

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Report for:

Withington Group Neighbourhood Area

May 2018



Withington Group HRA

HRA Screening Assessment

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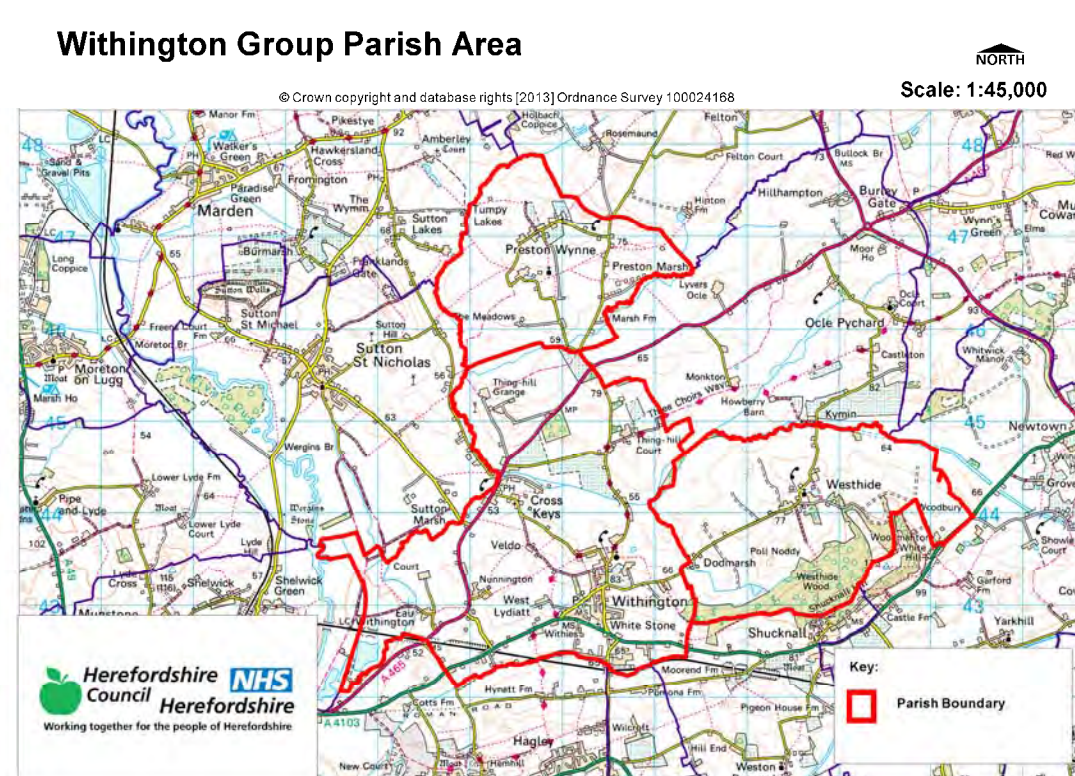
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Screening Assessment relates to a Neighbourhood Development Plan that is considered to be in general conformity with higher level strategic plans, such as the Herefordshire Core Strategy and the National planning Policy Framework. The screening stage involves assessing broadly whether the Draft Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on any European site(s).
- 1.2 Withington Group Parish Council is producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Withington Group Parish, in order to set out the vision, objectives and policies for the development of the Parish up to 2031. This HRA reviews the Draft Withington Group Neighbourhood Plan February 2018.
- 1.3 The NDP has 17 criteria based policies. It provides general policies that clarify and provide detail to the policies within the Herefordshire Core Strategy therefore it requires a high level screening assessment to build upon the HRA Screening Assessment Report for the Herefordshire Core Strategy. This high level screening assessment should be read in combination with the Herefordshire Pre-submission publication of the Local Plan-Core Strategy Habitat Regulations Assessment Report (April 2014) and ensures that there will not be any significant impacts upon Natura 2000 sites.
- 1.4 The map below shows Withington Group Neighbourhood Area with the European Site highlighted.



2 The requirement to undertake Habitats Regulations Assessment of neighbourhood plans

- 2.1 The requirement to undertake HRA of development plans was confirmed by the amendments to the “Habitats Regulations” published for England and Wales in July 2007 and updated in 2013. Therefore, when preparing its NDP, Withington Group Parish Council is required by law to carry out an assessment known as “Habitats Regulations Assessment”. It is also a requirement in Regulation 32 schedule 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.
- 2.2 Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive provides that:
Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [European] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.
- 2.3 HRA is an impact-led assessment and refers to the assessment of the potential effects of a neighbourhood plan on one or more European sites, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs):
- **SPAs** are classified under the European Council Directive ‘on the conservation of wild birds’ (79/409/EEC; ‘Birds Directive’) for the protection of **wild birds and their habitats** (including particularly rare and vulnerable species listed in Annex 1 of the Birds Directive, and migratory species).
 - **SACs** are designated under the Habitats Directive and target **particular habitats** (Annex 1) and/or species (Annex II) identified as being of European importance.
- 2.4 For ease of reference during HRA, general practice has been that these three designations are collectively referred to as either **Natura 2000** or **European sites**. This means that a Screening Assessment is carried out with regard to the Conservation Objectives of the European Sites and with reference to other plans or projects to identify if any significant effect is likely for any European Site.

3 Methodology

- 3.1 As the Withington Group NDP is not directly connected with the management of any European sites, and includes proposals for development which may affect European sites, it is necessary under Regulation 102(1)(a) of the Habitats Regulations 2010 to undertake screening for likely significant effects on European sites.
- 3.2 The HRA of neighbourhood plans is undertaken in stages and should conclude whether or not a proposal or policy in a neighbourhood plan would adversely affect the integrity of the site in question. This is judged in terms of the implications of the plan for a site’s ‘qualifying features’ (i.e. those Annex I habitats, Annex II species, and Annex I bird populations for which it has been designated) and are measured with reference to the conservation objectives for those qualifying features as defined by Natural England.
- 3.3 The first process is to undertake an initial screening report to determine the need to undertake the requirement for a HRA, this initial screening identifies whether the Plan could impact upon any European site that could be within the Neighbourhood Area or nearby.
- 3.4 If a European Site is within the Neighbourhood Area or the Neighbourhood Area could impact upon a European site then this will need to be taken into account and a full screening assessment will need to be undertaken.

