low by Government. This could alter the above figures but would not alter the extent of the screening area.)

The Core Strategy sets out the key elements of the planning framework for the Borough. It will comprise a vision and strategic objectives, a spatial strategy, core policies that apply to the whole area, and a monitoring and implementation framework. To meet the demand for housing and employment sites the Core Strategy sets out three possible options for growth in the Borough. It is likely that many growth areas will accommodate a mixture of housing and employment uses to help develop balanced, sustainable communities and provide viable transport choices. The current options proposed are as follows:

- Option 1 indicates strategic urban extensions to the major towns of Burton and Uttoxeter.
- Option 2 builds on Option 1 with the strategic expansion of Burton and Uttoxeter and the further development and expansion of the Borough's larger villages of Barton under Needwood, Rocester and Tutbury.
- Option 3 indicates strategic urban extensions to the major towns of Burton and Uttoxeter with the expansion of just one of the Borough's larger villages, Barton under Needwood or Tutbury.

There also exists the potential to develop some of the proposed growth to the south of Burton in Drakelow. This option along with all other options would require substantial infrastructure investment.

3.5. Step Three: Characteristics of the site

Whilst there are no Natura 2000 sites inside the East Staffordshire Borough Boundary, a number surround it. Government guidance states that significant effects may be incurred in cases where the area of the plan is some distance away. Therefore, as a precautionary measure any Natura 2000 sites within 15km (straight line) of the District boundary have been included in the initial screening process. Information was gathered from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) records regarding the status of the sites, including reason for their designation and potential vulnerability.

The following table details European Sites that could possibly be adversely affected by the East Staffordshire Core Strategy. Within 15km of East Staffordshire boundary there is one Ramsar site, one SPA site and nine SAC sites.

Table 1: European sites that could possibly be adversely affected by the East Staffordshire Core Strategy

Name of site	Grid Reference	Approx distance from East Staffs boundary	Reason for designation and conservation objectives	Vulnerability (things which should be considered when assessing the impact of Core Strategy)
RAMSAR				
Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 1	SK026281	0.3km	The Meres & Mosses form a geographically discrete series of 16 lowland open water and peatland sites in the north-west Midlands of England. They consist of a diverse range of habitats from open water to raised bog. Supports a number of rare species of plants associated with wetlands including five nationally scarce species together with an assemblage of rare wetland invertebrates.	Site is vulnerable to eutrophication through atmospheric pollution and agricultural run-off. Introduction/ invasion of exotic plant species has the potential to impact on native flora and fauna.
SPAs				
Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1)	SK285835	10.8km	This covers extensive tracts of semi-natural moorland habitats including upland heath and blanket mire. The site is of European importance for several upland breeding species, including birds of prey and waders. During the breeding season the area regularly supports at least: *2.2% of the GB breeding population of <i>Asio flammeus</i> * 2.3% of the GB breeding population of <i>Falco columbanus</i> * 1.9% of the GB breeding population of <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Significant habitat damage can occur through physical erosion or fire, combined with disturbance of breeding birds. Historic air pollution, high grazing pressure and wildfire burns mean that many habitats are sub-optimal (in vegetation terms). Major urban and industrial centres near to the Peak District Moors provide significant visitor pressure.
SACs				
South Pennine Moors	SK021683	10.8km	Supports a significant presence of Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> , and Transition mores and quaking bogs.	Atmospheric pollution has had an impact on the flora and fauna on the site. Historical overgrazing, burning (accidental and deliberate), drainage and

Name of site	Grid Reference	Approx distance from East Staffs boundary	Reason for designation and conservation objectives	Vulnerability (things which should be considered when assessing the impact of Core Strategy)
			The area is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for European dry heaths, Blanket bogs and Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles.	locally trampling have all meant that large areas of blanket bog have become de-vegetated and eroded. There are a number of key pressures upon the site; these include overgrazing by sheep, burning as a tool for grouse moor management and inappropriate drainage through moor-gripping. The aim is to try and ensure continued improvements in air quality to allow affected species to recolonise if they can. Access management has been a key issue for the area. Management of key pressures in order to maintain ecosystems is being carried out.
Cannock Chase	SJ982188	3.7km	Supports a significant presence of Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix. Area is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for European dry heaths.	Disturbance is caused by visitor pressures include dog walking, horse riding, mountain biking and off-track activities such as orienteering, all of which result in erosion, new track creation and vegetation damage. Mining fissures continue to appear across the site even though mining has ceased and this is thought to detrimentally affect site hydrology. The underlying Sherwood Sandstone is a major aquifer with water abstracted for public and industrial uses and the effects of this are not fully understood.
Cannock Extension Canal	SK020058	15.8km	A cul-de-sac canal. Is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom for Luronium natans.	The population of Luronium natans is vulnerable and dependent upon a balanced level of boat traffic. An increase, or decrease, in recreational activity could be detrimental to them. Existing discharges of surface water run-off, principally from roads, cause some reduction in water

