
**Stroud Neighbourhood Plan
2015-2035
Habitat Regulations Assessment**



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the report

- 1.1.1 This report describes the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process as it applies to the Stroud Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). Its purpose is to support the submission of the draft NDP, and to compliment the higher level HRA of the Stroud District Local Plan (LP). It provides a check to ensure that where the LP policies have been subject to Appropriate Assessment, any relevant NDP policies are subject to parallel scrutiny.
- 1.1.2 The Stroud NDP is being prepared in the context of the emerging Stroud District LP, which will provide the basis for decision making on development throughout the district. The NDP must conform to, but can provide further detail on, the LP policies. Once adopted, the policies of the NDP will form part of the statutory development plan.
- 1.1.3 The report has been prepared for formal consultation with Natural England (NE), as the relevant body with responsibility for European protected sites. NE has accepted that, provided the NDP complies with and reinforces the measures in the adopted LP to secure mitigation of significant impacts on the integrity of Rodborough Common's important features, a full HRA will not be required. The relevant comments from NE are included in Appendix A, whilst Appendix B contains the relevant LP policies and measures.
- 1.1.4 European protected sites consist of Special Protection Areas (SPAs classified under the so-called 'Birds Directive' on the conservation of wild birds - 79/409/EEC), and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs classified under the 'Habitats Directive', which aims to protect certain habitats (Annex I) and/or species (Annex II)), considered as being of European importance.
- 1.1.5 Rodborough Common is classified as a SAC, and its proximity to the area covered by the Stroud NDP identifies it as potentially vulnerable to impacts as a result of development policies in the plan.

1.2 Legal context

- 1.2.1 The European Habitats Directive 1992 Article 6 (3) states that:

“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the 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.”¹

1.2.2 The Directive is translated into UK law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended), which state that:

“A competent authority, before deciding to...give any consent for a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site...shall make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that sites conservation objectives...The authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site”

¹ Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora

2 HRA PROCESS

2.1 Purpose and approach

2.1.1 The purpose of HRA is to determine whether a policy or proposal in a development plan is likely to significantly impact on the qualifying features and conservation objectives of relevant sites. It is based on taking a precautionary approach, which assumes that adverse impacts are likely unless there is enough confidence that this will not be the case.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The broad methodology is described in the HRA produced at a higher level for the Stroud District LP, and it is therefore not necessary to describe it in detail here. There are basically three key elements - screening, Appropriate Assessment and 'IROPI'²-based assessment of mitigation and/or compensation.

2.2.2 This HRA relies on the approach and conclusions of the higher level HRA, and has not carried out its own detailed analysis of the LP policies. It has instead 'screened in' the LP policies that might apply to the relevant SAC - Rodborough Common - and has undertaken an analysis of the NDP policies in order to screen them for Appropriate Assessment.

2.2.3 The assumption is that since the LP policies apply to the NDP, and since Appropriate Assessment was deemed necessary at the higher level, it is necessary also at the level of the NDP-based HRA.

2.2.4 We have:

- identified the qualifying features, vulnerabilities and conservation objectives for Rodborough Common SAC³
- described the management context for the site
- examined the LP policies and the relevant HRA, and drawn down those policies that were 'screened in' for further consideration

² IROPI relates to Imperative Reasons of Overriding Importance. It is not relevant in the context of this HRA

³ These include Natural England's Site Improvement Plan; JNCC's site details and character <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/sac.asp?EUCODE=UK0012826>; Natural England's SSSI citation; and the Natura 2000 standard data form