- 3.5 The full screening stage consists of a description of the plan, identification of potential effects on European Sites, assessing the effects on European Sites (taking into account potential mitigation provided by other policies in the plan). For Neighbourhood Plans the outcome should demonstrate there are no likely effects upon the European sites. If any likely effects occur then there will need to be amendments to the NDP made and be re-screened until all likely effects have been mitigated.

4 Results of the Initial Screening Report and options

- 4.1 The initial Screening report (**11/06/2013**) found that the Neighbourhood Area is in the hydrological catchment of the River Wye (including the River Lugg) SAC. Therefore a full screening assessment is required.
- 4.2 For full details of the River Lugg and River Wye SAC attributes which contribute to and define their integrity and vulnerable data see Appendix 1 of the Withington Group Initial Screening Report. The Initial Screening Report, **11/06/2013**, can be found in Appendix 3 of this HRA report. This information made it possible to identify the features of each site which determine site integrity, as well as the specific sensitivities of each site, therefore enabling later analysis of how the potential impacts of the Withington Group Neighbourhood Plan may affect site integrity.
- 4.3 The initial options for the NDP were assessed to determine their environmental impact that could affect the River Wye SAC. Of the 3 options put forward the no NDP option was not considered viable for the Parish. The remaining options didn't directly prose growth, however any additional infill would all be within the proportional growth targets of the Core strategy and are therefore unlikely to have a significant impact on the SAC.
- 4.4 As Withington Group progresses from options onto their NDP policies, the Plan will need to identify ways in which the least effect on the River Wye SAC could be achieved, alongside taking forward the preferred option from the consultation from the community. A list of the options assessed can be found in Appendix 1, and the Assessment matrix for the options can be found Appendix 2.

5 Description of the Withington Group Neighbourhood Development Plan

- 5.1 The Draft Withington Group NDP presents detailed policies for development in the Neighbourhood Area, which is equivalent to the group parish boundary, up to 2031. The first part of the Plan introduces the Plan and its preparation and discusses the background of the village.
- 5.2 The NDP then details the vision for the Group Parish over the Plan period and 10 objectives of how this will be achieved. The objectives are as follow:
- 1. To ensure that the growth of housing in Withington is proportionate to the size and scale of the settlements and the surrounding countryside so that it retains its rural character.**
 - 2. To deliver housing development in the surrounding areas that are in line with Objective 1.**
 - 3. To ensure that all new development takes into consideration the style and substance of local housing, being designed to be in keeping with the surrounding character of the parish.**
 - 4. To ensure that new housing is developed in a suitable range of tenures, types, size, affordability ranges and is flexible in usage so that local people of all ages can live in the parish in a suitable home while attracting families to the area and local housing needs are met.**

- 5. To ensure that there are appropriate local and community facilities, which incorporate the latest technological advances in such areas as mobile phone reception and broadband as is suitable, which can support present demand, future projected growth and demographic change. Such developments must make a positive and tangible impact on the range and availability of community facilities throughout the parish.**
- 6. To continue to develop local employment opportunities, including small businesses and tourism, which continue to be sympathetic to the largely agricultural nature of the parish.**
- 7. To ensure that the natural and built environment of the parish is protected and enhanced for future generations through sustainable development by protecting key environmental and heritage assets (including listed buildings, conservation areas, green spaces and landscapes)**
- 8. To ensure any new development does not increase flood risk, and to restrict any new development in flood risk areas.**
- 9. To ensure development of a safe and well maintained network of roads and pavements and footpaths within the parish.**
- 10. To continue to seek the opinions of parishioners at regular intervals in connection with all the above objectives, in order to make the Neighbourhood Plan a fully inclusive on-going document.**

5.3 The NDP also sets out 17 policies on various topics based on the objective headings above and also for the villages, these include:

Policy P1: Allocated sites

- a. Land adjacent to Whitestone Baptist Chapel for 33 new dwellings.
- b. Land on the south side of the A4103 at Whitestone for a Care Home.

Policy P2: Withington Settlement Boundary

Policy P3: Westhide and Preston Wynne

Policy P4: Local Distinctiveness – Housing Layout and Design

Policy P5: Affordable Housing

Policy P6: Green Spaces

Policy P7: Transport and Traffic

Policy P8: Conserving Historic Character

Policy P9: Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal

Policy P10: Telecommunications - Broadband

Policy P11: Telecommunications – Mobile Phone Coverage

Policy P12: Employment

Policy P13: Agriculture and Tourism

Policy P14: Polytunnels

Policy P15: Renewable Energy

Policy P16: Social and Community Facilities

Policy P17: Minimising Flood Risk in Withington March

6 Identification of other plans and projects which may have ‘in-combination’ effects

- 6.1 Regulation 102 of the Habitats Regulations 2010 requires an appropriate assessment where a land use plan (not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. In addition, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulation 2012 a NDP cannot have a significant effect on any European Site whether alone or in combination with another Plan.
- 6.2 There are a number of potentially relevant plans and projects which may result in in-combination effects with the Core Strategy across Herefordshire, these plans have been reviewed and can be found in Appendix 2 of the pre-submission publication of the Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy Habitats Regulations Assessment (May 2014). It is seen that as this NDP does not go over and beyond the requirements set out in the Core Strategy this review will also be substantial for the NDP.
- 6.3 The HRA for the Core Strategy also identifies that both the Water Cycle Study for Herefordshire, which indicates the potential for planned water abstraction requirements combined with pressures on European Sites from the Core Strategy policies, and the work on the Nutrient Management Plan, to ensure the favourable conservation status of the SAC in respect of phosphate levels as soon as possible and at the latest by 2027, have both been considered as part of the in-combination assessment.

