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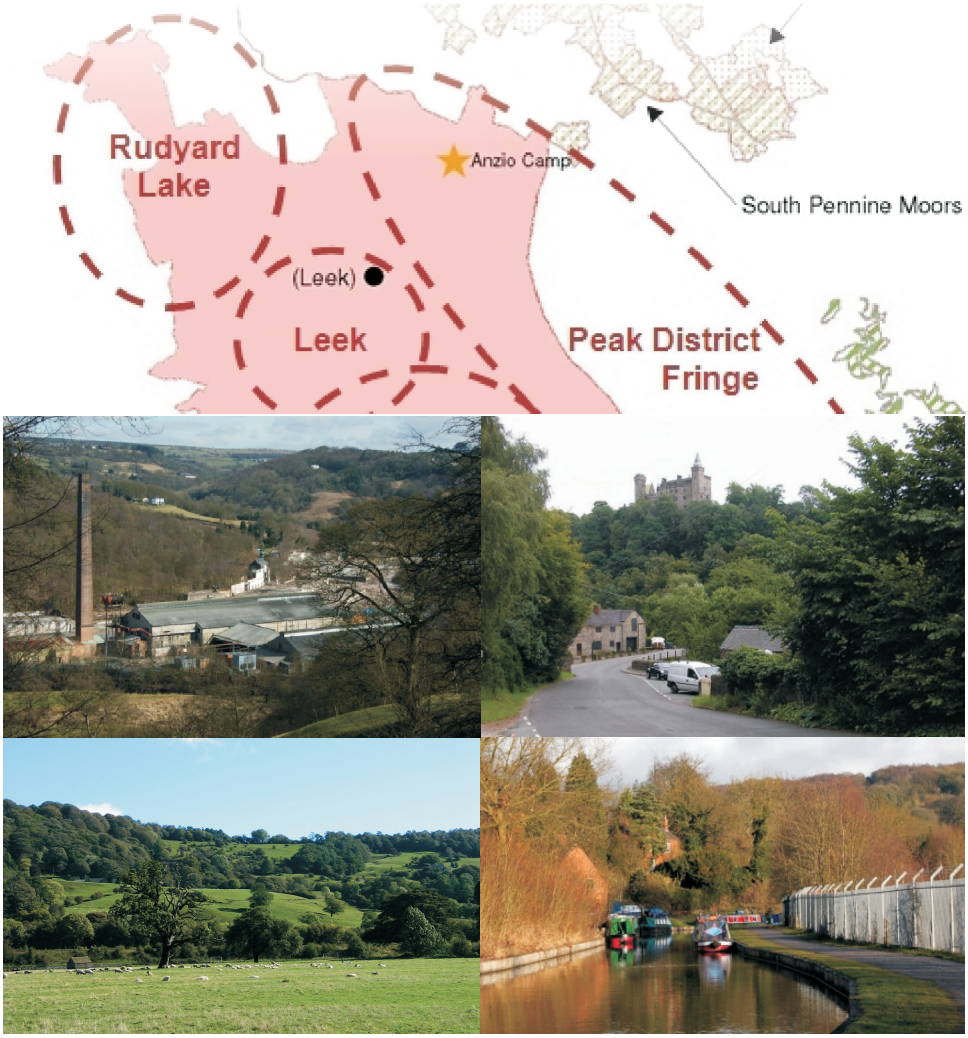

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan

Habitats Regulations Assessment
Screening Report

Updated November 2013

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Screening Report for Habitats Regulations Assessment

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

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Screening Report for the Habitats Regulations Assessment:
Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan

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Screening Report for Habitats Regulations Assessment

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Screening Report for the Habitats Regulations Assessment: Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan

For and on behalf of
Natural Capital Ltd.

Approved by: Dr Phil Say

Signed:

Position: Director

Date: 18th November 2013

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 EUROPEAN SITES

The UK is bound by the terms of the EC Habitats and Birds Directives[1] and the Ramsar Convention.[2] In the UK the European Directives have been implemented through the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994[3] (the Habitat Regulations) which provide for the protection of what are termed "European sites". These sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive.

At the heart of both these Directives is the creation of a network of sites called Natura 2000. The Habitats Directive requires Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to be designated for certain key species, and for habitats. The Birds Directive requires the establishment of Special Protection Areas (SPAs). SPAs are important for rare and vulnerable birds because they rely on them for breeding, feeding, wintering or migration. SACs provide rare and vulnerable animals, plants and habitats with increased protection and management. Together, SACs and SPAs make up the Natura 2000 network. All EU Member States are required to manage and implement Natura 2000.[4]

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of plans that could affect SPAs or SACs is required by Article 6(3) of the European Habitats Directive.

> *"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…."*

Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive goes on to discuss the alternative solutions, the test of 'Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest' (IROPI), and compensatory measures.

The Habitats Directive applies the precautionary principle to SACs and SPAs. Plans and projects can only be permitted having ascertained that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the site(s) in question. The interest features of the European Sites must be maintained in "favourable condition". This means that the abundance, distribution, structure or function of the plants and animals comprising the interest features must not be adversely affected by human activities. Plans and projects may still be permitted if there are no alternatives to them and the IROPI test confirms that they should go ahead. In such cases, compensation will be necessary to ensure the overall integrity of the site network.

In October 2005, the European Court of Justice ruled that land-use plans should be subject to a "Habitats Regulations Assessment" of their implications for European sites. A letter from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in

[1] Council Directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC) and Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora of 21st May 1992
[2] Convention on wetlands of international importance especially as waterfowl habitat, Ramsar, Iran 2nd Feb 1971.
[3] Statutory Instrument 1994/2716 which came into force on 30 October 1994
[4] Natura 2000 Networking Programme: www.natura.org

March 2006 communicated this ruling to Chief Planning Officers. In addition as a matter of policy, the Government has chosen to apply the procedures on Ramsar sites and potential SACs and SPAs even though these are not classified as European sites as a matter of law. Ramsar sites (so named following the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, held in Ramsar, Iran, 1971) are wetland sites of international importance. They are protected for their important habitats, in particular for waterbirds.

The Habitats Regulations Assessment of development plan documents is carried out under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (Amendment) Regulations, 2007.

1.2 CONTEXT FOR STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

1.2.1 Core Strategy

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) has produced a Core Strategy[5] that is currently under examination that sets out the overall vision and spatial strategy for the district until 2026. During the process of developing the Core Strategy the Council undertook both a sustainability appraisal (that incorporated strategic environmental assessment) and an HRA.

The main conclusions of the HRA during the preparation of the Core Strategy were that:

- The policies within the Core Strategy generally provided a positive framework for conservation and enhancement of the District's biodiversity, including the Natura 2000 sites.

- Core Strategy policy SS6d (in current draft of Core Strategy is now SS6c) identifies regeneration and economic growth opportunities on two specific sites: Anzio Camp, Blackshaw Moor and Bolton Copperworks, Froghall. The HRA suggested that redevelopment of the Anzio Camp site could create potential tensions between those draft Core Strategy policies which promote economic prosperity and those which aim to protect the European sites and conserve and enhance biodiversity. It went on to conclude that whether the economic re-development of the type envisaged can be accommodated without causing adverse effects on the integrity of the SAC and SPA sites can only be determined when detailed masterplans are put forward and they in turn are subject to more detailed EIA and Appropriate Assessment. Some additional wording was however recommended for this policy to sharpen the protection offered to the European and Ramsar sites.

- Two other types of development were identified that could, either on their own within Staffordshire Moorlands District or cumulatively (in-combination) with similar developments within adjacent local authority areas, potentially impact on the integrity of the SPA and SAC sites identified in the HRA. These were tourism development and renewable energy schemes (particularly wind turbines). There was insufficient detail on plans and schemes coming forward to make it possible to be specific about potential

[5] Staffordshire Moorlands Local Development Framework – *A Local Plan for the Future of Staffordshire Moorlands,* Revised Submission Document – Core Strategy development Plan Document, Revised Submission Document, December 2011, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

impacts and quantify them within the HRA. It was therefore concluded that further assessment would be needed once plans became better defined.

- The HRA concluded finally that the Core Strategy had sufficiently robust policies to protect the natural environment and ensure that any European protected sites within the wider area would not be significantly impacted on by any of the spatial development policies.

1.2.2 Churnet Valley Masterplan

The Churnet Valley is recognised as a sustainable tourism area in the Core Strategy and subject to a specific policy SS7 – Churnet Valley Tourism Corridor. In order to make sure that the potential of the Churnet Valley could be realised, whilst at the same time safeguarding what makes it special, the Council has led in the preparation of a Masterplan for the Churnet Valley. This Masterplan provides a comprehensive framework for future development in the area. It identifies opportunities and measures to help regenerate and manage this important rural area based around sustainable tourism in a manner which is sensitive to and enhances its important heritage, landscape and ecology.