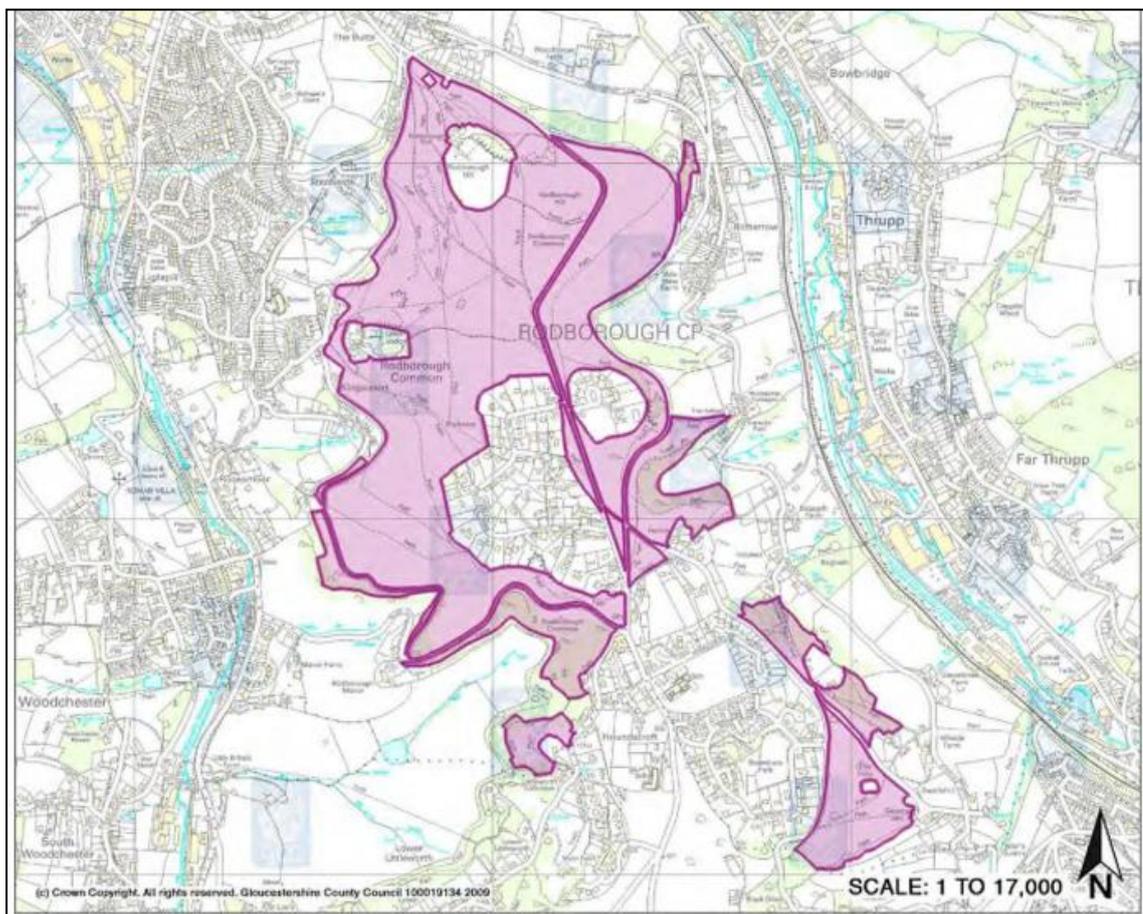
- analysed the NDP policies and screened them for likely significant adverse impacts on the site
- carried out an Appropriate Exercise describing how these impacts might be avoided firstly through avoidance, and where this is not feasible, through mitigation.

3 RODBOROUGH COMMON AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Rodborough Common was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1986 and a SAC in 2004. The north-easternmost point of this 104ha site is about 1km west of the town centre, and lies on a bed of Jurassic limestone, as a plateau bounded on either side by the Nailsworth and Frome Valleys. The margins of the plateau are dissected by steep and inaccessible dry valleys. The site is owned and managed by the National Trust.

MAP 1 - RODBOROUGH COMMON SAC



3.1.2 Its conservation value derives from being the most extensive area of semi-natural dry calcareous grassland surviving in the Cotswolds. It is described in the designation as primarily 'steppe' grassland, with some scrub and native deciduous woodland. About 1,000 plant species are recorded for Rodborough Common SAC⁴, including a number of rare species. In the UK it is categorised

⁴<https://data.nbn.org.uk/Reports/Sites/GA000327UK0012826/Groups/NHMSYS0000080054/Species?startYear=&endYear=&spatialRelationship=overlap&designation=&featureID=GA000327UK0012826&selectedDatasets>

by its National Vegetation Community reference: NVC CG5, namely *Bromus erectus* - *Brachypodium pinnatum* calcicolous grassland.

- 3.1.3 Given the site's proximity to the town of Stroud, it is a popular destination for local recreational activities and is frequented by walkers, with and without dogs, runners, joggers and cyclists. The National Trust also advertise the site for events relating to its biodiversity interests, specifically butterfly and orchid walks, all of which serve to enhance its popularity.