7 Assessment of the ‘likely significant effects’ of the Withington Group NDP

- 7.1 As required under Regulation 102 of the Habitats Regulations 2010, a screening assessment has been undertaken to identify the ‘likely significant effects’ of the NDP. A screening matrix was prepared in order to identify whether any of the policies in the Plan would be likely to have a significant effect on the River Wye SAC.
- 7.2 The findings of the screening matrix can be found in the Screening Matrix in Appendix 2 of this report. Colour coding was used to record the likely impacts of the policies on the European site and its qualifying habitats and species as shown in the table 1 below.

Red	There are likely to be significant effects
Green	Significant effects are unlikely

- 7.3 The Screening matrix took the approach of screening each policy individually, which is consistent with current guidance documents. The results from the HRA report for the pre-submission version of the Herefordshire Core Strategy was also taking into consideration.
- 7.4 Mitigation of some of the identified potential effects could be achieved through implementation of the other policies within the NDP which require good practice measures during and after construction phases, such as more efficient use of water, reduction in waste and encouragement of recycling. The provision and encouragement of use of more sustainable transport measures when improving the transport infrastructure, will also help to reduce car traffic around the parish and surrounding areas.

8 Conclusions from the Screening Matrix

- 8.1 None of the Draft Withington Group Neighbourhood Plan (February 2018) policies were concluded to be likely to have a significant effect on the River Wye SAC. Based on assumptions and information contained within the Withington Group Parish Plan, Herefordshire Core Strategy and the Pre-submission version / proposed modifications addendum of the HRA for the Core Strategy all of the NDP policies were found to be unlikely to result in significant effects on the River Wye.

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- 8.2 In many cases this is because the policy itself would not result in development, i.e., it related instead to criteria for development. In a number of cases the policies also included measures to help support the natural environment, including biodiversity and therefore no significant effect conclusion could be reached. In addition, these policies have the potential to mitigate some of the possible adverse effects arising from other policies.
- 8.3 The plan is mainly criteria based, however does allocate one site.
- 8.4 Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) has stated for the Core Strategy that there is sufficient existing permitted headroom in the Sewerage Treatment works serving the Almeley area to continue to treat the water from the amount of housing provided for in the Core Strategy policies. In addition, the preparation of the Nutrient Management Plan for the River Wye SAC should ensure that development within Herefordshire which can be accommodated within existing water discharge permits would not be likely to have a significant effect upon the River Wye SAC.
- 8.5 It is unlikely that the Withington Group Plan will have any in-combination effects with any Plans from neighbouring parish councils as the level of growth proposed is the same as that proposed for the Housing Market Area in the Herefordshire Core Strategy and all of the proposed housing sites will be of a small scale and in line with the proportional growth specified in the Core Strategy.
- 8.6 It is therefore concluded that the Withington Group Parish Plan will not have a likely significant effect on the River Wye SAC and Parish Councillors will welcome the conclusion as to no likely significant effect.
- 8.7 Any further amendments to policies (post February 2018) will be rescreened if required and an addendum to this report will be produced.

Appendix 1

Option 1 - Not to prepare a NDP: This would mean relying solely on Development Management practices of the LPA to ensure that the existing commitments are developed in a manner that meets the needs of the local community and that any further oversupply is limited by HCS policy and National Planning Policy Guidance. By implication this would allow only ad-hoc influence from the local community through responding to planning applications. It also depends on developer-led initiatives which may or may not meet local needs. A further “sub-option” would be to rely on the LPA bringing forward its Rural Areas Development Plan Document and including policies for this NDP area within it.

Option 2 – Seek to reduce the oversupply

The inherent risk of a high level of oversupply is that it would not be “Proportionate” for the Withington Group of parishes and may draw development away from other parishes in the same HCS sub-area thereby preventing them reaching their appropriate proportionate development needs. Planning permissions can, in theory, be revoked under Section 97 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 but that was not considered as a realistic option and has not been offered by the LPA anyway. Should existing permissions expire before development commences then the LPA has the option of not renewing permission, but that would need to be considered in the context at the time. It was not considered realistic to actively plan for existing permissions to expire and to depend on that for managing housing supply.

Option 3 – Seek to restrict further oversupply

A moratorium on all new permissions has not been offered by the LPA and would be a very restrictive approach that would not allow for changes in circumstances or any specific local needs. Hence that concept has not been pursued. Instead the Steering Group has looked to the concept of establishing Settlement Boundaries within which only very limited future growth can take place, along with detailed design policies to influence the nature of development, and protection of key open spaces where they are either within Settlement Boundaries or integral to their setting. (The settings of listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled monuments are protected through legislation in any event).

This Option has involved detailed consideration of 13 potential sites which have been subject to local consultations and publicity along with development of Settlement Boundaries which have also been the subject of informal consultations through local publicity and an exhibition.

Appendix 2

Table 1: HRA Screening of Emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan Objectives, Options and Policies

Parish Council Name: Withington Group

NDP Title: Withington Group NDP

Date undertaken: April 2018

NDP objectives, options policies	HRA Screening of Emerging NDP objectives, options and policies				
	Likely activities (operations) to result as a consequence of the objective/option/policy	Likely effect if objective/option/policy implemented. Could they have Likely Significant Effects (LSE) on European Sites? (Yes/No, with reasons) <i>(If no, progress on to next objective/option/policy. If yes, progress on to next set of columns in row)</i>	European Sites potentially affected (Refer to Initial Screening)	Mitigation measures to be considered, as necessary, through redraft of objective/option/policy and to be considered as part of Appropriate Assessment	Could the policy have likely significant effects on European sites (taking mitigation into account?)
OBJECTIVES		<i>The significance of the effect is key when assessing the effects.</i>			
Objective 1	To ensure that the growth of housing in Withington is proportionate to the size and scale of the settlements and the surrounding countryside	This objective would give certainty over the future conservation and preservation of the character and history of the parish, it would not lead directly to	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	No; policy criteria can be added to any allocation site as an outcome to this objective to mitigate the impact.