Natural Capital have undertaken an HRA of the Masterplan, on behalf of SMDC, in order to provide to the Council relevant information such that if necessary it could, as the competent authority, carry out an Appropriate Assessment. The purpose of the HRA is, therefore, to assess whether relevant parts of the Draft Masterplan (development opportunities and measures) could have a likely significant effect on any European site. If screening of the sites indicates the potential for a likely significant effect then the more detailed assessment must determine whether the plan's spatial objectives and development plans would adversely affect the integrity or conservation objectives of any site. If any negative effects remain after mitigation has been identified then other options should be examined to avoid any potential damaging effects.

The first stage in the HRA is therefore the 'screening' stage (see *Section 1.3*). The screening process aims to be a first sieve of European Sites that the proposed Masterplan could possibly affect.

1.3 METHODOLOGY USED FOR THIS APPRAISAL

Early guidance on the Habitat Regulations in relation to Natura 2000 Sites was produced by English Nature in a series of guidance notes. These included one dealing specifically with HRA[6], one dealing with the determination of likely significant effect[7], and a third published a little later dealing with the consideration of effects of plans on European Sites either alone or in combination with other plans and programmes[8].

Guidance for HRA can also be found in a guide issued in 2000 by the European Commission – *Managing Natura 2000 Sites*[9]. This provides a detailed guide of Article 6 and includes clarification of HRA, conservation objectives and other important concepts within the Article.

[6] The Habitats Regulations Assessment (Regulation 48) The Conservation (Natural Habitat &) Regulations, 1994, Habitats Regulation Guidance Note, HRGN 1, English Nature, 1997.
[7] The Determination of Likely Significant Effect under the Conservation (Natural Habitat &) Regulations 1994, Habitats Regulation Guidance Note, HRGN 3, English Nature, 1999.
[8] Alone or in Combination, Habitats Regulations Guidance Note, HRGN 4, English Nature, 2001.
[9] Managing Natura 2000 Sites – The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats' Directive 92/43/CEE, Official Publication of the European Communities, 2000.

The ODPM and the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) have issued a joint circular – *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System*[10] which sets out Government policy with regard to internationally designated sites and provides useful clarification on assessing effects of plans, HRA and considering site integrity.

The Department for Communities and Local Government issued guidance in August 2006 for regional spatial strategies and local development documents on planning for the protection of European Sites and undertaking HRA[11]. The circular sets out the recommended methodology and provides step-by-step guidance.

The European Commission Guidance[9] for HRA recommends a process of up to four stages:

1. **Screening**: Determining whether the plan 'in combination' is likely to have a significant effect on a European site.
2. **Appropriate Assessment**: Determining whether, in view of the site's conservation objectives, the plan 'in combination' would have an adverse effect (or risk of this) on the integrity of the site. If not the plan can proceed.
3. **Assessment of alternative solutions:** Where the plan is assessed as having an adverse effect (or risk of this) on the integrity of a site, there should be an examination of alternatives.
4. **Assessment where no alternative solutions exist**: and where adverse impacts remain.

Government guidance[11] summarises the process into 3 main stages:

1. Establishing the likely significant effects.
2. Carrying out the Appropriate Assessment and ascertaining the effect on site integrity.
3. Determining mitigation, alternative solutions and considering whether there are *"imperative reasons of overriding public interest"* (see *Section 1.1*).

Updated guidance has been recently produced by Scottish Natural Heritage[12] (SNH) that provides very useful information, in the form of check lists and flow charts, to navigate through the appraisal process and on how best to select sites for consideration, determine the approach and methodology and consult as necessary.

This appraisal covers Stage 1 – Screening highlighted in both of the above processes and making use of the SNH guidance. The screening was carried out in an iterative process in July 2013, involving:

[10] Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System, ODPM Circular 06/2005, Defra Circular 01/2005, August 2005.
[11] Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Habitats Regulations Assessment, Guidance for Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents, Department for Communities and Local Government, August 2006.
[12] Habitats Regulations Appraisal of Plans – Guidance for Plan-Making Bodies in Scotland, Version 2.0, David Tyldesley and Associates, August 2012

- identification of European Sites that could possibly be affected by the Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan, their qualifying features and key environmental conditions that support the sites' integrity;
- identification of possible 'likely significant effects' on the sites arising from the Draft Masterplan;
- research into the plans and programmes of adjoining local authorities and other relevant agencies to examine the possibilities of 'in combination effects';
- discussions with Natural England on whether it considered the Draft Masterplan might pose risks to European sites; and
- identification of impacts and sites that could be screened out, and any that were likely to require more detailed assessment where 'likely significant effects' were identified.

2 SCREENING

2.1 EUROPEAN SITES TO BE SCREENED

Table 2.1 lists the Natura 2000 Sites that are either within Staffordshire Moorlands District or within the general area. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show their locations and also those of the surrounding local authorities. Figure 2.1 shows the location of Staffordshire Moorlands District in the context of European sites in the wider West Midland, East Midland and North West regions of England. Figure 2.2 shows the location of Staffordshire Moorlands District in the context of the principal European sites in Stoke and Staffordshire and adjacent local authority areas. Figure 2.3 shows the Churnet Valley Masterplan boundary, within Staffordshire Moorlands District and in the context of the nearest European sites.

SPA sites are designated because of their important breeding birds and visiting migrants. These can include a wide range of wild fowl and wader species. Many of the breeding birds and migrants tend to move around in large flocks to feed and roost, particularly in winter. This can involve the birds moving between coast and inland sites often outside the designated European sites, sometimes to adjacent farmland and uplands. Therefore the protection of these areas is important for protecting in turn the integrity of the SPAs.

Table 2.1 European Sites to be Screened

Name of Site	Approx. Distance (km) to District Town			Reason for Designation
	Leek	Biddulph	Cheadle	
South Pennine Moors (SAC)	4.5	13	14.5	**Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** European dry heaths, Blanket Bog, Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles. **Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:** Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix,* Transition mires and quaking bogs.
Peak District Dales (SAC)	9	20	10.5	**Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*), *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines. **Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:** European dry heaths, Calaminarian grasslands of the *Violetalia calaminariae,* Alkaline Fens, Calcareous and calcshist

Name of Site	Approx. Distance (km) to District Town			Reason for Designation
	Leek	Biddulph	Cheadle	
				screes of the montane to alpine levels (*Thlaspietea rotundifolii*) **Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes.* **Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:** Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri,* Bullhead *Cottus gobio.*
Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA	4.5	13	14.5	Area provides breeding ground for 2.2% of the GB breeding population of *Asio flammeus.* Area provides breeding ground for 2.3% of the GB breeding population of *Falco columbarius.* Area provides breeding ground for 1.9% of the GB breeding population of *Pluvialis apricaria.*
West Midlands Mosses (SAC)	9km			**Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds, Transition mires and quaking bogs.
Cannock Chase (SAC)	22km			**Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** European dry heaths. **Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:** Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*
Pasturefields Salt Marsh (SAC)	10km			**Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** Inland salt meadows.
Oak Mere (SAC)	30km			**Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (*Littorelletalia uniflorae*), Transition mires and quaking bogs.
River Dee and Bala Lake (SAC)	45km			**Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion*

Name of Site	Approx. Distance (km) to District Town			Reason for Designation
	Leek	Biddulph	Cheadle	
				fluitantis and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation. **Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar,* Floating water-plantain *Luronium natans.* **Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:** Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus,* Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri,* River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis,* Bullhead *Cottus gobio,* Otter *Lutra lutra.*
Dee Estuary (SAC)	60km			**Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand, Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) **Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:** Estuaries, Annual vegetation of drift lines, Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts, Embryonic shifting dunes, Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (`white dunes`), Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (`grey dunes`), Humid dune slacks.
Manchester Mosses (SAC)	35km			**Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration.
Rixton Clay Pits (SAC)	33km			**Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus.*
Brown Moss (SAC)	35km			**Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** Floating water-plantain *Luronium natans.*
Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem &	40km			**Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** Active raised bogs.