3.2 Features

- 3.2.1 The following provides a basic summary of some of the important features of the site. It is not intended to be comprehensive, and does not describe European protected species (such as bats and newts) identified and associated with the site, but which are not the reasons for its designation.
- 3.2.2 The grassland includes ten species of brome and twenty nine species or sub-species of sedge including fingered sedge *Carex distans*. Typical grasses include upright brome *bromus erectus*, heath false brome or tor grass *brachypodium pinnatum*, sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*, and quaking grass *Briza media*. The common has a rich and varied flora, including chalk milkwort *Polygala calcarea*, clustered bellflower *Campanula glomerata*, kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria* and autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella*⁵.
- 3.2.2 Orchids are well represented, especially in some of the old quarries on the west facing slopes. These include frog orchid *Coeloglossum viride*, bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*, and the rare musk orchid *Herminium monorchis*.
- 3.2.3 The site also supports a nationally important population of pasque flower *Pulsatilla vulgaris*, a UK BAP Priority species recorded at only 18 sites in the UK, having disappeared from about 110 sites. Populations were known to exist on Bear Hill and below the Iron Age hill fort on Rodborough Hill, but two of the sites were lost due to scrub and tor grass encroachment. Populations are now recovering since the reintroduction of winter grazing⁶. Its flowers are insect pollinated, mainly by ants, wasps and bees, especially bumble bees.
- 3.2.3 Notable butterflies include Duke of Burgundy fritillary *Hamearis lucina* and marsh fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia*⁷ (an IUCN Annex II species). Other insects

⁵ See SSSI citation http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/citation/citation_photo/1002627.pdf

⁶ http://www.plantlife.org.uk/uploads/documents/Pulsatilla_vulgaris_Plantlifedossier_FINAL_Apr11.pdf

⁷ www.iucnredlist.org

are also well represented, particularly bugs, beetles and moths. Also present is the uncommon large chrysalis snail *Abida secale*, which occurs only on calcareous habitats.

3.3 Vulnerabilities

- 3.3.1 Whilst the site is designated for its steppe grassland communities, it is important to note that these rely on the mosaic of habitats, including wetland, scrub and woodland, to sustain their integrity, since these will harbour a variety of pollinating species, as well as supporting micro-climates that allow some flowering species to survive. **Climatic conditions** are an important influence.
- 3.3.2 The grassland is dependent upon the maintenance of grazing by cattle. The numbers of cattle grazing have declined with the general decline in the livestock industry. **Undergrazing** allows the encroachment of rank vegetation and scrub which threaten the species reliant on a short sward, particularly orchids.
- 3.3.3 Recreational activities on the upper plateau, which is accessible to cars, is causing localised **erosion and compaction of soil**. Recovery of vulnerable flora species in such areas is very limited and scarce species can be lost permanently. This should be noted alongside the **introduction of the seeds of native and non-native invasive species on people, dogs and vehicles**. There is also the danger of **disturbance**. Whilst this is not of direct concern to the plant communities themselves, disturbance of cattle on critical grazing areas, as well as general recreational disturbance of birds, bats and reptiles may have a negative effect on ecosystem function.
- 3.3.4 Calcareous grassland relies on the maintenance of low pH soil conditions. **Atmospheric nitrogen** from increased industry, housing and traffic can increase the impact of acidic rain on the soil biology.
- 3.3.5 The habitat is generally **fragmented**, with sections of common somewhat isolated from others by existing features, primarily housing development. The area is also intersected by a number of minor roads, tracks and paths. The result is an 'edge effect', in which plant and animal species retreat some distance from recreational and traffic corridors. Further fragmentation could lead to reductions in connectivity and habitat degradation.
- 3.3.6 As noted above, **invasives** such as common ragwort *Senecio jacobaea* and creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense* can quickly dominate large areas and eventually change the vegetation mix and alter soil biology. Ragwort has the added detriment of being deadly poisonous to livestock. Although they tend to

avoid tall swards, overgrazing by rabbits could result in the loss of plants such as orchids, cowslip and primrose, and the destruction of breeding sites for Duke of Burgundy fritillary, in areas already grazed short⁸.

