

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Report for:

**Little Birch and Aconbury
Neighbourhood Area**

September 2017



Little Birch and Aconbury HRA

HRA Screening Assessment

Contents

1 Introduction

Map of the Neighbourhood Area with European sites shown

2 The requirement to undertake Habitats Regulations Assessment of Neighbourhood Plans

3 Methodology

4 Results of the Initial Screening Report and options

5 Description of the Little Birch and Aconbury Neighbourhood Plan

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

7 Assessment of the ‘likely significant effects’ of the Little Birch and Aconbury Plan NDP

Table 1 - Colour coding key for Matrix

8 Conclusions from the Screening Matrix

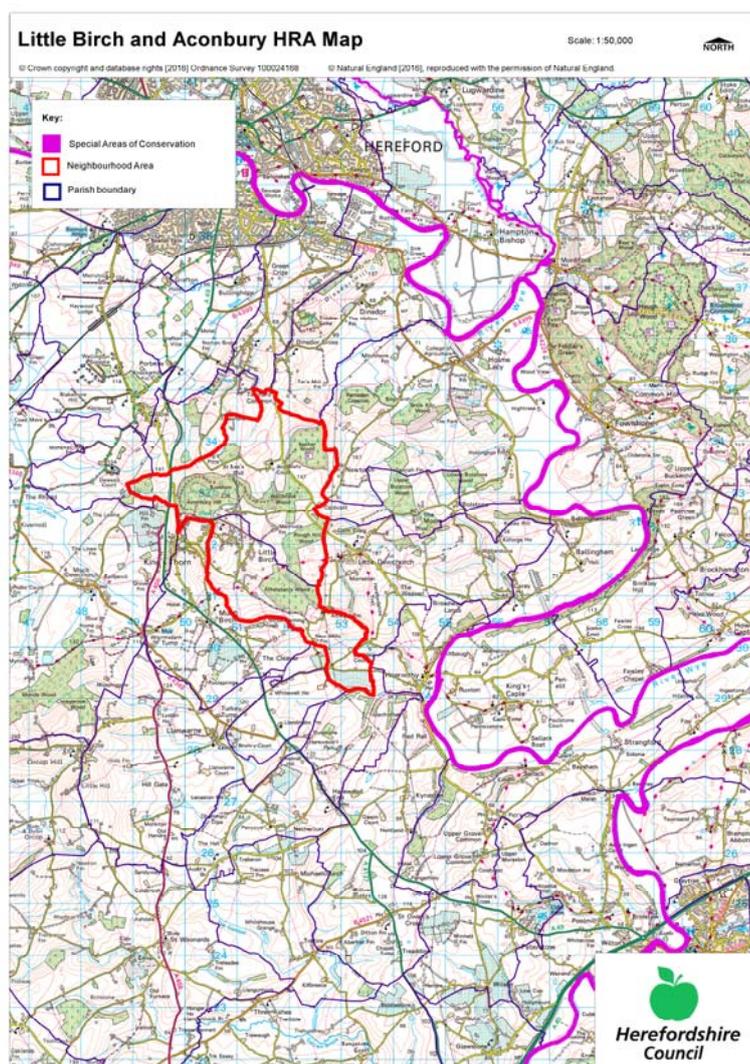
Appendix 1 – List of options assessed

Appendix 2 – Options, Objectives and Policies assessment matrix

Appendix 3– Initial Screening Report (2016)

