



Mid- Cherwell Modified NDP - Habitats Regulations Screening Opinion

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to determine whether or not the Modified Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment under S106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Section 106 (1) of the Regulations states that “A qualifying body which submits a proposal for a neighbourhood development plan must provide such information as the competent authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment under regulation 105 or to enable it to determine whether that assessment is required.”

The modified NDP is being prepared in the context of emerging Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 (CLPPR 2042). A Habitats Regulations Assessment has been completed to support the preparation of the CLPR 2042 which was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination on 31 July 2025. The draft Modified Neighbourhood Plan has taken into consideration the HRA undertaken to support the CLPR 2042.

The HRA for the CLPR 2042 concludes that the CLPR will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European sites either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

The physical scope of the Local Plan HRA in relation to European sites of interest includes Oxford Meadows SAC and Cothill Fen SAC. Part of Oxford Meadows SAC sits within the Cherwell District and Cothill Fen lies approximately 8km south of the district boundary. All other European sites are relatively remote from Cherwell, the next closest being 17km from the district boundary.

The HRA considered policy RUR1 which provides a housing figure of 100 new homes for the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Area. The test of likely significant effects identifies that there may be potential likely significant effects as the policy as a whole may have linkage to the following impact pathways:

- Recreational pressure
- Water resources, quality and hydrological change
- Air quality

The Appropriate Assessment stage considered these impact pathways at a local plan level in more detail but concluded that the Local Plan will not cause an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC or Cothill Fen.

Mid -Cherwell Modified Neighbourhood Development Plan

The submitted Modified Neighbourhood Plan includes a number of objectives under the following headings:

- Traffic and Transport
- Development
- Amenities
- Housing
- Technical Infrastructure
- Environment

The objectives will be delivered through the implementation of the 18 planning policies and the Community Action Plan.

Policy MC1: Settlement Areas makes provision for 60 dwellings in the plan area and provides guidance for development outside these settlement areas.

Subsequent policies MC2 – MC8 allocate individual sites for a total of 60 dwellings.

The remaining policies provide criteria for mitigation of development, allocation of local green spaces and requirement for new affordable housing and infrastructure.

Mid-Cherwell Parish Councils have undertaken a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Modified NDP.

Conclusions

There are no Ramsar Sites, Special Protection Area or Special Areas of Conservation within or in proximity to the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Within the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Area, Kirtlington Parish is the closest to the nearest European site, Oxford Meadows SAC, at approximately 10km distant from the closest proposed housing allocation. It is therefore considered unlikely to have any significant effects on this SAC or others located at a greater distance from the Parishes.

Therefore, it is concluded that the proposals included in the Modified Mid-Cherwell NDP are not likely to have a significant effect on any European Site and therefore an Appropriate Assessment is not required.

Planning Policy Team

Cherwell District Council

December 2025