3.3.7 Finally, it is worth noting that the SSSI designation describes the unit of the common closest to the town as being in favourable condition, but with a condition threat.⁹

⁸ Natural England - Lowland Grassland Management Handbook 1999. Section 5.3.5

⁹ See Natural England designated sites for Rodborough Common Unit 2:
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/UnitDetail.aspx?UnitId=1015726&SiteCode=S1002627&SiteName=rodborough%20common&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=>

4 MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

- 4.1 Rodborough Common is owned by the National Trust, whose formal purpose includes:
'The preservation for the benefit of the Nation of lands...of beauty or historic interest and, as regards lands, for the preservation of their natural aspect, features and animal and plant life.'
- 4.2 The Trust is empowered under the National Trust Acts to make byelaws to regulate the activities of people when on its land.
- 4.3 Local residents with grazing rights are entitled to release cattle to graze on the common, under the Commons registration Act of 1965. The Commoners' Committee comprises 15 elected members with registered rights. They appoint a Hayward who regularly checks on the cattle. Otherwise, the main function of the committee is to control the grazing rights. Traditionally, cattle are let out to graze on 13th May, and can remain on the common until the following 1st April, although graziers voluntarily remove their beasts by the end of October, mainly because of the danger to traffic. The site is traversed by minor roads and a number of cattle have been killed and injured by traffic in the past. A major concern is the danger of cattle straying off the species-rich lower slopes onto surrounding roads.
- 4.4 Between them, the Commoners and the National Trust control thistles, nettles and scrub.
- 4.5 Two important partners in the wider management context are the Gloucestershire Wildlife trust and the Stroud Valleys Project, who manage important wildlife areas (such as Frome Banks and Rodborough Fields) surrounding the site, with the support of many local volunteers. They are therefore critical partners in raising awareness about the biodiversity values of the grassland and woodland habitats in and around Rodborough Common, and their vulnerabilities.
- 4.6 Under the European Habitats Directive, there is a statutory duty to protect the features for which it has been designated a SAC. The body for ensuring its protection under this designation is Natural England, under the direction of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- 4.7 Natural England, in collaboration with key partners¹⁰ has developed a Site Improvement Plan for Rodborough SAC, funded by the EU under its LIFE

¹⁰ Including Gloucestershire County Council, the National Trust, Stroud District Council and Rodborough Commoners

programme. The plan identified three major issues - undergrazing, public access and disturbance, and air pollution/nitrogen deposition. For each of these, measures have been proposed, as the following table illustrates:

TABLE 1 - SITE IMPROVEMENT PLAN ISSUES

Issue	Measure	Action
Undergrazing	Increase grazing in key areas	Six cattle grids on minor roads to prevent cattle from straying when Commoners are encouraged to push cattle on to the lower slopes
		Increase grazing intensity across the Common (particularly on the lower slopes)
		Clear some secondary woodland which has developed around the edges of the Common, and restore grassland
Public access/ disturbance	Reduce impact of recreation	Assess grassland (including NVC). Produce access strategy
		Minimise risk of increasing housing around Stroud leading to increased recreational pressure on the Common.
Air pollution	Monitor potential of atmospheric nitrogen impacts	Further investigate potential atmospheric nitrogen impacts on the site

5 POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Whilst the site is vulnerable to a number of potential impacts, some of these cannot be attributed to the policies of either the LP or the NDP (although a number of proposals can help to ameliorate some of the effects), and are therefore beyond the scope of this HRA.

5.1.2 This HRA reflects the higher level screening exercise carried out for the Stroud District Local Plan, as part of its HRA and appropriate assessment¹¹. We have not carried out a separate screening exercise, but have assumed that those local plan policies that have been screened into the higher level HRA apply to the NDP.

5.2 Local plan policies

5.2.1 The higher level HRA identified the following local plan policies as potentially having implications for Rodborough Common in terms of adverse effects, and therefore require further analysis.

TABLE 2 - STROUD DISTRICT LP POLICIES 'SCREENED IN'

Policy	Issue	Implications
Core Policy CP2 - strategic growth and development locations	Intensification of employment and 300 dwellings - Stroud Valleys	Potential air quality concerns; recreational pressure
Site Allocations Policy SA1 - Stroud Valleys	As above - 30 dwellings to be delivered in Cheapside	As above
Core Policy CP11 - New employment development	New development sites across the district. Mixed use development, expansion or intensification of existing sites	Potential air quality issues. Noise not likely to be a factor.

5.3 Neighbourhood development plan policies

5.3.1 The table below highlights those NDP policies that might have an adverse effect on the integrity of Rodborough Common SAC.