Name of Site	Approx. Distance (km) to District Town			Reason for Designation
	Leek	Biddulph	Cheadle	
Cadney Mosses (SAC)				**Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:** Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration.
Mottey Meadows (SAC)	25km			**Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** Lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*).
River Mease (SAC)	26km			**Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:** Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation. **Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:** Spined loach *Cobitis taenia*, bullhead *Cottus gobio.* **Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:** White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes, Otter Lutra lutra.*
Dee Estuary (SPA)	60km			As above for Dee Estuary SAC
Mersey Estuary (SPA)	42km			Area provides over-wintering site for: • 1.2% of the GB population of *Pluvialis apricaria,* • 1.9% of the population of *Anas acuta* (North-western Europe), • 2.9% of the population of *Anas crecca* (North-western Europe), • 4.2% of the population in Great Britain of *Anas Penelope* (Western Siberia/North-western/North-eastern Europe), • 3.6% of the population of *Calidris alpina alpina* (Northern Siberia/Europe/Western Africa), • 1.6% of the population of *Limosa limosa islandica*(Iceland – breeding), • 1.1% of the population in Great Britain of *Numenius arquata* (Europe – breeding), • 2.3% of the population in Great Britain of *Pluvialis*

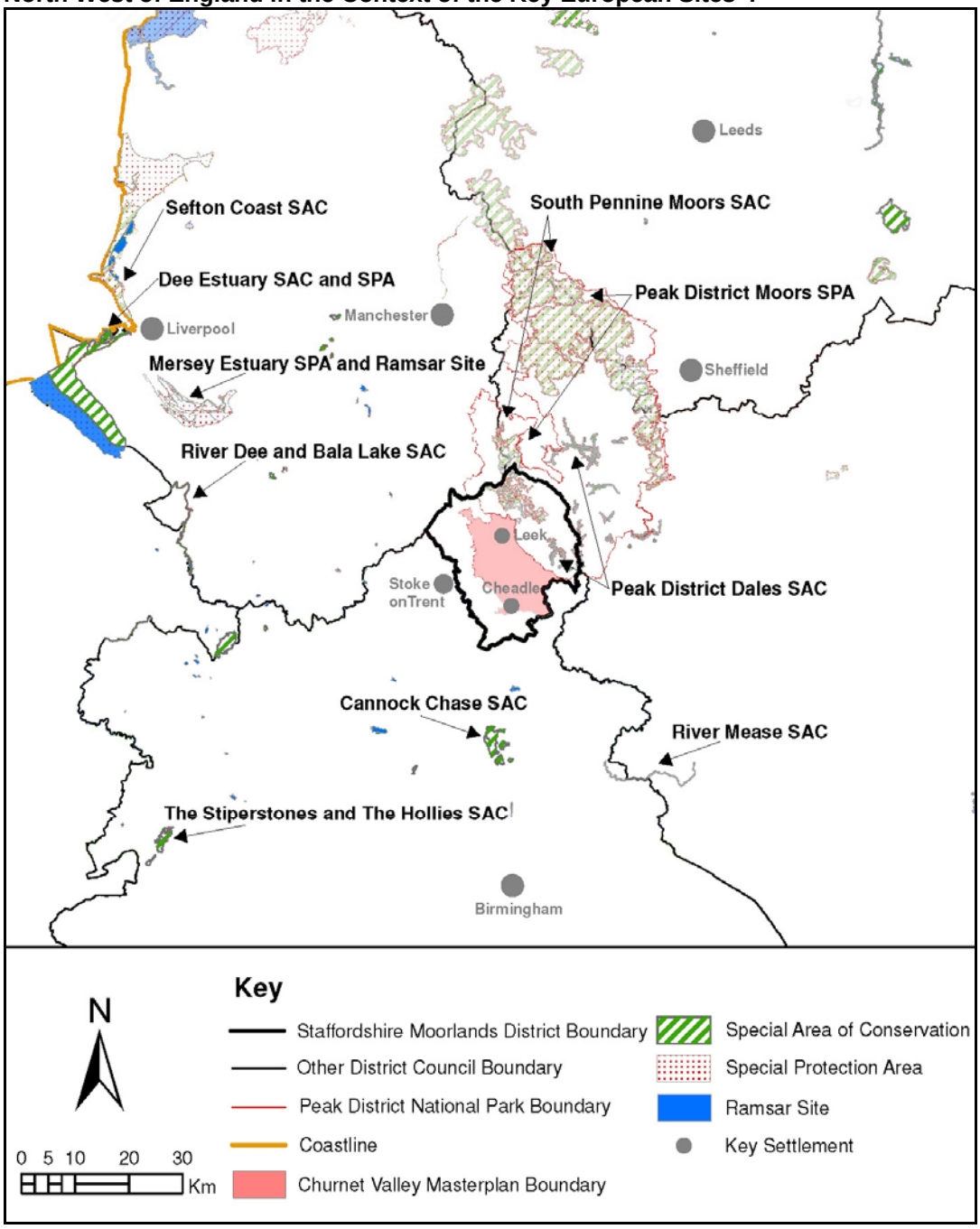
Name of Site	Approx. Distance (km) to District Town			Reason for Designation
	Leek	Biddulph	Cheadle	
				squatarola(Eastern Atlantic – wintering), • 1.4% of the population in Great Britain of *Podiceps cristatus* (North-western Europe – wintering), • 2.2% of the population of *Tadorna tadorna*(North-western Europe), • 2.8% of the population of *Tringa totanus* (Eastern Atlantic – wintering), • 0.7% of the population in Great Britain of *Vanellus vanellus* (Europe – breeding). On passage the area regularly supports: • 1.7% of the population in Great Britain of *Charadrius hiaticula*(Europe/Northern Africa – wintering), • 3.8% of the population of *Tringa totanus* (Eastern Atlantic – wintering).
Mersey Estuary (Ramsar Site)	42km			Bird assemblages of international importance: Species with peak counts in winter include 89576 waterfowl. Presence of qualifying species with peak counts in spring/autumn: • 12676 individuals of common shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) representing an average of 4.2% of the population. • 2011 individuals of black-tailed godwit, *Limosa limosa islandic*a representing an average of 5.7% of the population. • 6651 individuals of common redshank , *Tringa totanus totanus*, representing an average of • 2.6% of the population. Qualifying Species with peak counts in winter: • 10613 individuals of Eurasian teal *Anas crecc*a representing

Name of Site	Approx. Distance (km) to District Town			Reason for Designation
	Leek	Biddulph	Cheadle	
				an average of 2.6% of the population. • 565 individuals of northern pintail *Anas acuta* representing an average of 2% of the GB population. • 48364 individuals of dunlin (*Calidris alpina alpina*) representing an average of 3.6% of the population.
Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 1 (Ramsar site)	11km			The Meres & Mosses form a geographically discrete series of lowland open water and peatland sites in the north-west Midlands of England. These have developed in natural depressions in the glacial drift left by receding ice sheets which formerly covered the Cheshire/Shropshire Plain. The 16 component sites include open water bodies (meres), the majority of which are nutrient-rich with associated fringing habitats; reed swamps, fen, carr & damp pasture. Peat accumulation has resulted in nutrient poor peat bogs (mosses) forming in some sites in the fringes of meres or completely infilling basins. In a few cases the result is a floating quaking bog or schwingmoor. The wide range of resulting habitats support nationally important flora & fauna.
Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 2 (Ramsar Site)	9km			Description as above; containing nationally scarce cowbane *Cicuta virosa* and, elongated sedge *Carex elongata*. Also present are the nationally scarce bryophytes *Dicranum affine* and *Sphagnum pulchrum*. Also supports an assemblage of invertebrates including several rare species. There are 16 species of British Red Data Book insect listed for this site including the following endangered species: the moth *Glyphipteryx lathamella*, the caddisfly *Hagenella clathrata* and the sawfly *Trichiosoma vitellinae*.
Rostherne Mere (Ramsar Site)	24km			Rostherne Mere is one of the deepest and largest of the meres of the Shropshire-Cheshire Plain. Its shoreline is fringed with common reed *Phragmites australis*.

Name of Site	Approx. Distance (km) to District Town			Reason for Designation
	Leek	Biddulph	Cheadle	
The Dee Estuary (Ramsar Site)	60km			Presence of extensive intertidal mud and sand flats (20km by 9km) with large expanses of saltmarsh towards the head of the estuary. Features as expressed above in Dee Estuary SAC section. Bird assemblages of international importance: Species with peak counts in winter include 74230 waterfowl. **Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:** • Common shelduck, *Tadorna tadorn*a, NW Europe: 9346 individuals, representing an average of 3.1% of the population. • Eurasian oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus ostralegu*s, Europe & NW Africa –wintering: 19174 individuals, representing an average of 1.8% of the population. • Eurasian curlew Numenius *arquata arquat*a, N. arquata Europe (breeding): 4195 individuals, representing an average of 2.8% of the GB population. • Common redshank *Tringa totanus totanu*s: 8281 individuals, representing an average of 3.3% of the population. **Species with peak counts in winter:** • Eurasian teal, *Anas crecc*a, NW Europe: 3058 individuals, representing an average of 1.5% of the GB population. • Northern pintail, *Anas acut*a, NW Europe 4976 individuals, representing an average of 8.2% of the population. • Grey plover, *Pluvialis squatarol*a, E Atlantic/W Africa – wintering: 603 individuals, representing an average of 1.1% of the GB population.