Name of site	Grid Reference	Approx distance from East Staffs boundary	Reason for designation and conservation objectives	Vulnerability (things which should be considered when assessing the impact of Core Strategy)
				quality.
Pasturefields Salt Marsh	SJ992249	3.1km	Is the only known outstanding locality in the UK of a natural spring with Inland Salt Meadows, which is considered to be rare as its total extent in the UK is estimated to be less than 10 hectares.	Requires traditional agricultural management with livestock grazing and minimal use of agricultural management. Is likely to be vulnerable to abstractions of water and is dependent upon the brine source being maintained. The site is managed by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust with support from English Nature's Reserve Enhancement Scheme.
Peak District Dales	SK142550	0.93km	<p>Is considered to support a significant presence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *European dry heaths *Calaminarian grasslands of the <i>Violetalia calaminariae</i> *Alkaline fens *<i>Cottus gobio</i> *<i>Lampetra planeri</i> *Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation (rare) *Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (<i>Thlaspietea rotundifolii</i>) (rare) <p>Is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>), *Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines, *<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>. 	<p>The main threat to the limestone grasslands is inappropriate grazing management which tends to result in either neglect and invasion by scrub, or overgrazing and the loss of the important vegetation communities.</p> <p>Proposed developments have the potential to interfere with drainage patterns within the site. The impact of dust from quarrying needs to be assessed.</p> <p>In addition to grassland and woodland there are a range of scrub communities some of which are valuable for nature conservation. The balance between woodland, grassland and scrub needs to be struck.</p>
River Mease	SK260114	0.16km	The area is considered to support a significant presence of Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-</i>	Is an unusually semi-natural system in a largely rural landscape, dominated by intensive agriculture. Water quality and quantity are

Name of site	Grid Reference	Approx distance from East Staffs boundary	Reason for designation and conservation objectives	Vulnerability (things which should be considered when assessing the impact of Core Strategy)
			Batrachion vegetation, Austropotamobius pallipes, Lutra lutra. Is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for Cottus gobio. Is one of only four known outstanding localities in the UK for Cobitis taenia.	important, whilst competition for water resources is high. Diffuse pollution and excessive sedimentation are catchment-wide issues and have the potential to affect the site.
West Midlands Mosses Chartley Moss	SK026282	0.38km	Considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds and Transition mires and quaking bogs	Sites are threatened by nutrient enrichment from several sources including atmospheric deposition of nutrients. A Management Agreement controls agricultural run-off at Chartley Moss. Trees at this site trap airborne nutrients and provide roost areas for birds, but the enrichment effect of both is only localised.
Gang Mine	SK286557	14km	Is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae	Approximately one-fifth of Gang Mine is currently ungrazed and is under threat. If ungrazing continues the accumulation of plant litter will result in detrimental successional change, although temporary cessation of grazing will allow the development of the unusual lichen-rich sub-community. This area has recently been purchased by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and will be developed as a nature reserve. The remaining area is well-grazed and is under no immediate threat. There is deposition of limestone dust on at least part of the site from the adjacent active Dean Quarry, and this impact needs to be assessed.
Bees Nest and Green Clay Pits	SK240545	9.52km	Is considered to support a significant presence of Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on	A rich mix of habitats, including ponds used by great crested newts, which were partially created

Name of site	Grid Reference	Approx distance from East Staffs boundary	Reason for designation and conservation objectives	Vulnerability (things which should be considered when assessing the impact of Core Strategy)
			calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia). Is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for Triturus cristatus.	by mineral extraction of silica sands. An extant planning permission (until 2042) for extraction is currently dormant and would need to be reviewed by the planning authority before re-enactment. The site has not operated for several years and it is not clear if there are viable reserves on the site. There are currently problems with the grazing management, which is affecting the quality of the grassland. The ponds require maintenance and enhancement management for the newts.