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	<p>so that it retains its rural character.</p> <p>Protection and management of the high-quality landscape, green space, biodiversity and geology of the Parish and the settings of its settlements.</p> <p>Maintaining the rural character of the parish would ensure that the landscape character, views and features of the parish would be preserved and open spaces. Specific environmental issues could be investigated during the site search and be positively addressed within the policy wording.</p>	<p>development but and there would be no significant effect on the River Wye catchment.</p> <p>If required mitigation criteria can be added to site allocations policies to ensure no likely significant effect would occur.</p>			
Objective 2	<p>To deliver housing development in the surrounding areas that are in line with Objective 1.</p> <p>Protection and management of the high-quality landscape, green space, biodiversity and geology of the Parish</p>	<p>This objective would give certainty over the future conservation and preservation of the character and history of the parish, it would not lead directly to development but and there would be no significant effect on the</p>	<p>River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>No; policy criteria can be added to any allocation site as an outcome to this objective to mitigate the impact.</p>

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	<p>and the settings of its settlements.</p> <p>Maintaining the rural character of the parish would ensure that the landscape character, views and features of the parish would be preserved and open spaces. Specific environmental issues could be investigated during the site search and be positively addressed within the policy wording.</p>	<p>River Wye catchment.</p> <p>If required mitigation criteria can be added to site allocations policies to ensure no likely significant effect would occur.</p>			
Objective 3	<p>To ensure that all new development takes into consideration the style and substance of local housing, being designed to be in keeping with the surrounding character of the parish.</p> <p>Maintaining the rural character of the parish would ensure that the landscape character, views and features of the parish would be preserved and open spaces. Specific environmental issues</p>	<p>This objective would give certainty over the future conservation and preservation of the character of the parish, it would not lead directly to development but and there would be no significant effect on the River Wye catchment.</p> <p>If required mitigation criteria can be added to site allocations policies to ensure no likely significant effect would occur.</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	No; policy criteria can be added to any allocation site as an outcome to this objective to mitigate the impact.

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	<p>could be investigated during the site search and be positively addressed within the policy wording.</p> <p>Specific environmental issues could be investigated during the site search and be positively addressed within the policy wording.</p>				
Objective 4	<p>To ensure that new housing is developed in a suitable range of tenures, types, size, affordability ranges and is flexible in usage so that local people of all ages can live in the parish in a suitable home while attracting families to the area and local housing needs are met.</p> <p>Specific environmental issues could be investigated during the site search and be positively addressed within the policy wording.</p>	<p>This objective would give certainty over the future conservation and preservation of the character and history and community of the parish, it would not lead directly to development but and there would be no significant effect on the River Wye catchment.</p> <p>If required mitigation criteria can be added to site allocations policies to ensure no likely significant effect would occur.</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	No; policy criteria can be added to any allocation site as an outcome to this objective to mitigate the impact.
Objective 5	<p>To ensure that there are appropriate local and community facilities, which incorporate the</p>	<p>This objective would give certainty over the future of community facilities in the parish. It could lead to</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	No; policy criteria can be added to any allocation site as an outcome to this

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	<p>latest technological advances in such areas as mobile phone reception and broadband as is suitable, which can support present demand, future growth and demographic change. Such developments must make a positive and tangible impact on the range and availability of community facilities throughout the parish.</p>	<p>development but there is unlikely to be no significant effect on the River Wye catchment.</p> <p>If required mitigation criteria can be added to site allocations policies to ensure no likely significant effect would occur.</p>			<p>objective to mitigate the impact.</p>
Objective 6	<p>To continue to develop local employment opportunities, including small businesses and tourism, which continue to be sympathetic to the largely agricultural nature of the parish.</p> <p>Specific environmental issues could be investigated during the site search and be positively addressed within the policy wording</p>	<p>This objective would give certainty over the future appropriate business activity in the parish in the future. It would not lead directly to development and there would be no significant effect on the River Wye catchment.</p> <p>If required mitigation criteria can be added to site allocations policies to ensure no likely significant effect would occur.</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	<p>No; policy criteria can be added to any allocation site as an outcome to this objective to mitigate the impact.</p>
Objective 7	<p>To ensure that the natural and built environment of the parish is protected and enhanced for future</p>	<p>This objective would give certainty over development in the parish in the future and certainty regarding the protection</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	<p>No; policy criteria can be added to any allocation site as an outcome to this objective to mitigate</p>

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	generations through sustainable development by protecting key environmental and heritage assets (including listed buildings, conservation areas, green spaces and landscapes)	of conservation and landscapes. The objective itself would not lead directly to development but would help to manage and regulate development. There would be no significant effect on the River Wye catchment. If required mitigation criteria can be added to site allocations policies to ensure no likely significant effect would occur.			the impact.
Objective 8	To ensure any new development does not increase flood risk, and to restrict any new development in flood risk areas.	This objective would help to address the issue of flooding, but would not lead directly to development. There would be no significant effect on the River Wye catchment. If required mitigation criteria can be added to site allocations policies to ensure no likely significant effect would occur.	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	No; policy criteria can be added to any allocation site as an outcome to this objective to mitigate the impact.
Objective 9	To ensure development of a safe and well	This objective would help to guide and enhance	River Wye (including	N/A	No; policy criteria can be added to any