¹¹ URS Infrastructure & Environment (2013): UK Limited Stroud Local Plan Habitat Regulations Assessment. December 2013. Prepared for Stroud District Council

TABLE 3 - STROUD NDP POLICY SCREENING ASSESSMENT

Policy heading	Policy	Likely negative impact?	
AP1 - Jobs and business	New or intensified employment development or changes of use.	Air quality	
AP2 - retail and social	Changes of use of buildings or redevelopment which will enhance the retail viability and social vitality of the town centre	None identified	
AP3 - Access and moving around the town centre	Improving/creating access routes for pedestrians/cyclists within the core area	Increased recreational use	
AP4a - Homes - General residential	Increasing the range and type of housing stock	Increased recreational use; air quality	
AP4b - Homes - affordable housing	Delivery and control of affordable housing - community land trust	Increased recreational use; air quality	
AP 5 - Greenspaces	Designation of local green spaces within the core area	None identified	
AP6 - Town centre setting	Protecting and enhancing views into surrounding landscape	None identified	
AP7 - Gateways to the town centre	Public realm works marking key entry points to town centre	None identified	
AP8a - Heritage - Conservation Areas	Compliance with guidance set out in conservation area SPD	None identified	
AP8b - Heritage - Local Heritage Assets	Conserving/protecting features on town centre structures identified as non-designated heritage assets	None identified	
AP9a - Design - General Principles	High quality design including greening, SUDS and renewables	None identified	
AP9b - Design - Public Realm	High quality design in the public realm including greening/ biodiversity elements	None identified	
AP10 - Buildings of cultural importance	Safeguarding buildings of cultural/community importance	None identified	
AP11 - Car Parks	Maintaining existing levels of car parking on town centre	Air quality; traffic movements into town centre	
AP12 - Public transport	Promoting improvements to the quality of public transport serving the town centre	None identified	
AP 13 - Energy	Energy efficiency/small scale renewables. Cycle parking/ plug-ins for electric cars	None identified	
ZP1a - Shop fronts	Design principles for town centre shop fronts	None identified	
ZP1b - Cornhill/Market	Landmark design/public	None identified	

Tavern development site	access improvements/ protection and enhancement of market		
ZP1c - Important town spaces	Protection/enhancement of public spaces	None identified	
ZP2a - Cheapside development site	Residential development/ pedestrian access/ commercial use of canalside/warehouse renovation	Air quality; potential increase in traffic movements	
ZP2b - Canal basin opportunity site	Safeguarding tourist/leisure uses. Improved pedestrian access/network	Air quality; potential increase in traffic movements	
ZP2c - Fromeside industrial estate opportunity site	High quality design/ improved towpath/pedestrian access	Air quality; potential increase in traffic movements	
ZP3 - Railway land/ Cheapside car parks area	Redevelopment/improvement of railway land and adjacent car parks	None identified	
ZP4a - Railway arches development site	Mixed use commercial/ residential redevelopment. Improvements to Merrywalks frontage	None identified	
ZP4b - Pedestrian and cycle access in Merrywalks	Improve access to pedestrians and cyclists	None identified	
ZP5 - Beeches Green area	Redevelop/intensify public service uses. Redevelop redundant land for residential use	None identified	
ZP6 - Police Station/ Magistrates Court opportunity site	Redevelop for commercial/ residential potential. Landmark building	None identified	
NP1 - Car parking	Retain current levels of car parking. Maximise ease of use. Better signage	Air quality; potential increase in traffic movements	
NP2 - Town centre promotion	Sustained programme of events and activities in the town centre	Potential increase in numbers attracted to events in the surrounding area including Rodborough Common	
NP3 - Pedestrian priority in the Core Zone	Promotion of pedestrian priority over other forms of transport in town centre. Enjoyment of public realm	None identified	
NP4 - Greening the town centre	Enhancement of appearance of town centre including biodiversity/ environmental performance	None identified	