Name of Site	Approx. Distance (km) to District Town			Reason for Designation
	Leek	Biddulph	Cheadle	
				• Red knot, *Calidris canutus islandic*a, W & Southern Africa (wintering): 3729 individuals, representing an average of 1.3% of the GB population. • Dunlin, *Calidris alpina alpin*a, W Siberia/W Europe: 19157 individuals, representing an average of 1.4% of the population. • Black-tailed godwit, *Limosa limosa islandic*a, Iceland/W Europe: 2791 individuals, representing an average of 7.9% of the population. • Bar-tailed godwit, *Limosa lapponica*, W Palearctic: 322 individuals, representing an average of 0.5% of the GB population. • Ruddy turnstone, *Arenaria interpres interpre*s, NE Canada, Greenland/W Europe & NW Africa: 291 individuals, representing an average of 0.5% of the GB population.

Figure 2.1 Location of Staffordshire Moorlands District in the North Midlands and North West of England in the Context of the Key European Sites[13].



[13] Not all sites necessarily shown and named on this map – see also Figure 2.2

Figure 2.2 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Boundary showing more detailed location of the Key European sites within West Midland, East Midland and North West regions of England

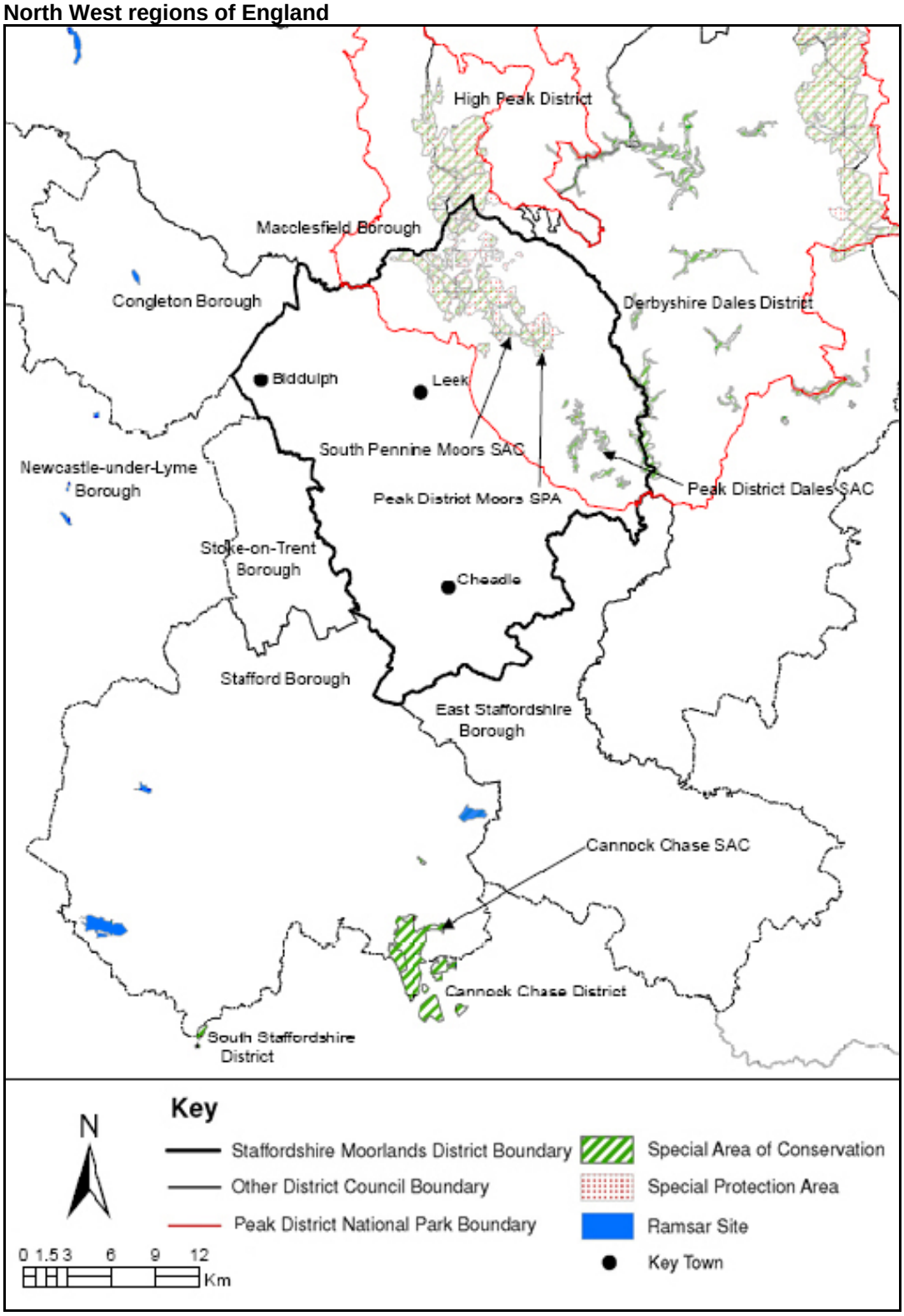
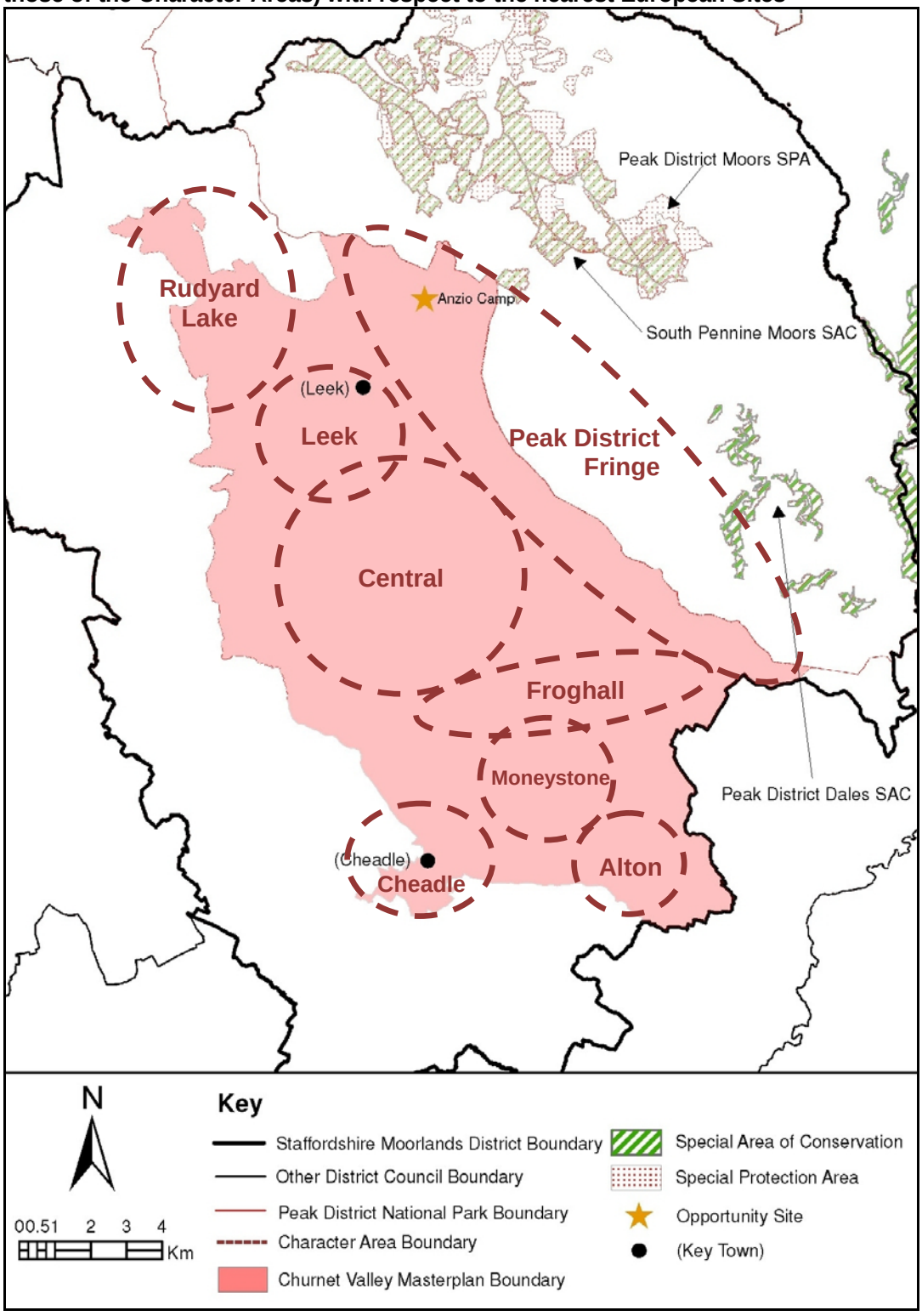


Figure 2.3 Churnet Valley Masterplan Boundary showing its location (together with those of the Character Areas) with respect to the nearest European Sites



2.2 THE CHURNET VALLEY MASTERPLAN AND POSSIBLE EFFECTS

2.2.1 The Masterplan

The Churnet Valley Masterplan sets out a vision for sustainable tourism together with a set of Masterplan Principles and a draft Spatial Strategy. It then goes on to describe eight local character areas that have been identified because they reflect the distinctiveness of areas of the Churnet Valley and because of the role they will play in achieving the vision. These are areas where existing characteristics and opportunities lend themselves to particular development purposes and change. The Character Areas (see Fig. 2.3) are listed with identified 'opportunity sites' in brackets:

- Rudyard Lake (Rudyard)
- Peak District Fringe (Meerbrook, Tittesworth with visitor centre, Anzio Camp, Blackbrook, Waterhouses)
- Leek
- Central (Cheddleton, Consall, Ipstones)
- Froghall (Kingsley, Froghall, Whiston)
- Moneystone (Kingsley Holt, Oakamoor)
- Alton (Alton, Alton Towers Resort)
- Cheadle

2.2.2 Possible Effects

Whilst some environmental effects can be quite specific and localised to developments that may be either in or very close to the European sites, it should be remembered that certain impacts to sites further afield could be brought about by the "knock-on" effects of development within the area.