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 Little Birch Parish Council and Aconbury Parish Meeting are producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Little Birch and Aconbury, in order to set out the vision, objectives and policies for the development of the Group Parish up to 2031. This HRA reviews the Draft Little Birch and Aconbury Plan September 2017.
- 1.3 The NDP includes a number of criteria based policies and defines a settlement boundary for the settlement of Aconbury. 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 publication of the Local Plan-Core Strategy Habitat Regulations Assessment Report (May 2016) and ensures that there will not be any significant impacts upon Natura 2000 sites.
- 1.4 The map below shows Little Birch and Aconbury 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, Little Birch Parish Council and Aconbury Parish Meeting 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 Little Birch and Aconbury Plan 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 (June 2016) found that the Little Birch and Aconbury Parish is 5.4 km from the River Wye. Therefore Little Birch and Aconbury NDP area falls within the hydrological catchment area of the River Wye (including the Lugg) SAC. The SAC is located east of the Neighbourhood Area and therefore a full screening assessment is required.
- 4.2 For full details of the River Wye (including the Lugg) SAC attributes which contribute to and define their integrity and vulnerable data see Appendix 1 of the Little Birch and Aconbury Plan Initial Screening Report. The Initial Screening Report, May 2016, can be found in Appendix 4 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 Little Birch and Aconbury Plan 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. Overall the majority of the options proposing any growth appear to depend on location and scale in relation to environmental impact. However this plan does not intend to allocate sites and settlements are all on a small scale and located away from the SAC and are unlikely to have a significant impact on the SAC.
- 4.4 As Little Birch and Aconbury Plan progresses from options onto their NDP policies, the Plan will need to identify ways in which the least effect on the River Wye SAC (including the Lugg) could be achieved, alongside taking forward the preferred options from the consultation from the community. If a majority of these options are taken forward either as standalone policies or in combination with other policies then the mitigation from these options will help to counter balance the effect of all new development within the Parish. A list of the options and site options assessed can be found in Appendix 1, and the Assessment matrix for the options can be found Appendix 2.

5 Description of the Little Birch and Aconbury Plan Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.1 The Draft Little Birch and Aconbury Plan 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 to each of the villages.
- 5.2 The NDP then details the vision for the Little Birch Parish Council and Aconbury Parish Meeting over the Plan period and three objectives of how this will be achieved. The 3 objectives cover the following topics:

Housing Development
Economic and Social Development
Protecting the environment

- 5.3 The NDP also sets out 11 policies on various topics based on the objective headings above and also for the village, these include:
- Policy LBA1: Sustainable development
 - Policy LBA2: Development needs and requirements
 - Policy LBA3 Little Birch village
 - Policy LBA4: Development in Little Birch
 - Policy LBA5: Development in Aconbury
 - Policy LBA6: Rural economic development
 - Policy LBA7: Communications and broadband
 - Policy LBA8: Renewable energy
 - Policy LBA9: Community facilities
 - Policy LBA10: Protecting the local environment
 - Policy LBA11: Building design
- 5.4 The NDP does not propose any sites be allocated for housing, but relies on commitments, windfalls and areas within the identified settlements in order to facilitate the proportional growth envisaged by Policy RA2 of the Local Plan (Core Strategy). The NDP proposes a settlement boundary for Aconbury, the plan expects at least 27 houses to be developed within the Neighbourhood Area of Little Birch and Aconbury.

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 Little Birch and Aconbury Plan 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 3 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 submission version of the Herefordshire Core Strategy were 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.

8 Conclusions from the Screening Matrix

- 8.1 None of the Draft Little Birch and Aconbury Plan (September 2017) policies and sites were concluded to be likely to have a significant effect on the River Wye (including Lugg) SAC. Based on assumptions and information contained within the Little Birch and Aconbury Plan, Herefordshire Core Strategy and the submission version 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 (including Lugg) SAC.
- 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 allocates a settlement boundary for Aconbury. Little Birch has a criteria based policy to define the settlement. Within the settlement area for Aconbury there appears to be small amount of capacity in Aconbury within the identified settlements to meet the target housing growth of 18 for Little Birch and Aconbury. Along with development from 4 completions and windfall to meet the housing target of 18 from 2011 to 2031.
- 8.4 Commitments and completions from April 2011-April 2017 are currently 4 dwellings and no commitments, leaving a residual figure of 14 to find within the parish of Little Birch and Aconbury. Majority of this target will be achieved through windfall housing and smaller site opportunities within the settlements of Aconbury and Little Birch.
- 8.5 It is unlikely that the Little Birch and Aconbury 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.
- 8.6 **It is therefore concluded that the Little Birch and Aconbury Plan will not have a likely significant effect on the River Wye (including Lugg) SAC.**
- 8.7 Any further amendments to policies (post September 2017) will be rescreened if required and an addendum to this report will be produced.