Source: Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) www.jncc.gov.uk

3.6. Step Four: Assessment of significance

The following table sets out the assessment of likely significant effects of the Core Strategy on the Natura 2000 sites.

Table 2: Assessment of likely significant effects

Site	Key environmental conditions to support site integrity	Possible impacts arising from the Core Strategy	Is there a risk of a significant effect alone?	Possible impacts from other plans etc	Is there a risk of significant effect "in combination"
Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 1, RAMSAR	* Air pollution – site is vulnerable to eutrophication through atmospheric pollution and agricultural run-off. * Introduction/ invasion of exotic plant species has the potential to impact on native	* Increase in visitor numbers could affect local atmospheric pollution and increase eutrophication * No effect	* Possible risk * N/A		

Site	Key environmental conditions to support site integrity	Possible impacts arising from the Core Strategy	Is there a risk of a significant effect alone?	Possible impacts from other plans etc	Is there a risk of significant effect "in combination"
	flora and fauna				
Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1), SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Recreational pressure and disturbance – disturbance to breeding birds and damage to habitats. * Water quality and quantity – critical to maintenance of blanket bog habitat * Air pollution – may have significant effects if nutrient loading is altering species composition * Land management – critical to maintaining habitats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Increase in housing numbers and population may lead to increased visitor numbers and disturbance to the Peak District Moors * No effect * Currently acid and nitrogen deposition are above critical loads. This affects habitat structure and diversity on site. Increased traffic flows may affect this * No effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Potential risk * N/A * Possible risk * N/A 		
South Pennine Moors SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Recreational pressure and disturbance leads to trampling and erosion * Atmospheric air pollution is a key issue leading to localised damage. * Appropriate management is key – maintenance of ecosystems relies primarily on appropriate grazing levels and burning regimes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Increase in housing numbers and population may lead to increased visitor numbers and disturbance to the South Pennine Moors * Acid and nitrogen deposition are above critical loads and increased traffic may contribute to background levels of nitrogen oxides and affect the site. * No effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Possible risk * Possible risk * N/A 		
Cannock Chase SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Disturbance caused by visitor pressures * Air pollution * Water quantity and quality – Sherwood Sandstone is a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Increase in housing numbers and population may lead to increased visitor numbers to Cannock Chase * Potential increase in air 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Possible risk * Possible risk * Possible risk * N/A 		

Site	Key environmental conditions to support site integrity	Possible impacts arising from the Core Strategy	Is there a risk of a significant effect alone?	Possible impacts from other plans etc	Is there a risk of significant effect "in combination"
	major aquifer with water abstracted for public and industrial use * Appropriate management is essential – grazing and burning	pollution if traffic levels increase on roads adjacent to the site * No effect on quality. Increased water requirements may lead to increased abstractions at points that affect water levels at Cannock Chase * No effect			
Cannock Extension Canal SAC	* Recreational pressure - population of Lauronium natans is dependent upon a balanced level of boat traffic. * Water quality - surface water run-off from roads causes some reduction in water quality	* Increase in households/ population may lead to increased recreational pressures on the Canal and hence increased boat traffic * Potential increase in traffic may increase run-off from roads	* No risk * No risk		
Pasturefields Salt Marsh, SAC	* Management - requires traditional agricultural management – livestock grazing and no/minimal use of agricultural chemicals. * Water quantity and quality - Underground aquifer likely to be vulnerable to abstractions of water from underground aquifer	* No effect – not related to management of the site * No effect on quality. Increased water requirements may lead to increased abstractions at points that affect water levels at the site	* N/A * Possible risk		
Peak District Dales, SAC	* Recreational pressure and disturbance may conflict with conservation interests * Air pollution – dust from	* Very popular area for visitors and population growth and development may increase recreational pressures on the	* Possible risk * Possible risk * N/A * N/A		