6 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Two areas of concern arise - the potential for increased problems with air quality; and the increased use of the Rodborough Common for recreation and for accessing the town centre by foot or cycle. The area is arguably already stressed because of factors beyond the policy remit, but policies that add to the stress need to be mitigated by other policy measures, and by qualifications within stated policies.
- 6.2 Thus on air quality, the following balancing policies apply: AP5, AP9a, AP9b, AP12, AP13, NP4. Avoidance measures such as restrictions in vehicle movements are beyond the remit of the NDP and of this HRA.
- 6.3 On impacts relating to increased recreational use, avoidance through restricting access to parts of the common are not within the remit of the NDP. Other avoidance measures such as no net increase in development have also been dismissed as unfeasible and socially undesirable. The potential for recreational pressure remains, and therefore mitigating recreational impacts will require management interventions to ensure the site's over robustness. Stroud LP policies are in place to protect open spaces (policy ES13) and to provide additional green space both for recreation and for the provision of natural and ecological processes (policies CP8 and ES14).
- 6.4 The district council has introduced an interim measure to support the avoidance of likely significant impacts, namely via a contribution of £200.00 per new dwelling within the 3 km core catchment of the SAC towards management interventions and public awareness raising. It would be appropriate for this to be reflected in a NDP policy such as AP4a. It is worth noting that LP policy CP6 refers to this.
- 6.5 It is possible that contributions will also be required for non-residential developments '*...based on their individual merits.*'¹² This may be necessary, for example to offset the potential increase in traffic and pedestrian and cycle movement that arises from improvements to canalside residential, commercial and tourism development.
- 6.7 In conclusion, it is anticipated that the NDP will support and reinforce the policies and mechanisms included in the Stroud LP to address potential significant impacts on Rodborough Common.

¹² SDC Environment Committee Agenda Item 10. 'INTERIM STRATEGY FOR AVOIDANCE OF LIKELY SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EFFECTS ON RODBOROUGH COMMON SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC)'. March 2015

7 REFERENCES

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8 APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - NATURAL ENGLAND SCREENING CONSULTATION RESPONSE 16 SEPTEMBER 2015

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Where a neighbourhood plan could potentially affect a European protected site, it will be necessary to screen the plan in relation to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010), as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations'). One of the basic conditions that will be tested at Examination is whether the making of the plan is compatible with European obligations and this includes requirements relating to the Habitats Directive, which is transposed into the Habitats Regulations.

In accordance with Schedule 2 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, a neighbourhood plan cannot be made if the likelihood of significant effects on any European Site, either alone (or in combination with other plans and projects) cannot be ruled out. Therefore, measures may need to be incorporated into the neighbourhood plan to ensure that any likely significant effects are avoided in order to secure compliance with the Regulations. A screening exercise should be undertaken if there is any doubt about the possible effects of the plan on European protected sites. This will be particularly important if a neighbourhood plan is to progress **before** a local plan has been adopted and/or the neighbourhood plan proposes development which has not been assessed and/or included in the Habitats Regulations Assessment for the local plan.

The Council concludes that as the Neighbourhood Plan is in conformity with the emerging Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan can rely on measures written into the Local Plan to avoid/mitigate likely significant effects on Rodborough Common Special Area of Conservation (SAC)... The Council therefore concludes that there is no requirement for further Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Stroud Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan.

If the adoption of this Neighbourhood Plan is timetabled to take place after the adoption of the Local Plan, then we are satisfied that the conclusion of the HRA Screening is appropriate. However, if this Neighbourhood Plan is timetabled for adoption before the Local Plan, then the Local Plan cannot be relied upon in this way. In the absence of an adopted Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan can only proceed if adequate avoidance and mitigation measures can be secured at the neighbourhood plan level.

Given the late stage in Local Plan production, we would recommend delaying the adoption of this Neighbourhood Plan until after the Local Plan is adopted. This would allow the Neighbourhood Plan to rely on the HRA of the Local Plan and on measures

secured in the Local Plan. With regard to both Rodborough Common SAC and the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC, the emerging Local Plan includes hooks to secure mitigation for identified likely significant effects and avoid adverse effects on integrity.

Lower tier plans such as neighbourhood plans should, wherever possible, reinforce these measures and help to secure their delivery through planning applications. The Council should consider whether it would be appropriate for the Stroud Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan to include references to the emerging mitigation strategies for these SAC, and advise the Neighbourhood Group accordingly.