Appendix 1

Little Birch and Aconbury Options

Option 1 -Do nothing
Option 2 -To do a criteria based policy.
Option 3 -To allocate sites in the plan.
Option 4 - Criteria policy and settlement boundary.
Option 5 - Criteria policy/settlement boundary/allocate sites.

Appendix 2

Appendix 2

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

Parish Council Name: **Little Birch Parish Council and Aconbury Parish Meeting**

NDP Title: **Little Birch and Aconbury Draft Plan Reg 14**

Date undertaken: **September 2017**

Core Strategy HRA version: **Adopted Core Strategy 2011-2031**

HRA Screening of Emerging NDP objectives, options and policies

NDP objectives, 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)	European Sites potentially affected	Mitigation measures to be considered, as necessary, through redraft of objective/policy and to be considered as part of Appropriate Assessment	Could the policy have likely significant effects on European sites (taking mitigation into account?)
Options					
Option 1- to do nothing	No NDP to determine planning applications.	Criteria policies within the Core Strategy would guide further development. Specific policies and proposals for the parish would not exist.	River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).	N/A	N/A
Option 2- To do a criteria based policy.	Small scale proportionate growth where the location would be determined by a criteria based policy.	Uncertain as to the impact on the European sites as dependant on the location of the development.	River Wye (including the River Lugg) SAC	Criteria based housing policy would require to include reference to mitigation measures to avoid any non-disturbance effects on the River Wye via its catchment.	No, development in line with the Local Plan (Core Strategy) and the policy safeguards which exist within the Core Strategy should avoid or mitigate any likely significant effects.

Appendix 2

				Policy would need to take account of the proportional growth requirements of the Core Strategy and potential headroom capacity at the local STW.	Policy criteria should be included within the NDP which reflects this. Further assessments will be undertaken at draft policy stage.
Option 3 - To allocate sites in the plan.	Allocation of sites for housing or other uses would give certainty to future development. Specific environmental issues could be investigated during the site search and be positively addressed within the policy wording.	Pursuing this option would give greater certainty over future development within the area particularly within 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 policy to mitigate. The majority of the village, where likely proportionate growth would be located is outside of the catchment area for the River Wye.
Option 4- Criteria policy and settlement boundary.	The designation of a settlement boundary will give additional certainty and help define those areas considered as the built form and open countryside. This can aid the direction of further growth to maintain the quality of the landscape and surroundings. There is	Any settlement boundary would need to be designated to ensure that sufficient capacity was included to permit the proportional growth requirements within Policy RA2 of the Core Strategy. Criteria would need to be included within the policy to safeguard against any	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	n/a	No; policy criteria can be added to any settlement boundary criteria policy to mitigate. The majority of the village, where likely settlement boundary would be drawn is outside of the catchment area for the River Wye.

Appendix 2

	less certainty as any growth will be adjudged by criteria based policy.	likely effects. However the majority of the village is outside of the catchment for the River Wye			
Option 5- Criteria policy/settlement boundary/allocate sites.	Allocation of sites for housing or other uses would give certainty to future development. Specific environmental issues could be investigated during the site search and be positively addressed within the policy wording. The designation of a settlement boundary will give additional certainty and help define those areas considered as the built form and open countryside	Pursuing this option would give greater certainty over future development within the area particularly within the River Wye catchment. If required mitigation criteria can be added to site allocations policies. However the majority of the village where proportional growth and the settlement boundary are likely to be located are outside of the River Wye catchment area.	River Wye (including River Lugg) SAC	n/a	No; policy criteria can be added to any allocation policy to mitigate. The majority of the village, where likely proportionate growth and settlement boundary would be located is outside of the catchment area for the River Wye.
Objectives					
Objective 1-Housing Development	Objective to support sustainable and appropriate development in line with policies SS1 and	There will be mitigation in place to help reduce the impact of new homes. The remainder of the objective could	River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).	None identified.	No. This objective sets sustainable development criteria for housing to be developed in Little Birch and Aconbury.