Site	Key environmental conditions to support site integrity	Possible impacts arising from the Core Strategy	Is there a risk of a significant effect alone?	Possible impacts from other plans etc	Is there a risk of significant effect "in combination"
	quarrying may affect the site. Increased nitrogen deposition may affect community composition. * Appropriate management – changes in grazing practice lead to overgrazing and undergrazing. * Land use change - Developments may interfere with drainage patterns within the site	area. * Increased transport emissions may affect levels of nitrogen in the area * No effect on management of the site * No effect on drainage			
River Mease, SAC	* Competition for water resources is high * Air pollution - Diffuse pollution and excessive sedimentation may affect the site * Vulnerable to diffuse pollution and sedimentation.	* Potential for increased pressure on water resources from developments * Potential increase in air pollution from increased traffic flows on near-by roads * No effect	* Potential risk * Potential risk * N/A		
West Midlands Mosses Chartley Moss, SAC	* Recreational pressure and disturbance causes erosion, trampling and casual pollution * Air pollution – potential threat, particularly where it increases nutrient loading. * Management agreement controls agricultural run-off (a potential threat)	* Potential increase in recreational pressure from increased household numbers * Unlikely to increase pollution from local sources but may add to background air pollution levels through increased traffic * No effect	* Potential risk * Potential risk * N/A		
Gang Mine, SAC	* Management - habitat is dependent upon grazing levels * Threat of un-grazing on part	* No effect on management of SAC * No effect on grazing levels of	* N/A * N/A		

Site	Key environmental conditions to support site integrity	Possible impacts arising from the Core Strategy	Is there a risk of a significant effect alone?	Possible impacts from other plans etc	Is there a risk of significant effect "in combination"
	of the site may result in detrimental successional change	SAC			
Bees Nest and Green Clay Pits, SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Management - problems with grazing management affecting the quality of the grassland * Ponds require maintenance and management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * No effect on management of SAC * No effect on management/ maintenance of ponds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * N/A * N/A 		

4. Summary

- 4.1 The Core Strategy sets out the broad approach to development in the borough and does not provide any site-specific developments. The Core Strategy is also at an early stage in its production and therefore it is difficult to identify impacts of the Core Strategy developments on specific Natura 2000 sites.
- 4.2 The most likely effects of the Core Strategy on the Natura 2000 sites are related to the additional households and associated construction in the Borough and how these may increase visitors to the sites and contribute to increased recreational pressure, increased traffic flows, and hence increased air pollution. These new developments may also mean increased pressure on water resources in the Borough and on the Natura 2000 sites.
- 4.3 In terms of pollution from vehicular emissions the concentrations decline exponentially from kerbside. Given that the majority of development is likely to be in and around Burton upon Trent and Uttoxeter these are not in close proximity to the sites and are unlikely to affect the Natura 2000 sites in terms of pollution from vehicle emissions. The closest site to Burton is approximately 10km away (The River Mease), and traffic flows in the vicinity of the sites attributable to East Staffordshire residents are likely to be minimal. The European sites could also be adversely affected by changes in groundwater levels through over abstraction and a fall in the water table. However, again, due to the location of development, it is unlikely that this will impact on the European sites.
- 4.4 In terms of tourism and recreational pressures on sites, more local or site-based management solutions will be required. For example, more integrated and sustainable transport options could be considered to ensure that increased visitor numbers do not result in increased traffic disturbance and emissions.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Once the issues and options consultation on the Core Strategy is complete the responses received will be used to form a Preferred Option. This would enable a more detailed assessment of whether the Core Strategy is likely to have significant effects on the Natura 2000 sites and therefore further appropriate assessment work is likely to be necessary at this stage.

Glossary

EC Habitats Directive

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. The main aim is to promote the maintenance of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species. Member States are required to take account of economic, social and cultural requirements and regional and local characteristics.

Natura 2000

A network of protected areas across the EU comprising of SPAs and SACs, designed to protect the most seriously threatened habitats and species across Europe.

Ramsar

Wetland sites designated for conservation under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention). Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation requires that Ramsar sites receive the same protection as designated SPAs and SACs in terms of policy.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

Sites which have been designated under the European Union's Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) for wildlife protection. The aim of the designation is to conserve important or threatened species and habitats.

Special Protection Area (SPA)

These are sites which have been established to protect wild birds under the European Commission Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC).

Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC)

These are areas that are in the process of being considered for designation. For the purpose of considering development proposals these sites are to be considered in the same way as if they had already been classified or designated.

Potential Special Protection Areas (pSPA)

These are areas that are in the process of being considered for designation. For the purpose of considering development proposals these sites are to be considered in the same way as if they had already been classified or designated.