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	<p>maintained network of roads and pavements and footpaths within the parish.</p>	<p>transport networks in the parish but would not lead directly to development.</p> <p>There would be no significant effect on the River Wye catchment.</p> <p>If required mitigation criteria can be added to site allocations policies to ensure no likely significant effect would occur.</p>	River Lugg) SAC		<p>allocation site as an outcome to this objective to mitigate the impact.</p>
Objective 10	<p>To continue to seek the opinions of parishioners at regular intervals in connection with all the above objectives, in order to make the Neighbourhood Plan a fully inclusive on-going document.</p>	<p>This objective would help to monitor the overall plan and would not necessarily lead directly to development but could help to enhance existing access to public transport.</p> <p>There would be no significant effect on the River Wye catchment.</p> <p>If required mitigation criteria can be added to site allocations policies to ensure no likely significant effect would occur.</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	<p>No; policy criteria can be added to any allocation site as an outcome to this objective to mitigate the impact.</p>
OPTIONS					

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Option 1	<p>Not producing a neighbourhood plan would result in any future growth decisions within the parish being made based on the strategic policies within the Core Strategy.</p> <p>Proportional housing and employment growth would be in accordance with the Core Strategy.</p>	<p>Core Strategy HRA has examined the likely significant effects of the Core Strategy rural policies in May 2014 and April 2015 and concluded that there are no LSE but acknowledges the role of neighbourhood plans to provide additional certainty.</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	N/A
Option 2	<p>Seek to reduce the oversupply</p>	<p>This option looks to address risk of a high level of oversupply for the reasoning that it would not be “Proportionate” for the Withington Group of parishes. Specific environmental issues could be investigated further during the site search and allocation, therefore could be positively addressed within policy in regard to managing housing supply.</p> <p>Pursuing this option would give certainty over future development within the area particularly within</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	No; policy criteria can be added to any allocation of sites policy to mitigate.

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		<p>the River Wye catchment but would work towards mitigating impact on the SAC.</p> <p>If required mitigation criteria can be added to commitment site policies.</p>			
Option 3	Seek to restrict further oversupply	<p>This approach, promoted through Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy, would define the extent of the built-up area of each settlement and any proposed extensions to it where housing development might take place. The definition of the settlement boundary and the allocation of sufficient land to deliver required housing would give certainty in terms of the baseline objects. Specific environmental issues could be investigated further during the site search and allocation, therefore could be positively addressed within policy. This option would have an overall positive effect on the baseline.</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	No; policy criteria can be added to any allocation policy to mitigate.

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		<p>Pursuing this option would give certainty over future development within the area particularly within the River Wye catchment but would work towards mitigating impact on the SAC.</p> <p>If required mitigation criteria can be added to commitment site policies.</p>			
POLICIES					
Policy P1:	<p>To deliver housing on pre allocated sites that have planning permission.</p> <p>a. Land adjacent to Whitestone Baptist Chapel for 33 new dwellings.</p> <p>b. Land on the south side of the A4103 at Whitestone for a Care Home.</p>	<p>This policy will lead to development of an already approved houses on pre-approved sites.</p> <p>Any development could have a possible increase in vehicular movements and demand for water abstraction and treatment.</p> <p>There is unlikely to be an impact on the SAC as this will have been addressed at planning stage.</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	No: this policy seeks to include of renewable energy design within any residential schemes but does not directly lead to development itself.

Policy P2	Defining a Withington Settlement Boundary	<p>This policy will not directly lead to development but will guide any future development.</p> <p>Any development could have a possible increase in vehicular movements and demand for water abstraction and treatment.</p> <p>Uncertain as to the impact on the River Wye SAC as dependant on the location of the development of any additional windfall.</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	Specific environmental issues could be investigated during the site search and be positively addressed within the policy wording. Policies LD2, SD1, SD3 and SD4 of the Local Plan (Core Strategy)	No, development in line with the Local Plan (Core Strategy) policy RA2 and the policy safeguards which exist within the Core Strategy should avoid or mitigate any likely significant effects.
Policy P3	Westhide and Preston Wynne, defining settlement boundaries	<p>This policy will not directly lead to development but will guide any future development.</p> <p>Any development could have a possible increase in vehicular movements and demand for water abstraction and treatment.</p> <p>Uncertain as to the impact on the River Wye SAC as dependant on the location of the development of any additional windfall.</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	Specific environmental issues could be investigated during the site search and be positively addressed within the policy wording. Policies LD2, SD1, SD3 and SD4 of the Local Plan (Core Strategy)	No: this policy seeks to maintain and protect the landscape and its features but does not directly lead to development itself.
Policy P4	Local Distinctiveness – Housing Layout and Design protecting the	This policy will not directly lead to development but will guide development	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	No: this policy seeks to address conservation and

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	<p>character of the parish through any development</p>	<p>and ensure that sustainable construction methods are taken and that development takes into account aspects of the parish.</p> <p>Any development could have a possible increase in vehicular movements and demand for water abstraction and treatment.</p> <p>Uncertain as to the impact on the River Wye SAC as dependant on the location of any development that the policy will mitigate.</p>	Downton Gorge SAC		<p>enhancement of the environment but does not directly lead to development itself.</p>
Policy P5	Affordable Housing	<p>New development of infrastructure and or environmental impacts of as a result of direct development in the parish.</p> <p>Possible increase in vehicular movements, business activity and demand for water abstraction and treatment.</p> <p>Uncertain as to the impact on the River Wye SAC as dependant on specific location of the</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	<p>Specific environmental issues could be investigated during further site investigation and be positively addressed within the policy wording.</p> <p>Policy would need to take account of the proportional growth requirements of the Core Strategy and potential headroom capacity at the local STW</p>	<p>No, development in line with the Local Plan (Core Strategy) policy RA2 and the policy safeguards which exist within the Core Strategy should avoid or mitigate any likely significant effects.</p> <p>Policy criteria should be included within the NDP which reflects this. Further assessments will be undertaken at site</p>