Appendix 2

	<p>RA1 of the Core Strategy.</p> <p>New housing developed.</p>	<p>have a positive impact upon European sites.</p>			<p>There are features within the plan that can help mitigate impact from housing development.</p>
<p>Objective 2-Economic and Social Development</p>	<p>More people will be encouraged to work from home or closer to their work. The plan will attract employment opportunities that are suitable for a rural area, and support agricultural sector.</p> <p>High quality broadband and mobile phone coverage will extend to all parts of the parish.</p>	<p>There enough emphasis within the related policies on limiting pollution from business activity/attracting non-polluting activity to avoid adverse impacts on the European sites.</p>	<p>River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).</p>	<p>None identified.</p>	<p>No, potential damage to the interests of species using the SAC would be significantly reduced by the criteria within various policies.</p> <p>There are features within the plan that can help mitigate impact from social and economic development.</p>
<p>Objective 3-Protecting the environment</p>	<p>The objective will contribute towards sustainable development, by protecting the natural and historic environment, safeguarding agricultural land, maintaining high quality built and natural settings.</p>	<p>If objective is realised then the policies that deliver it could have a positive impact upon European sites.</p>	<p>River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).</p>	<p>None. This objective is a mitigation measure in itself.</p>	<p>No, this objective seeks to protect the environment and would only have positive impacts upon the European sites if they are successfully implemented.</p>

Appendix 2

Policies					
Policy LBA1: Sustainable development	Protect And enhance the existing natural environment, landscape and views.	Protection of community assets including the village hall.	River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).	None identified.	No: this policy would allow for small to medium scale housing schemes and supports the Core Strategy. Policy RA1 and RA2. There is additional policy criteria in place in both the Core Strategy and the Little Birch and Aconbury Neighbourhood Plan to avoid or mitigate any likely significant effects towards the SAC
Policy LBA2: Development needs and requirements	Criteria to protect existing landscape and visual amenity within the countryside.	None identified.	River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).	<p>Measures included within policy SD2 of the Core Strategy should help to mitigate potential impacts relating to non-physical disturbances.</p> <p>Good practice construction techniques include noise suppression measures; hours of operation may help to mitigate potential adverse effects during construction.</p>	<p>No: this policy would allow for small to medium scale housing schemes and supports the Core Strategy Policy RA1 and RA2. Further assessment of the sites considered can be tested at planning application stage when further details are known.</p> <p>There are additional policy criteria in place in both the Core Strategy and the Little</p>

Appendix 2

					Birch and Aconbury Neighbourhood Plan to avoid or mitigate any likely significant effects towards the SAC
Policy LBA3 Little Birch village	<p>Housing development</p> <p>Increased vehicle traffic</p> <p>Increased demand for water abstraction and sewage treatment</p> <p>Non-physical disturbance during construction phase.</p> <p>Physical damage of disturbance on a localised scale.</p>	Possible vehicular movements and demand for water abstraction and treatment.	River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).	<p>Measures included within policy SD2 of the Core Strategy should help to mitigate potential impacts relating to non-physical disturbances.</p> <p>Good practice construction techniques include noise suppression measures; hours of operation may help to mitigate potential adverse effects during construction.</p>	<p>No: this policy would allow for small/ medium scale housing schemes and supports the Core Strategy Policy RA1 and RA2. Further assessment of the sites considered can be tested at planning application stage when further details are known.</p> <p>There are additional policy criteria in place in both the Core Strategy and the Little Birch and Aconbury Neighbourhood Plan to avoid or mitigate any likely significant effects towards the SAC.</p>
Policy LBA4: Development in Little Birch	Increased demand for water abstraction and sewage treatment	River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).	River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).	Measures included within policy SD2 of the Core Strategy should help to mitigate potential impacts	No. The scale and extent of such development is unlikely to be significant, as the development is