The possible effects (direct and indirect) of proposed developments within the Churnet Valley Masterplan Area in the context of designated sites are likely to be in the form of:

- **Land take:** There could be the potential to disturb, remove and replace habitats and associated flora and fauna (possibly including qualifying and protected species) at the sites of development (through e.g. site clearance and construction activities) and then depending on their location there could be indirect negative impacts on nearby sites of conservation importance (including disturbance and downstream contamination affecting habitats, flora and fauna). There can also be risks of possible fragmentation of habitats and destruction or interruption of wildlife corridors. In the case of migratory and/or breeding birds that flock in winter to feed and roost and where the flocks can move between sites and sometimes over considerable distances, there can be risks of impacts through land take on the integrity of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites further afield.

- **Water resources:** Development could lead to an increased demand for water and wastewater treatment in those parts of the Masterplan area targeted for tourism related business premises development. There will be a requirement to make sure that increased water abstraction has no significant impacts on the European sites (e.g. impacts on hydrological regimes that in turn influence habitats and both plant and animal species), either those in the near vicinity or further afield. There will also

be a need to ensure that wastewater is treated to acceptable levels in order to safeguard the quality of controlled waters and to make sure that there is no deterioration in amenity value of the District's rivers and lakes especially those associated with European sites both within Staffordshire Moorlands District and those that could be affected further afield.

- **Traffic levels and congestion:** Increases in road traffic (cars, lorries, public transport) will inevitably lead to increases in emissions and associated atmospheric pollution which can affect sensitive plant species (such as lichens and heath communities). Increased traffic creates noise, vibration and other nuisances which could disturb bird species. Increases in emissions, noise and vibration are likely to have a negative impact on biodiversity and the wider environment. This could affect sites both within the Churnet Valley area and further afield.

- **General urbanisation:** more development, more activity, more noise, more clutter, more light and generally more disturbance within the environment. Growth in population and commercial businesses will inevitably lead to increases in waste generation. All of these factors could put pressure on European Sites in particular where there are towns and villages nearby – such as the South Pennine Moors SAC.

- **Increased tourism and recreation:** could lead to more visits into or near to the European sites with consequential noise, disturbance (vehicles, cycles, people, and dogs) trampling and litter all of which could affect sensitive habitats and bird species. This could apply to those sites in or near to the Churnet Valley (e.g. Peak District Dales SAC, South Pennine Moors SAC and Peak District Moors SPA).

Table 2.2 provides a brief summary of the more "generic" operations and actions that would be likely to cause an effect on a European site and would therefore need to be considered within the HRA.

Table 2.2 Generic actions that can cause effects on European Sites

Operations likely to cause deterioration or disturbance	Actions that can cause the effect
Physical loss	• Removal • Smothering
Physical damage	• Changes in land management practices • Prevention of natural erosion as in coastal defences, flood defences • Mineral extraction • Water abstraction • Recreational pressure – trampling, erosion etc • Drainage – increased run-off and land form disturbance can affect hydrology and groundwater of wetland sites
Non-physical disturbance	• Noise/visual presence – recreational or industrial • Transport/navigation
Toxic (and non-toxic) contamination	• Nutrient enrichment • Changes in turbidity (e.g. flood defence) • Changes in water level (e.g. water abstraction) • Changes in salinity (e.g. water abstraction) • Agricultural run-off
Biological disturbance	• Introduction of non-native species • Selective extraction of species

2.3 POSSIBLE IN-COMBINATION EFFECTS

The guidance[14,15] indicates that it is essential to consider possible developments in adjoining local authority areas in order to assess whether there could be any "in-combination" effects caused by the cumulative effects of additional development plans and programmes. Table 2.3 indicates some possible developments in adjoining local authority areas that would need to be taken into consideration. This information has been sourced from reviews of relevant local authority Core Strategies and Local Plans available from relevant web sites carried out during this assessment.

[14] Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment, Guidance for Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents, Department for Communities and Local Government, August 2006.

[15] Appropriate Assessment of Plans: Discussion Paper, Scott Wilson *et al*, June 2006

Table 2.3 Developments in Nearby Districts and Other Relevant Strategies/Plans – In-Combination Effects

Local Authority or Agency / Organisation	House Construction Proposed (where relevant)	Other Development or Relevant Plan	Sources of Information
Cheshire East Council (Congleton and Macclesfield now part of this)	• 27,000 homes between 2010-2030 • 1,600 new dwellings per annum	• Looks to develop tourism: o Nantwich Riverside o Sandbach Town Centre • 20,000 jobs across 300ha of land for commercial, industrial and logistics needs along the M6 Corridor between 2010-2030	Cheshire East Local Plan Shaping our Future: A Development Strategy for Jobs and Sustainable Communities
East Staffordshire District Council	• 7,452 dwellings supplied by March 2011. No new targets planned	Looks to develop tourism: • Trent Valley water based recreation; • Extension of Branston Water Park; • Water based recreation in Tean Valley north of Uttoxeter (6km from Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 1 Ramsar site). • Central Rivers Initiative – maximising ecology while keeping mineral industry going • Toyota site near Burnaston governing factor for new employment land allocation along A38	Local Plan 2006-2011 Saved Policies
Stafford Borough Council	• Annual housing provision of ~206 homes; 35 affordable homes per annum	• Looks to develop tourism: o Stone Market Town – coincides with sustainable housing focus o Promote links with Cannock Chase AONB and Stafford cultural heritage venues	Stafford Borough Local Development Framework Submission Core Strategy Development Plan Document October 2005 The Plan for Stafford Borough Publication Pre Submission

Local Authority or Agency / Organisation	House Construction Proposed (where relevant)	Other Development or Relevant Plan	Sources of Information
		• 10ha average of industrial land to be made available annually	
High Peak Borough Council	• 5,940 additional dwellings between 2006-2028 • Target of 220 new dwellings per annum increasing to 340 in the last 5 years of the plan (overall rate of 270 per annum) • Majority is regeneration	• Looks to support tourism: o At 'gateway' market towns o More sustainable tourism, as part of the wider Peak District destination • Employment land to be protected, maintained and regenerated.	The High Peak Local Plan Preferred Options 2013
Stoke-on-Trent	• 11,400 net additional dwellings by 2026 in Stoke-on-Trent • Roughly 570 per annum	• Looks to develop tourism: o Heritage based tourism (esp. Burslem - ceramics) • Most employment developments are focused on regeneration/brownfield sites • Significant retail and office growth in region (100s of ha) • Regional Investment Site at Chatterley Valley (~70ha) which spans the boundary of both authorities	Core Spatial Strategy 2009
Newcastle-Under-Lyme	• 5,700 net additional dwellings by 2026 in Newcastle-Under-Lyme • Roughly 285 per annum	• Looks to develop tourism: o Along canals o Heritage based • 40ha of land at Chatterley Valley to be designated for employment – light industry (inc. hi-tech) and manufacturing. Nature conservation value of development to be enhanced • Keele University extension and	Newcastle-Under-Lyme Local Plan 2003 (policies saved beyond 2007) Joint Core Spatial Strategy (with Stoke) October 2009

Local Authority or Agency / Organisation	House Construction Proposed (where relevant)	Other Development or Relevant Plan	Sources of Information
		Science Park	
Derbyshire Dales District Council	• 4,400 dwellings needed between 2006-2028 • Residual requirement for 628 more dwellings	• Looks to develop sustainable tourism: o Encouraging overnight stays by enhancing and retaining infrastructure for this purpose o Supporting growth of Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site as a destination o Supporting new tourist provision through reuse of existing buildings or as part of farm diversification • Supports measures within Plan Area to relieve tourist pressures from most sensitive areas of the Peak District National Park • Further development of employment land at the following locations: o Ashbourne Airfield 8ha o Halldale Quarry, Matlock 7ha o Middleton Road, Wirksworth 4ha	Draft Local Plan June 2013
Cannock Chase Council	• Latest suggested rate of build between 250 and 280 per annum. ~70-80% of which need to be affordable	• Looks to develop tourism: o Closely managed, ensure no impact on AONB/greenbelt • ~38% of a projected 91ha of employment land has been developed. No new land allocations are planned unless	Local Plan 2013