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		development, size and type.			allocation stage.
Policy P6	Green Spaces, the allocation of green spaces in the parish..	N/A	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	N/A
Policy P7		N/A	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	No, development in line with the Local Plan (Core Strategy) policy RA2 and the policy safeguards which exist within the Core Strategy should avoid or mitigate any likely significant effects.
Policy P8	Conserving historic character of the parish	N/A	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	N/A
Policy P9	Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal – protection of the area	N/A	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	No: this policy seeks to protect the canal and associated greenspaces in the parish but does not directly lead to development itself.
Policy P10	Telecommunications - Broadband	N/A	River Wye (including	N/A	N/A

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			River Lugg) SAC		
Policy P11	Telecommunications – Mobile phone coverage	N/A	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	N/A
Policy P12	Employment in the parish area	<p>New development of infrastructure and or environmental impacts as a result of increased activity.</p> <p>Possible increase in vehicular movements, business activity and demand for water abstraction and treatment.</p> <p>Uncertain as to the impact on the River Wye SAC as dependant on specific location of the development, size and type.</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	<p>Policies LD2, SD1, SD3 and SD4 of the Local Plan (Core Strategy) and FW1 within the NDP will aim to help avoid any adverse impacts on the River Wye from any new employment or business uses.</p> <p>Improved water efficiency measures, metering and addressing leakages in the supply may help to mitigate any additional pressures on the water supply as a result of new development.</p>	Mitigation to the policy will be required to ensure that the outcomes and aims of the policy are clear and structured and that it addresses the correct aspects of land use issues and environmental issues.
Policy AYJE3:	Agriculture and Tourism Development in the parish area	New development or diversification through tourism related activities would lead to some infrastructure and or environmental impacts as a result of increased activity.	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	No; policy criteria can be added to any allocation policy to mitigate.

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		<p>Possible increase in vehicular movements, business activity and demand for water abstraction and treatment.</p> <p>Uncertain as to the impact on the River Wye SAC as dependant on specific location of the development, size and type of diversification.</p>			
Policy P14	Polytunnels	N/A	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	N/A
Policy P15	Renewable Energy	Any development could have a possible increase in vehicular movements.	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	N/A	No, this policy will not directly lead to development but will help to protect the landscape and features through any development and enhance the provision for renewable energy.
Policy P16	Social and community facilities	New development of infrastructure and or environmental impacts as a result of increased	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	Policies LD2, SD1, SD3 and SD4 of the Local Plan (Core Strategy) and FW1 within the NDP will	Mitigation to the policy will be required to ensure that the outcomes and aims of

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		<p>employment activity.</p> <p>Possible increase in vehicular movements, business activity and demand for water abstraction and treatment.</p> <p>Uncertain as to the impact on the River Wye SAC as dependant on specific location of the development, size and type.</p>		<p>aim to help avoid any adverse impacts on the River Wye from any new employment or business uses.</p> <p>Improved water efficiency measures, metering and addressing leakages in the supply may help to mitigate any additional pressures on the water supply as a result of new development.</p>	<p>the policy are clear and structured and that it addresses the correct aspects of land use issues and environmental issues.</p>
Policy P17	Minimising flood risk in Withington Marsh	<p>Development needs to be tested before it commences.</p> <p>Housing, infrastructure development</p> <p>Possible loss of surface drainage capacity</p> <p>Uncertain as to the impact on the River Wye SAC as dependant on the location and specifics of the development.</p>	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	<p>Specific environmental issues could be investigated at development stage but be positively addressed within the policy wording.</p> <p>Policy would need to take account of the proportional growth requirements of the Core Strategy and potential headroom capacity at the local STW and the impact this will have on flooding in the</p>	<p>No, development in line with the Local Plan (Core Strategy) policy RA2 and the policy safeguards (SS& and SD3) which exist within the Core Strategy should avoid or mitigate any likely significant effects.</p>

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				development areas and SAC.	
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Appendix 3

**Initial Habitat Regulations Assessment and Strategic Environmental
Assessment Screening Notification**

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulation 2012 (Reg. 32)

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (d)