Appendix 2

	<p>Non-physical disturbance during construction phase.</p> <p>Physical damage of disturbance on a localised scale.</p>			<p>relating to non-physical disturbances.</p> <p>Good practice construction techniques include noise suppression measures; hours of operation may help to mitigate potential adverse effects during construction.</p>	<p>contained in a sustainable approach.</p>
<p>Policy LBA5: Development in Aconbury</p>	<p>New housing allocated in selected sites</p> <p>Increase in water consumption.</p> <p>Non-physical disturbance during construction phase.</p> <p>Physical damage of disturbance on a localised scale.</p>	<p>Small scale housing development.</p> <p>Housing, infrastructure development Possible increase in recreation activities, vehicular movements and demand for water abstraction and treatment.</p> <p>Physical damage of disturbance on a localised scale.</p> <p>Non-physical disturbance such as noise.</p>	<p>River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).</p>	<p>This policy helps Aconbury contain development and control growth in a sustainable way. Adverse effects will be mitigated by NDP policies</p>	<p>No: this policy would allow for small to medium scale housing schemes and supports the Core Strategy Policy RA1 and RA2. Further assessment of the sites considered can be tested at planning application stage when further details are known.</p> <p>There are additional policy criteria in place in both the Core Strategy and the Little Birch and Aconbury Neighbourhood Plan to avoid or mitigate any likely significant effects towards the SAC.</p>

Appendix 2

<p>Policy LBA6: Rural economic development</p>	<p>Encourage development of small scale employment facilities.</p> <p>Promotion of business development</p> <p>Job creation in local area</p> <p>Small reduction in vehicular usage.</p>	<p>Employment growth and infrastructure development</p> <p>Physical damage of disturbance on a localised scale.</p> <p>Non-physical disturbance such as noise.</p> <p>Uncertain as to the impacts upon the River Wye SAC dependent on the location of any development.</p> <p>Potential increase in visitor numbers to the parish could have an effect on the River Wye Employment and infrastructure development.</p> <p>Possible vehicular movements and demand for water abstraction and treatment.</p>	<p>River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).</p>	<p>The implementation of Core Strategy policies SD3 and SD4 should also help to avoid any adverse impacts in relation to the hydrological regimes at the River Wye.</p> <p>The implementation of the Nutrient Management Plan will specifically address issues relating to water quality in the River Wye.</p> <p>The Core Strategy policy LD2 will aim to help avoid any adverse impacts on the River Wye for new employment or businesses uses.</p> <p>Measures within Core Strategy policy SD1 should help to mitigate potential impacts relating to non-physical disturbances.</p> <p>Although the River Wye does not pass through the parish, additional policy criteria could be added to strengthen the avoidance locations which could have an</p>	<p>No. The scale and extent of potential employment development is unlikely to have a significant impact on the SAC. There are sufficient policy safeguards within the NDP and Core Strategy to help avoid or mitigate any likely significant effects on the River Wye SAC.</p> <p>Mitigation measures are covered in policy LD2 and LD3 of the Core Strategy and policies within the Little Birch and Aconbury NDP.</p>
--	--	--	--	--	--