Local Authority or Agency / Organisation	House Construction Proposed (where relevant)	Other Development or Relevant Plan	Sources of Information
		there is additional need. • Main employment sites include Cannock, Rugeley and Brereton and Norton Canes	
Peak District National Park Planning Authority	• The Peak District National Park does not have a target for the level of housing that should be provided in recognition of the conservation requirements of the area. • Below average completions in 2011/2012 period	• 4.1.2 5 new grassland SSSIs notified 23/11/11- Bradbourne Mill Meadows, Hallam Barn Grasslands, Lower Hollins, Matley Moor Meadows & South Lee Meadows, totalling 22.75ha. • 4.10 Bakewell (White Peak-South West Peak) may get a new hotel • No need for additional employment land, but small business developments are supported if applicable • *Policy 10 in the East Midlands Regional Plan requires authorities and others to encourage and promote tourism opportunities outside the National Park that could ease pressures on the National Park itself.*	PDNPA LDF Core Strategy October 2011

2.4 SCREENING AND POTENTIAL EFFECTS

2.4.1 Screening the European Sites

Annex A shows the rapid screening table used for assessing the potential for impact of the proposed developments within the Churnet Valley Masterplan area on the various SPA, SAC and Ramsar sites within Staffordshire Moorlands District or in the near vicinity (within neighbouring authority areas).

The screening process demonstrated that:

- no direct impacts that would result in a likely significant effect on European sites were identified; and
- similarly, no potential for indirect impacts that would cause a likely significant effect were identified.

On the basis of this screening process it was considered that 19 of the 22 European sites could be screened out. In other words it was considered that none of the development opportunities within the Churnet Valley Masterplan would be considered likely to generate impacts that would have a likely significant effect on the sites.

Screening (presented in Annex A) did however identify a question mark as to the possibility of likely significant effects on three of the sites from proposed developments within one of the Character Areas – that of the Anzio Camp within the Peak District Fringe Character Area. The sites were:

- South Pennine Moors (SAC);
- Peak District Dales (SAC); and
- Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA.

Screening suggested that for these three sites there was some uncertainty in the first instance as to the possible effects of developments that would increase tourism in the area, and therefore these sites have been considered further in the following sections and in Table 2.5.

2.4.2 Potential Tourism-related Environmental Effects

The potential effects of developments that promote tourism and recreational activities which could have likely significant effects on the European sites are summarised in Table 2.4, and considered further in the following sections.

A more detailed screening assessment on the three European sites is summarised in Table 2.5. Here the qualifying features and conservation objectives together with the key factors affecting site vulnerability are considered in the context of potential tourism and recreational developments associated with the Peak District Fringe Character Area.

Table 2.4 Screening the Potential Tourism-related Environmental Effects in Relation to the European Sites

Action likely to Cause Effect	Activities Related to Tourism and Recreational Activity
Physical loss of plants and habitat	• Removal
Physical damage to habitat	• Changes in land management practices • Recreational pressure – trampling, erosion, water sports • Drainage – increased run-off and land form disturbance can affect hydrology and groundwater of wetland sites • Construction of gates, fences, footpaths
Disturbance to birds and animals	• Noise/visual presence • Traffic • Cycling • Walking • Dogs • Horse riding • Game sports • Water sports
Biological disturbance	• Introduction of non-native species

2.4.3 Recreational Disturbance and Damage

Integrating people with the landscape and wildlife is a key aspiration for Natural England and is an aspiration that fits with the vision in the Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan. Although the Draft Masterplan will seek to encourage walking and cycling, it is anticipated that the proposed developments will seek to retain people within the Churnet Valley to enjoy the assets and features inherent to the area. The Masterplan, also, has the potential to act as a sub-regional asset and complement and ease pressure on the neighbouring Peak District National Park. Although it cannot be guaranteed that some of the tourists might not also visit the Peak District (including areas where the European sites are located), many agencies such as the Moors for the Future Partnership are working towards reducing the environmental impact of recreation and therefore should an increase in walking and cycling take place it is unlikely that further damage (e.g. localised issues of soil erosion and loss of flora alongside some of the busiest footpaths) would take place because of the protective measures already being developed and implemented.

The Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA is noted for the breeding of five species of birds – golden plover, merlin, peregrine falcon, short eared owl and dunlin. All of these apart from the peregrine are ground nesting birds which are potentially vulnerable to disturbance from walkers and cyclists. A survey of moorland breeding bird distribution and change in the Peak District, which covers most of the SPA in Derbyshire, was produced by the Moors for the Future Partnership[16]. In considering recreational disturbance the report concluded that a number of species, particularly ground nesting waders such as curlew, golden plover, lapwing, and snipe avoid areas of habitat close to footpaths. However, over a 1km area this was found not to have an impact on overall density of population. The study further concluded that populations of

[16] Breeding Bird Survey of the Peak District Moorlands, Moors for the Future Report No 1, 2004

wader species regarded as sensitive to visitor pressures were in fact increasing in the Peak District, suggesting that visitor pressure is not currently a major driver of population change.

In relation to SPA key species, the report noted that golden plover populations were stable and merlin populations had increased since the early 1970s alongside considerable increases in recreational pressures. Mitigation measures (e.g. paving busy routes such as the Pennine Way) have helped to reduce the spatial impact. Since 2000 large areas of open access land have been designated by Natural England and as part of this only one site has required mitigation measures – Beeley Moor which requires dogs to be on leads through the nesting season which suggests that disturbance is a more localised issue.

2.4.4 Anzio Camp Regeneration Site

Because of the close proximity of Anzio Camp to the South Pennine Moors SAC and the Peak District Moors SPA Natural England had expressed concerns (during the HRA of the Core Strategy) over possible negative impacts that might occur at these sites as a result of any redevelopment. Impacts that could occur would depend on the type and extent of the development, and the infrastructure that may be required to service a given development.

Mitigation against the possible effects of regeneration activities at the proposed development site would be provided by a) rigorous application of both the Principles and Policies on sustainable tourism contained within the Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan and b) the Core Strategy policies that are intended to provide protection for the environment. In particular Policy NE1 affords protection for the European sites against inappropriate development.

Although there are no detailed masterplan designs for the Anzio Camp initiative to date, there would appear to be sufficiently robust principles and policies within both the Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan and the Core Strategy to make sure that development at this location would not impact negatively on nearby European sites.

2.4.5 Tourism, Recreation and Possible In-Combination Effects

It was highlighted in the previous HRA on the Core Strategy that Government guidance (Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism[17]) recommends that developers of tourism projects should consider whether new developments would protect and improve biodiversity (whether it is a statutory requirement or not). It also stressed how important it was to reconcile the economic benefits of tourism with the needs of conservation and to enhance the potential for biodiversity when considering any new proposal.

SMDC has built this philosophy into the Principles within the Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan. During the preparation of the plan it has undergone a sustainability appraisal (SA) that has considered environmental effects. The SA concluded that the overall approach adopted within the Draft Masterplan of 'Balanced Development' scored well in terms of supporting the heritage of the Churnet Valley, enhancing the landscape, protecting the environment, providing

[17] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-for-tourism

local employment opportunities, regenerating brownfield sites and strengthening links between the rural areas and the towns.

The SA made recommendations for mitigation/improvement of aspects of the Draft Masterplan that could have negative impacts. These included resisting development which would harm the character of the local landscape, encouraging overnight stays, better promotion of public transport services, maximising use of gateways and hubs, and seeking renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies in new schemes.

Cannock Chase SAC

The previous HRA of the Core Strategy concluded that although recreation and tourism policies (including tourism developments) together with relevant accessibility, transport and housing policies in both SMDC's Core Strategy and those of neighbouring authorities could lead to an increase in traffic movements and visitor and recreation activities across the District (in particular within the Peak District National Park and Cannock Chase - in areas that could be vulnerable to recreational pressure), that at present time these effects are likely to be diffuse and cumulative and would be difficult to quantify with any accuracy. It concluded, however, that Core Strategy policies designed to protect the environment, to promote sustainable tourism and to promote sustainable transport should provide the necessary mitigation in the event of any possible tourism, transport and related effects and that the Core Strategy policies of neighbouring authorities will help to strengthen these as well.