APPENDIX B - RELEVANT STROUD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

Core Policy CP6 - Infrastructure and developer contributions

'The Council will work with partners to ensure that infrastructure will be in place at the right time to meet the needs of the District and to support the development strategy. This will be achieved by:

- 1. The preparation and regular review of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) for the District that will set out the infrastructure to be provided by partners, including the public sector and utilities*
- 2. Securing contributions to all aspects of land use, infrastructure and services that may be affected by development, in accordance with the District Council's identified priorities and objectives for delivering sustainable communities*
- 3. The preparation of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule that sets out the level of developer contributions towards new or upgraded infrastructure to support the overall development strategy*
- 4. Negotiating appropriate planning obligations to mitigate any adverse impacts of proposed development – while avoiding duplication of payments made through CIL.*

Where implementation of a development would create a need to provide additional or improved infrastructure and amenities, would have an impact on the existing standard of infrastructure provided, or would exacerbate an existing deficiency in their provision, the developer will be expected to make up that provision for those local communities affected. Where the developer is unable to make such provision, the Council will require the developer to make a proportionate contribution to the overall cost of such provision through a legal agreement and/or Community Infrastructure Levy.

Various types of contribution will be used, including the following:

- 1. In-kind contributions and financial payments*
- 2. Phased payments and one-off payments*
- 3. Maintenance payments*
- 4. Pooled contributions*
- 5. A combination of the above.'*

Core Policy CP8 - New Housing Development

'New housing development must be well designed to address local housing needs, incorporating a range of different types, tenures and sizes of housing, to create mixed communities. New developments should take account of the District's housing needs, as set out in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Residential development proposals will need to:

- 1. Be built at an appropriate density that is acceptable in townscape, local environment, character and amenity terms*
- 2. Have a layout that supports accessibility by bus, bicycle and foot to shopping and employment opportunities, key services and community facilities or contribute towards provision of new sustainable transport infrastructure to serve the area*

3. *Have a layout, access, parking, landscaping and community facilities that are appropriate to the site and its surroundings*
4. *Use sustainable construction techniques and provide renewable or low carbon energy sources in association with the proposed development and*
5. ***Enable provision of infrastructure in ways consistent with cutting greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change and its consequences.***
6. ***Major residential development proposals will be expected to enhance biodiversity through a network of multi-functional green spaces, which support the natural and ecological processes.'***

Delivery Policy EI11 - Promoting Sport, Leisure and Recreation

'Planning applications for new sports, cultural, leisure and recreational facilities, or improvements and extensions to existing facilities, will be permitted provided:

1. *the proposals are connected to and associated with existing facilities, they are located at a site that relates well to the settlement hierarchy in the District or they are intended to meet specific rural needs that cannot be appropriately met at settlements within the settlement hierarchy*
2. ***the development would not harm the character, appearance and amenities of the area***
3. *the development can be made readily accessible to adequate bus, cycling and walking links, for the benefit of non-car users*
4. *cycle/vehicle access and on-site cycle/vehicle parking would be provided to the adopted standards*
5. *adequate access to and between the facilities would be provided for people with disabilities*
6. ***any biodiversity interest is enhanced by taking opportunities to create a network of multi-functional green spaces, which support the locality's natural and ecological processes.***

Delivery Policy ES13 - Protection of Existing Open Space

'Development proposals shall not involve the whole or partial loss of open space within settlements, or of outdoor recreation facilities, playing fields or allotments within or relating to settlements, unless:

1. *a robust assessment of open space provision has identified a surplus in the catchment area to meet both current and future needs, and full consideration has been given to all functions that open space can perform*
2. *any replacement facility (or enhancement of the remainder of the existing site) provides a net benefit to the community in terms of the quality, availability and accessibility of open space or recreational opportunities.*

There should be no harm to spaces which:

- A. *contribute to the distinctive form, character and setting of a settlement*

B. create focal points within the built up area C. provide the setting for important buildings or scheduled ancient monuments

D. form part of an area of value for wildlife, sport or recreation, including areas forming part of a 'green corridor'.

Local communities through Neighbourhood Plans shall designate Local Green Spaces which are of importance to them and are of particular local significance.'

Delivery Policy ES14 - Provision of Semi-natural and Natural Green Space with New Residential Development

'Strategic and major residential development shall be accompanied with additional accessible natural green space, proportionate to the scale of development. This will be provided to achieve the following target rates:

- Provision of at least 2ha of accessible natural green space per 1,000 population*
- Provision of at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home;*
- Provision of one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home; and*
- No person should live more than 300m (or 5 minutes walk) from their nearest area of natural green space of at least 2 hectares in size.*

All strategic scale residential development will be expected to have a network of such spaces.'