Appendix 2

				adverse impact on the natural environment especially River Wye catchment.	
Policy LBA7: Communications and broadband	<p>Support for broadband and infrastructure development.</p> <p>Improved mobile coverage</p> <p>Increased access to internet.</p> <p>Increase working from home and small scale business.</p> <p>Small reduction in commuter traffic.</p>	No significant effect on the River Wye (including the River Lugg) SAC.	River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).	This policy should help to mitigate the potential impacts of other NDP policies in relation to increased traffic, and new business developments due to reducing the extent to which people need to travel for work.	No. Although this policy may lead to some new development this will be small scale to allow for the implementation of high speed broadband across the Parish. This in turn can allow new types of businesses to occupy the Parish and also allow for home working, thereby reducing the need vehicle traffic travelling across the County.
Policy LBA8: Renewable energy	<p>Community based renewable energy schemes promoted</p> <p>Renewable energy schemes developed.</p> <p>Construction traffic.</p>	<p>Unlikely that there will have a significant effect on the European Site.</p> <p>Non-physical disturbance such as noise in construction phase.</p>	River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).	This policy should help to mitigate the potential impacts of any renewable energy developments. Criteria is included within this policy to safeguard existing natural and built environment.	No. This policy may result in varied renewable energy schemes. Depending on scale, nature and location of the development it may have a possibility of having a detrimental effect on the River Wye SAC. There are sufficient policy safeguards within the NDP and Core Strategy to help avoid or mitigate any likely

Appendix 2

					significant effects on the SAC.
Policy LBA9: Community facilities	<p>Support and upkeep of existing local community facilities.</p> <p>Promote new development of community facilities.</p> <p>Increase in vehicular movements.</p> <p>Increase in nonphysical disturbance.</p>	<p>New community facilities.</p> <p>Possible vehicular movements and demand for water abstraction and treatment.</p> <p>Physical damage of disturbance on a localised scale.</p> <p>Non-physical disturbance such as noise.</p>	River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).	<p>Measures are included in both the Core Strategy and the Little Birch and Aconbury Neighbourhood Plan to help relieved any increased pressure on the River Wye.</p> <p>The implementation of the Nutrient Management Plan will specifically address issues relating to water quality in the River Wye.</p>	<p>No, although this policy could result in the development of new community facilities or the loss of existing provision to new uses, which depending on location could have potential effect on the River Wye SAC. However, sufficient policy safeguards are in place within the Local Plan (Core Strategy) and with the inclusion of additional wording in the Little Birch and Aconbury NDP policy to avoid or mitigate any likely significant effects on the River Wye.</p>
Policy LBA10: Protecting the local environment	<p>Safeguard existing landscape against inappropriate development.</p> <p>Encouragement of sustainable development which preserves and protects the landscape, environment and habitats.</p>	<p>No significant effect on the River Wye (including the River Lugg) SAC. This policy is a mitigation measure within itself.</p>	River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).	<p>None. This policy acts as a mitigation measure to ensure developments to be fitting for its context and ensures protection to the exiting landscape.</p>	<p>No. This policy ensures existing landscape is protected against inappropriate development.</p> <p>There are sufficient policy safeguards within the NDP and Core Strategy to help avoid or mitigate any</p>

Appendix 2

					likely significant effects on the River Wye SAC.
Policy LBA11: Building design	<p>Encourage good design</p> <p>Safeguard existing landscape against inappropriate development.</p> <p>Encouragement of sustainable development which preserves and protects the landscape, environment and habitats.</p>	<p>Physical damage of disturbance on a localised scale.</p> <p>Non-physical disturbance such as noise.</p> <p>Uncertain as to the impacts upon the River Wye SAC dependent on the location of any development.</p> <p>Potential increase in visitor numbers to the parish could have an effect on the River Wye Employment and infrastructure development.</p> <p>Possible vehicular movements and demand for water abstraction and treatment.</p>	River Wye (including the Lugg SAC).	None. This policy acts as a mitigation measure to ensure developments to be fitting for its context and ensures protection to the exiting landscape.	<p>No. This policy ensures existing landscape is protected against inappropriate development.</p> <p>There are sufficient policy safeguards within the NDP and Core Strategy to help avoid or mitigate any likely significant effects on the River Wye SAC.</p>