Concern continues to be shown for the potential of likely significant effects on Cannock Chase SAC (renowned for its European Dry Heath communities). Recent research has shown that new development within Districts close to Cannock Chase(Lichfield District, South Staffordshire District and Stafford Borough), as set out in their relevant core strategies, will result in an increase of around nine percent in the number of visits to Cannock Chase[18]. This research sets out recommendations for measures to enable the delivery of dwellings in the vicinity of Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), without causing a likely significant effect on the SAC. The strategy relates to Cannock Chase District, and a zone of influence of 12 miles (19 km) from the SAC boundary. It is estimated that In order to ensure no adverse effect on integrity, mitigation measures should aim to ensure no net increase in recreation pressure to the SAC, and ideally a reduction in pressure and enhancement to the SAC.

The measures presented in the strategy promote responsible access within the SAC and ensure no net increase in the number of visitors by both attracting people to areas outside the SAC and potentially directing people away from the more sensitive areas of the SAC.

A more recent updated research report[19]on Cannock Chase SAC that looks at the mitigation of visitor impacts following an updated visitor survey carried out

[18] White, J, Liley, D. & Underhill-Day, J. (2009). Cannock Chase Visitor Impact Mitigation Strategy. Footprint Ecology. Unpublished report.

[19] Underhill-Day, J. & Liley, D. (2012). Cannock Chase Visitor Impacts Mitigation Report. Footprint Ecology. Unpublished report.

during 2010 - 11 and subsequent analysis suggests that the evidence base supports a zone of influence of some 15 km (9 miles).

The nearest boundary edge to the Churnet Valley Masterplan Area is some 22 km (14 miles) from Cannock Chase SAC and so is beyond the 15 km zone of influence. The relatively small-scale housing referenced within the Masterplan will also be beyond the 15 km zone of influence.

Within the introduction to the Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan it is highlighted that – '*The Churnet Valley has the potential to act as a sub-regional asset and to complement and ease pressure on the neighbouring Peak District National Park*.' Developments within the Churnet Valley will be undertaken in a way that attracts and holds visitors, thus focusing recreational activities in areas away from the European sites.

This will be beneficial to both Cannock Chase and the Peak District. The Churnet Valley is beyond the 15 km zone of influence for Cannock Chase and in addition to this the Draft Masterplan has set out Sustainable Tourism and Masterplan Principles that will safeguard designated sites and afford protection to the environment. In view of the strategic thrust of tourism development for the Churnet Valley, that is on leisure and tourism activities within the Churnet Valley and therefore to attract and retain tourists within this area, there are unlikely to be in-combination effects on the Cannock Chase SAC.

It is also noted that the Peak District National Park (PDNP) Authority monitors visitor numbers closely and manages those visitor numbers. For this reason a partnership approach to tourism management between SMDC and the PDNP Authority is suggested to help strengthen mitigation against loss of or damage to habitats and species in European sites. A similar partnership approach with the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership would also be likely to help protect the interests of the SAC.

2.4.6 Summary of Findings

The screening process summarised in Annex A confirmed that there would be no likely significant effects caused by the Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan on 19 of the European sites considered but that there were question marks over the possibility of likely significant effects caused by proposed developments within the Peak Fringe Character Area on the three remaining European sites. These being:

- South Pennine Moors (SAC);
- Peak District Dales (SAC); and
- Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA.

It was thought possible that the likely significant effects could result from increased tourism in the area. The assessment Table 2.5 and discussed further in Sections 2.4.2 to 2.4.5 has found that it is considered unlikely that effects on the integrity or any of the conservation objectives could result. This leads to the conclusions set out in Section 3.

Table 2.5 More Detailed Screening Process for the Pennine Moors and Peak District European Sites in Relation to the Peak District Fringe Character Area and Anzio Camp

Site	Qualifying Features and Conservation Objectives	Key Environmental Conditions Supporting Site Integrity and Site Vulnerability	Screening of Proposed Developments and Potential Effects	Site screened in or out?
South Pennine Moors (SAC)	**Qualifying Features** European dry heaths, Blanket Bog, Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles. Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix,* Transition mires and quaking bogs. **Conservation Objectives** To maintain in favourable condition the above features.	**Key Environmental Conditions** Area is considered to support a significant presence of: • Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetrali*. • European dry heaths for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. • Blanket bogs for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. • Transition mires and quaking bogs. • Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. **Site Vulnerability** • Large numbers of people use the area for recreational activities as around two-thirds is within the Peak District National Park. Therefore access management is a key issue. • Accidental fires. • Maintenance of the ecosystems relies primarily on appropriate grazing levels and burning regimes. • Atmospheric pollution over the last few	• No direct impacts from proposed developments within the Peak District Fringe Character Area. • The potential indirect impacts of increased tourism, recreational activities and footfall that may follow from proposed developments within the Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan are uncertain but may result in additional traffic and associated disturbance. However the intention is to encourage this within the Churnet Valley. • In the Introduction to the Draft Masterplan it is recognised that – '*The Churnet Valley has the potential to act as a sub-regional asset and to complement and ease pressure on the neighbouring Peak District National Park*.' • If anything, therefore, developments within the Churnet Valley will be undertaken in a way that attracts and holds visitors. • Many agencies such as the	• No likely significant effects predicted. • Screened out.

Site	Qualifying Features and Conservation Objectives	Key Environmental Conditions Supporting Site Integrity and Site Vulnerability	Screening of Proposed Developments and Potential Effects	Site screened in or out?
		hundred years has depleted the lichen and bryophyte flora and may be affecting dwarf-shrubs. The impact has arguably been greatest on blanket bog, wet heath and transition mire where the bog-building *Sphagnum* mosses have been largely lost. • The former extensive cover of woodland is now fragmented, relatively small-scale and largely restricted to steeper valley sides. Woods are often unfenced and open to grazing which restricts tree regeneration. In some *Rhododendron* has invaded, choking out native flora.	Moors for the Future Partnership are working towards reducing the environmental impact of recreation and therefore should an increase in walking and cycling take place it is unlikely that further damage (e.g. localised issues of soil erosion and loss of flora alongside some of the busiest footpaths) would take place because of the protective measures already being developed and implemented. • The Draft Masterplan has set out Sustainable Tourism and Masterplan Principles that will safeguard designated sites and afford protection to the environment. • The Draft Masterplan sits within the Local development Framework, with the Core Strategy providing overarching policies that influence all development. Policy NE1 provides the necessary protection for European sites.	

Site	Qualifying Features and Conservation Objectives	Key Environmental Conditions Supporting Site Integrity and Site Vulnerability	Screening of Proposed Developments and Potential Effects	Site screened in or out?
Peak District Dales (SAC)	**Qualifying Features** Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*), *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines. European dry heaths, Calaminarian grasslands of the *Violetalia calaminariae,* Alkaline Fens, Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (*Thlaspietea rotundifolii*). White-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes.* Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri,* Bullhead *Cottus gobio.* **Conservation Objectives** To maintain in favourable condition the above features and to encourage conditions favourable for crayfish and lamprey.	**Key Environmental Conditions** Area is considered to support a significant presence of: • European dry heaths. • Calaminarian grasslands of the *Violetalia calaminariae.* • Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates *(Festuco-Brometalia*) for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. • Alkaline fens. • Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels *(Thlaspietea rotundifoli*i) which is considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 1000 Hectares. • Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation which is considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 1000 hectares. • *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. • White-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.	• No direct impacts from proposed developments within the Peak District Fringe Character Area. • The potential indirect impacts of increased tourism, recreational activities and footfall that may follow from proposed developments within the Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan are uncertain but may result in additional traffic and associated disturbance. However the intention is to encourage this within the Churnet Valley. • In the Introduction to the Draft Masterplan it is recognised that – '*The Churnet Valley has the potential to act as a sub-regional asset and to complement and ease pressure on the neighbouring Peak District National Park*.' • If anything, therefore, developments within the Churnet Valley will be undertaken in a way that attracts and holds visitors. • Many agencies such as the Moors for the Future Partnership are working	• No likely significant effects predicted. • Screened out.

Site	Qualifying Features and Conservation Objectives	Key Environmental Conditions Supporting Site Integrity and Site Vulnerability	Screening of Proposed Developments and Potential Effects	Site screened in or out?
		• Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*. • Bullhead *Cottus gobio*. **Site Vulnerability** • The main threat to the limestone grasslands of the Peak District Dales is inappropriate grazing management. This results in either neglect and invasion by scrub, or overgrazing and the loss of the important vegetation communities. • Proposed developments have the potential to interfere with drainage patterns within the site. The impact of dust from quarrying needs to be assessed. • The woodlands within the SAC occupy very steeply-sloping dalesides, where access is always going to be problematic, and development pressures are therefore limited. Existing permission for limestone or mineral extraction is a potential threat to some of the woodlands on one part of the site. • There will be a need to work closely with game fishing interests to ensure that fishery management does not adversely affect the freshwater	towards reducing the environmental impact of recreation and therefore should an increase in walking and cycling take place it is unlikely that further damage (e.g. localised issues of soil erosion and loss of flora alongside some of the busiest footpaths) would take place because of the protective measures already being developed and implemented. • The Draft Masterplan has set out Sustainable Tourism and Masterplan Principles that will safeguard designated sites and afford protection to the environment. • The Draft Masterplan sits within the Local development Framework, with the Core Strategy providing overarching policies that influence all development. Policy NE1 provides the necessary protection for European sites.	