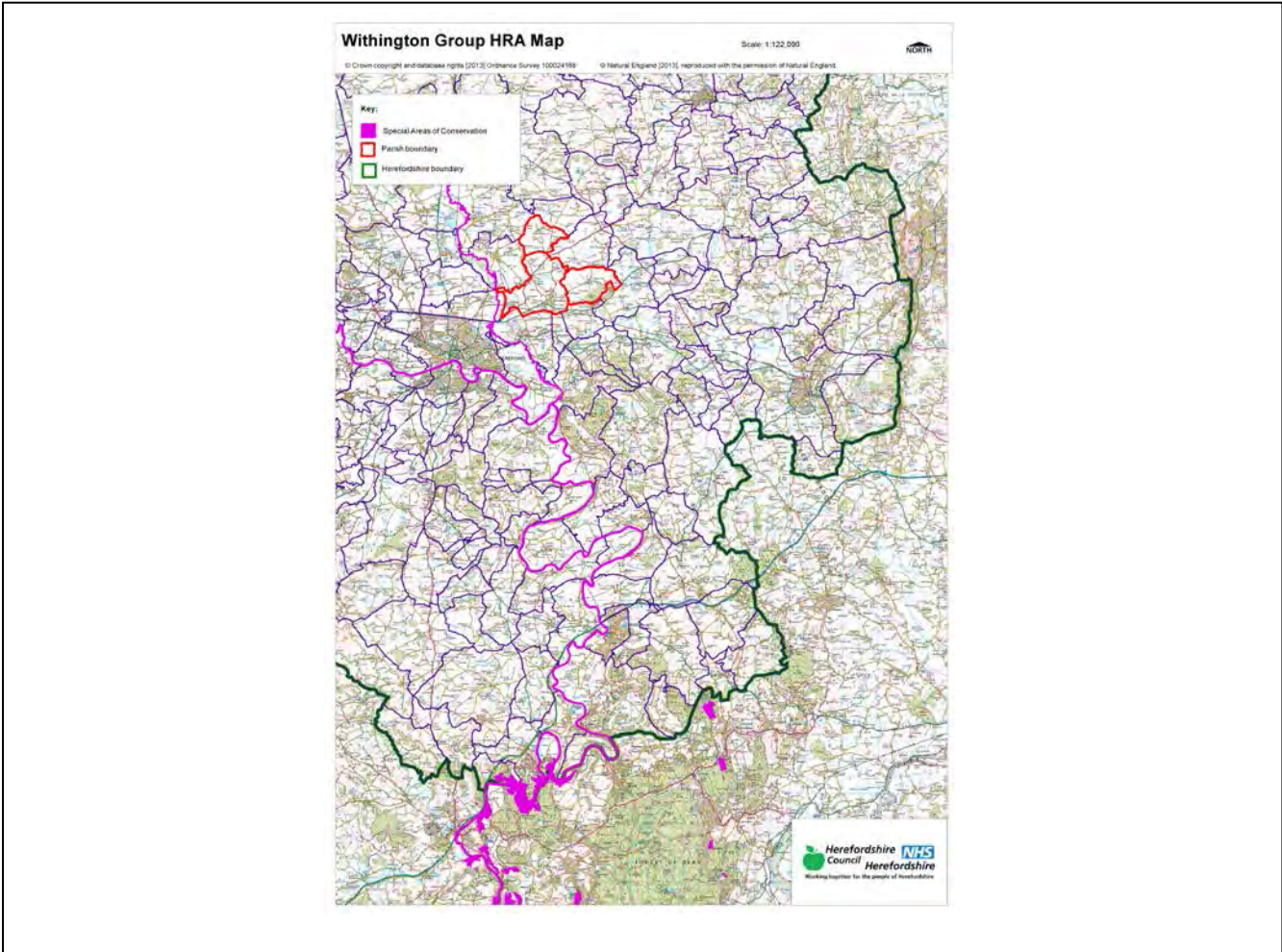
Neighbourhood Area:	Withington Group Neighbourhood Area
Parish Council:	Withington Group Parish Council
Neighbourhood Area Designation Date:	12/07/2013

Introduction

This Initial Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening has been undertaken to assess whether any European sites exist within or in proximity to the neighbourhood area which could be affected by any future proposals or policies.

Through continual engagement the outcomes of any required assessments will help to ensure that proposed developments will not lead to Likely Significant Effects upon a European Site or cause adverse impacts upon other environmental assets, such as the built historic or local natural environment.

**HRA Initial Screening: Map showing relationship of Neighbourhood Area with European Sites
(not to scale)**



Initial HRA Screening

River Wye (including the River Lugg) SAC:

Does the Neighbourhood Area have the River Wye (including the River Lugg) in or next to its boundary?	Y	The River Lugg borders the Group Parish to the west
Is the Neighbourhood Area in the hydrological catchment of the River Wye (including the River Lugg) SAC?	Y	The Group Parish is within the River Lugg hydrological catchment area.
If yes above, does the Neighbourhood Area have mains drainage to deal with foul sewage?	Y	There is mains drainage at Preston Wynne. Withington is also served by Hereford

Downton Gorge SAC:

Is the Neighbourhood Area within 10km of Downton Gorge SAC?	N	Downton Gorge is 28km away from the Group Parish
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River Clun SAC:

Does the Neighbourhood Area include: Border Group Parish Council or Leintwardine Group Parish Council?	N	River Clun does not border the Group Parish
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Usk Bat Sites SAC:

Is the Neighbourhood Area within 10km of the SAC boundary?	N	Usk Bat Sites are 42.5km away from the Group Parish
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Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC:

Is the Neighbourhood Area within 10km of any of the individual sites that make up the Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Bat Sites?	N	The Group Parish is 23.6km away from Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites
--	---	--

Wye Valley Woodlands SAC:

Is the Neighbourhood Area within 10km of any of the individual sites that make up the Wye Valley Woodlands Site?	N	The Group Parish is 28.1km away from the Wye Valley Woodlands
--	---	---

HRA Conclusion:

The assessment above highlights that the following European Sites will need to be taken into account in the future Neighbourhood Development Plan for the Withington Group Neighbourhood Area and a Full HRA Screening will be required.

European Site

(List only those which are relevant from above)

River Wye (including the River Lugg) SAC

Strategic Environmental Assessment Initial Screening for nature conservation landscape and heritage features

The following environmental features are within or in general proximity to the Withington Group Neighbourhood Area and would need to be taken into account within a Strategic Environmental Assessment. In addition, the NDP will also need to consider the other SEA topics set out in Guidance Note 9a to ensure that the plan does not cause adverse impacts.

SEA features	Total	Explanation	SEA required
Air Quality Management Areas	0	There are no AQMA's within the Group Parish	N
Ancient Woodland	1	Westhide Wood	Y
Areas of Archaeological Interest	0	There are no AAI's within the Group Parish	N
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	0	There are no AONB's within the Group Parish	N
Conservation Areas	1	There is a Conservation Area around Withington Village	Y
European Sites	1	River Lugg	Y
Flood Areas		There are Flood Zones on the western borders of the Group Parish and extending into Cross Keys and ending north of Westhide, and also along the southern borders of Preston Wynne Parish	Y
Listed Buildings	Numerous	There are numerous Listed Buildings throughout the Group Parish	Y
Local Sites (SWS/SINCs/RIGS)	3 (SWS)	River Lugg; Field south of Sutton Rhea (border); Woodland on Shucknall	Y
Long distance footpaths/trails	0	There are no Trails within the Group Parish	N
Mineral Reserves	4	Quarry north west of Westhide; Yarkhill Reservoir to Hillend Grove; Shucknall Hill Common; Site running from Leominster-Hereford	Y
National Nature Reserve	0	There are no NNR's within the Group Parish	N
Registered & Unregistered parks and gardens	2 Unregistered	Westhide Court; Porch House	Y
Scheduled Ancient Monuments	2	Churchyard Cross in St Peters Churchyard; Churchyard Cross in St Bartholomew's Churchyard	Y
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	1	River Lugg (Unfavourable Recovering)	Y