Appendix 3

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

**The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations
2015 (Reg. 32)**

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (d)

Neighbourhood Area:	Little Birch & Aconbury Neighbourhood Area
Parish Council:	Little Birch Parish Council and Aconbury Parish Meeting
Neighbourhood Area Designation Date:	24/05/2016

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)



River Wye (including the River Lugg) Special Area of Conservation (SAC):

Does the Neighbourhood Area have the River Wye (including the River Lugg) in or next to its boundary?	N	The River Wye is 1km away from the Parishes
Is the Neighbourhood Area in the hydrological catchment of the River Wye (including the River Lugg) SAC?	Y	The Parishes are within the hydrological catchment of the River Wye.
If yes above, does the Neighbourhood Area have mains drainage to deal with foul sewage?	N	There is no mains drainage in the Parishes

Downton Gorge SAC:

Is the Neighbourhood Area within 10km of Downton Gorge SAC?	N	Downton Gorge is 38km away from the Parishes.
---	---	---

River Clun SAC:

Does the River Clun border the Neighbourhood Area	N	River Clun does not border the Parishes.
---	---	--

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	Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites are 14km away from the Parishes.
--	---	--

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	Wye Valley Woodlands are 13km away from the Parishes.
--	---	---

HRA Conclusion:

The assessment above highlights that European Sites will need to be taken into account in the future Neighbourhood Development Plan for the Little Birch and Aconbury 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 Little Birch and Aconbury 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	Within Neighbourhood Area		Bordering Neighbourhood Area	
	Total number	Name(s)	Total number	Name(s)
Ancient Woodland	4	Williams Wood; Nether Wood; Hamptons Rough Wood; Lady Coppice.	12	Pullastone Wood; Hopleys Wood; Reeces Wood; Callow Plantation; Widows Wood; Brick Kiln Wood; Fox Wood; Ballis Wood; Trilloes Court Wood; Weaven Wood; Gwatkins Grove; Elvaston Wood.
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	1	Wye Valley.	0	-
Conservation Areas	0	-	0	-
Flood Areas	Flood Zones 2 and 3 run through the southern part of Little Birch Parish.			
Geoparks	0	-	0	-
Listed Buildings	There are numerous Listed Buildings throughout the Parishes.			
Local Geological Sites (LGS)	0	-	0	-
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	4	Williams Wood; Hamptons Rough Wood and The Firs; Woodlands on Aconbury Hill; Athelstans & Rough Hill Wood and The Crickets.	11	Hopleys Wood; Reeces Wood; Roadside Bank near Twyford; Brick Kiln Wood;

				Upper Bolstone Wood and The Belt; Trilloes Wood Court; Ballis Wood; River Wye; Margin of Wriggle Brook near Tressock; Redbrook Meadow, Gwatkins Grove and Grandoos Coppice; Helens Wood.
Mineral Reserves	0	-	0	-
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	0	-	0	-
Nature Trails	2	Herefordshire Trail; Violette Szabo.		
Registered Parks and Gardens	0	-	1	Holme Lacy.
Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM)	1	Aconbury Camp.	3	Churchyard cross in St David's Churchyard; Ringwork 750m west of Grove Farm; Churchyard cross in St Michael's Churchyard.
Sites of Importance in Nature Conservation (SINC)	0	-	0	-
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	0	-	1	River Wye.
Unregistered parks and gardens	0	-	5	Harewood Park; Pennoxstone; Aramstone; Bryngwyn; Lyston House.
			SSSI Status	
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	0	-	-	1 River Wye.
				SSSI Status
				Unfavourable Recovering.

Decision Notification:

The initial screening highlights that the Neighbourhood Development Plan for the Little Birch and Aconbury Neighbourhood Area:

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

Assessment date: 24/05/2016

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."

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.