Site	Qualifying Features and Conservation Objectives	Key Environmental Conditions Supporting Site Integrity and Site Vulnerability	Screening of Proposed Developments and Potential Effects	Site screened in or out?
		features of the SAC. The same is true of shooting tenants, who may impact on the overall ecology of the woodland.		
Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA	**Qualifying Features** Area provides breeding ground for 2.2% of the GB breeding population of short-eared owl *Asio flammeus.* Area provides breeding ground for 2.3% of the GB breeding population of merlin *Falco columbarius.* Area provides breeding ground for 1.9% of the GB breeding population of golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria.* **Conservation Objectives** To maintain in favourable condition the above features and to encourage conditions favourable for bird communities.	**Key Environmental Conditions** Area is considered to support a significant presence of: • Bogs. • Heath and scrubland. • Dry grassland. • Humid grassland, Mesophile grassland. **Site Vulnerability** • Major urban and industrial centres near to the Peak District Moors provide significant visitor pressure and approximately two-thirds of the moorlands are open to public access. • Habitat damage through physical erosion or fire, combined with disturbance of breeding birds, can be significant. Initiatives for sustainable recreation are being necessary. • Many habitats are sub-optimal (in vegetation terms) as a consequence of historic air pollution, high grazing pressure and wildfire burns. • Breeding birds in the south-west of the area may be declining on both open moorland and enclosed rough grazing land, possibly due to general agricultural improvement of the	• No direct impacts from proposed developments within the Peak District Fringe Character Area. • The potential indirect impacts of increased tourism, recreational activities and footfall that may follow from proposed developments within the Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan are uncertain but may result in additional traffic and associated disturbance. However the intention is to encourage this within the Churnet Valley. • In the Introduction to the Draft Masterplan it is recognised that – '*The Churnet Valley has the potential to act as a sub-regional asset and to complement and ease pressure on the neighbouring Peak District National Park*.' • If anything, therefore, developments within the Churnet Valley will be undertaken in a way that attracts and holds visitors.	• No likely significant effects predicted. • Screened out.

Site	Qualifying Features and Conservation Objectives	Key Environmental Conditions Supporting Site Integrity and Site Vulnerability	Screening of Proposed Developments and Potential Effects	Site screened in or out?
		surrounding areas.	• Research[15] on recreational disturbance has shown that a number of species, particularly ground nesting waders such as curlew, golden plover, lapwing, and snipe avoid areas of habitat close to footpaths. However, over a 1km area this has been found not to have an impact on overall density of population. The research has also shown that populations of wader species regarded as sensitive to visitor pressures were in fact increasing in the Peak District, suggesting that visitor pressure is not currently a major driver of population change. • The research also showed that in relation to SPA key species, that golden plover populations were stable and merlin populations had increased since the early 1970s alongside considerable increases in recreational pressures. Mitigation measures (e.g. paving busy routes such as the Pennine Way) have helped to reduce the spatial impact. • The Draft Masterplan has set	

Site	Qualifying Features and Conservation Objectives	Key Environmental Conditions Supporting Site Integrity and Site Vulnerability	Screening of Proposed Developments and Potential Effects	Site screened in or out?
			out Sustainable Tourism and Masterplan Principles that will safeguard designated sites and afford protection to the environment. • The Draft Masterplan sits within the Local development Framework, with the Core Strategy providing overarching policies that influence all development. Policy NE1 provides the necessary protection for European sites.	

3 CONCLUSIONS

This screening exercise has established that of the 22 European sites (including five Ramsar sites) considered within the appraisal all can be screened out of the need for more detailed assessment. This is based on the following conclusions:

- that no direct impacts from proposed developments leading to likely significant effects on European sites would be predicted (see Annex A and Section 2.4);
- the potential indirect impacts of increased tourism, recreational activities and footfall that may follow from proposed developments within the Draft Churnet Valley Masterplan are uncertain but may result in additional traffic and associated disturbance. However the intention is to promote activity within the Churnet Valley so that developments within the Draft Masterplan area will be planned and undertaken in a way that attracts and holds visitors and the potential for likely significant effects on European sites is considered unlikely (see Section 2.4.5);
- recent research suggests that even for the nearest European sites in the Peak District (South Pennine Moors (SAC), Peak District Dales (SAC), Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA) that recreational pressure is not having a significant effect on soil erosion and flora because of the protective measures already being developed and implemented (see Section 2.4.3);
- the same research suggests that recreational pressure is not having an impact on overall population density of several species of wader and that the populations of certain key SPA species such as golden plover are stable and that merlin populations have increased since the early 1970s alongside considerable increases in recreational pressures (see Section 2.4.3);
- the Draft Masterplan has set out Sustainable Tourism and Masterplan Principles that will promote sustainable design and construction aimed at safeguarding designated sites and affording protection to the environment; and
- the Draft Masterplan sits beneath the emerging Core Strategy that provides overarching policies that influence all development. Policy NE1: *Biodiversity and Geological Resources* provides strong and robust protection for European sites.

It is therefore concluded that there is no need for further more detailed appropriate assessment by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

ANNEX A

DRAFT CHURNET VALLEY MASTERPLAN
CHARACTER AREA:
SCREENING TABLE

A1 This annex reports the screening undertaken of the Character Area Development Opportunities within the Churnet Valley Masterplan and possible effects on the various European Natura 2000 sites in the general area.

A screening system was developed and used based on the following scale of effects.

✓	**Broadly supportive**
0	**Neutral or no discernible effect**
?	**Uncertain**
✖	**Likely negative effect**

Methodology
To carry out the screening process, a set of questions based on key criteria that relate to the qualifying interests and integrity of the sites was established to aid in the decision making process for assessing any of the proposed types of development within the Character Areas would generate a significant effect. The questions are summarised in the following table.

Key Questions used in the Screening Process
Will proposed developments cause physical loss or damage to the European site?
Will proposed developments cause pollution to land, sea or air that might impact upon the qualifying features?
Will proposed developments restrict the capacity to meet conservation objectives?
Will proposed developments disrupt those factors which help maintain the favourable conditions of the site?
Will proposed developments interfere with the balance, distribution and density of key flora and fauna that are the indicators of the favourable condition of the site?
Will proposed developments increase disturbance close to the site?
Will proposed developments encourage further access to the site by the public and their pets?
Will proposed developments result in the removal of roosting grounds?
Will proposed developments cause an increase in the scale or nature of development near the site, which could cause an impact on the site and affect site integrity?
Will proposed developments change the type of development currently near the site that could lead to future impacts on the site?
Will proposed developments affect areas utilised by qualifying bird species outside of the SPA?
Will proposed developments encourage the encroachment on bird flight paths or affect their habitat?
Will proposed developments increase developmental creep that could attract other types of development that might be more likely to have an impact on the site?

The screening is summarised in the following table which lists the Character Areas together with the findings of the screening in relation to each of the Natura 2000 sites.

SPA and SAC Sites Churnet Valley Masterplan – Character Areas and Opportunity Sites	South Pennine Moors SAC	Peak District Dales SAC	Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA	West Midlands Mosses SAC	Cannock Chase SAC	Pasturefields Salt Marsh SAC	Oak Mere SAC	River Dee and Bala Lake SAC	Dee Estuary SAC	Manchester Mosses SAC	Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem & Cadney Mosses (SAC)	Mottey Meadows SAC	River Mease SAC	Dee Estuary SPA (and Ramsar Site)	Mersey Estuary SPA(and Ramsar Site)
Rudyard Lake • Rudyard	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Peak District Fringe • Anzio Camp • Blackbrook • Meerbrook • Tittesworth with visitor centre • Waterhouses	?	?	?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leek	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Central • Cheddleton • Consall • Ipstones	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

SPA and SAC Sites Churnet Valley Masterplan – Character Areas and Opportunity Sites	South Pennine Moors SAC	Peak District Dales SAC	Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA	West Midlands Mosses SAC	Cannock Chase SAC	Pasturefields Salt Marsh SAC	Oak Mere SAC	River Dee and Bala Lake SAC	Dee Estuary SAC	Manchester Mosses SAC	Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem & Cadney Mosses (SAC)	Mottey Meadows SAC	River Mease SAC	Dee Estuary SPA (and Ramsar Site)	Mersey Estuary SPA(and Ramsar Site)
Froghall • Froghall • Kingsley • Whiston	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moneystone • Kingsley Holt • Oakamoor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alton • Alton • Alton Towers Resort	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cheadle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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