Decision Notification:

The initial screening highlights that the Neighbourhood Development Plan for the Withington Group Neighbourhood Area:

- a) Will require further environmental assessment for Habitat Regulations Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Assessment date: 11/06/2013

Assessed by: James Latham

Appendix 1: European Sites

The table below provides the name of each European Site, which has been screened in for the purposes of neighbourhood planning in Herefordshire; includes their site features of integrity; and vulnerability data. This is based on the sites individual features of integrity and their vulnerabilities, which could include distance criteria. This has been used in identifying which parishes are likely to require a full HRA Screening of their future Neighbourhood Development Plan, to establish if their plan might have Likely Significant Effects on a European Site.

Downton Gorge
Site Features: <i>Tilio-Acerion</i> forests of slopes, screes and ravines
Vulnerability data: 10km for air quality associated with poultry units or other intensive agricultural practices.
River Clun
Site Features: Freshwater pearl mussel <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>
Vulnerability data: Water quality is important to maintain the site feature. Parishes either side of the River Clun will be affected.
River Wye
Site Features: Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation. Transition mires and quaking bogs. White-clawed (or Atlantic Stream) crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> . Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> . Brook lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i> . River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> . Twaite shad <i>Alosa fallax</i> . Atlantic salmon <i>Salmo salar</i> . Bullhead <i>Cottus gobio</i> . Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> . Allis shad <i>Alosa alosa</i>
Vulnerability data: Proximity: Developments should not be within 100m of the designated bank. Some developments beyond 100m may also have impacts based on proximity and these issues should be addressed where possible when developing NDP policy and choosing site allocations. Water Quality: Within the whole catchment of the River Wye, which includes the River Lugg, mains drainage issues with regards to water quality are being resolved through the Core Strategy / Local Plan and development of a Nutrient Management Plan. Welsh Water should be consulted to ensure that the proposed growth will be within the limit of their consents. Otters: "An otter will occupy a 'home range', which on fresh waters usually includes a stretch of river as well as associated tributary streams, ditches, ponds, lakes and woodland. The size of a home range depends largely on the availability of food and shelter, and the presence of neighbouring otters. On rivers, a male's home range may be up to 40km or more of watercourse and associated areas; females have smaller ranges (roughly half the size) and favour quieter locations for breeding, such as tributary streams. Otters without an established home range are known as 'transients'. They are mostly juveniles looking for a territory of their own, or adults that have been pushed out of their territories. Transient otters may use an area for a short while, but they will move on if conditions are not suitable or if they are driven away by resident otters. Transients will have been important in extending the range of otters, but they are very difficult to identify from field signs. Within a home range an otter may use many resting sites. These include above-ground shelters, such as stands of scrub or areas of rank grass, and underground 'holts' – for example, cavities under tree roots and dry drainage pipes." (Source: EA website: http://www.environmentagency.gov.uk/static/documents/Business/Otters_the_facts.pdf accessed 09/04/2013)

Usk Bat Site

Site Features: Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection: European dry heaths, Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration, Blanket bogs, Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation, Caves not open to the public, *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines. Annex II species of primary reason for site selection: Lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, UK population 5%, although it is suggested this is an underestimate.

Vulnerability data: Lesser Horseshoe bats are known to migrate between 5km and 10km between their summer and winter roosts. The Lesser Horseshoe Bat is vulnerable to disturbance; light pollution; and habitat loss. Check with the planning ecologist for other issues.

Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites

Site Features: Annex II species that are a primary reason for site selection: Lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*. Greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*

Vulnerability data: Lesser Horseshoe bats are known to migrate between 5km and 10km between their summer and winter roosts. The Lesser Horseshoe Bat is vulnerable to disturbance; light pollution; and habitat loss. Check with the planning ecologist for other issues.

Greater Horseshoe bats are known to migrate between 20-30km between their summer and winter roosts.

NDPs closest to the European Site will need to consider:

Woodland habitat buffer.

Lesser Horseshoe Bat: Old buildings; woodland locations; sheltered valleys, extensive deciduous woods or dense scrub, close to roost sites. In areas of fragmented habitats, linear habitats such as hedgerows are important corridors. Vulnerable to loss or disturbance of both summer and winter roosts and removal of linear habitat.

Greater Horseshoe Bat: Large buildings, pasture, edge of mixed deciduous woodland and hedgerows. Mixed land-use especially south-facing slopes, favours beetles, moths and insects they feed on. During the winter they depend on caves, abandoned mines and other underground sites for undisturbed hibernation. A system/series of sites required. Vulnerable to loss of insect food supply, due to insecticide use, changing farming practices and loss of broad-leaved tree-cover and loss / disturbance of underground roosts sites.

Wye Valley Woodlands

Site Features: Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for site selection: Beech forests *Asperulo-Fagetum*, *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines, *Taxus baccata* woods of the British Isles. Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection: Lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, 51-100 residents

Vulnerability data: Lesser Horseshoe bats are known to migrate between 5km and 10km between their summer and winter roosts. The Lesser Horseshoe Bat is vulnerable to disturbance; light pollution; and habitat loss. Check with the planning ecologist for other issues. NDPs closest to the European Site will need to consider: Woodland habitat buffer. Lesser Horseshoe Bat: Old buildings; woodland locations; sheltered valleys, extensive deciduous woods or dense scrub, close to roost sites. In areas of fragmented habitats, linear habitats such as hedgerows are important corridors. Vulnerable to loss or disturbance of both summer and winter roosts and removal of linear habitat.

Appendix 2: Wye Catchment Map

