



Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report

February 2013
(Update of the July 2012 Screening Report)

FENLAND CORE STRATEGY ('PROPOSED SUBMISSION')
HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT
SCREENING REPORT
February 2013
(Update of the July 2011 and July 2012 Screening Reports)

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
The Requirement To Undertake Habitats Regulations Assessment Of Development Plans	
Stages of the Habitats Regulations Assessment	
2. Methodology	5
Screening Assessment Tasks	
3. Identification of Sites	6
N2k Sites To Be Considered	
N2k Site Baseline Information	
N2K Maps	
4. Vulnerabilities of Qualifying Features	11
Vulnerabilities	
Sites and Their Vulnerabilities	
5. Key Components of the Emerging Fenland Core Strategy	19
Introduction	
Summary of Policies	
6. Assessment of the Key Components of the Core Strategy	21
Introduction	
Likelihood of individual policies resulting in significant effects on N2K sites	
Summary of likelihood of significant effects on N2K sites	
7. Other Relevant Plans And Projects	26
Other Relevant Plans and Projects	
8. Conclusions And Next Steps	27
Screening Assessment Of Spatial Options For Growth	
Screening Assessment Of Spatially Generic Core Strategy Policies	
Next Steps	

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Screening matrix

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report is a Stage 1 (Screening) of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the Proposed Submission Fenland Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD). This HRA Screening Report sets out the findings of the Screening stage to determine whether the Core Strategy, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant adverse effect on a Natura 2000 site, and thus whether full Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2 of HRA) is required.
- 1.2. This report is a February 2013 update of the previously published July 2011 and July 2012 versions of the Screening Report and therefore takes into account the latest draft Core Strategy (Proposed Submission version) of February 2013.

THE REQUIREMENT TO UNDERTAKE HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS

- 1.3. The requirement to undertake HRA of development plans was confirmed by government in 2006, following a European Court of Justice ruling. In short, it must be demonstrated that the implementation of a development plan (such as the Fenland Core Strategy) would not adversely affect the integrity of Natura 2000 sites.

Natura 2000 sites

- 1.4. Natura 2000 is a Europe-wide network of sites of international importance for nature conservation established under the European Council Directive 'on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora' (92/43/EEC; 'Habitats Directive').
- 1.5. The network comprises 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.
- 1.6. The Government also expects candidate SACs (cSACs), potential SPAs (pSPAs), and Ramsar sites to be included within the HRA. Ramsar sites support internationally important wetland habitats and are listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention, 1971). This report treats all types of sites named in these two paragraphs as being of equal status for the purpose of this Screening report, and where the word Natura 2000 (N2K) is used it should be interpreted to cover all such types of sites.

STAGES OF THE HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT

- 1.7. The HRA process is generally divided into three stages:

Stage 1 – Screening	Identification of sites Description of the development plan Identification of potential effects on identified sites Assessment of the effects
------------------------	--

	Decide whether there are 'no likely significant effects' or 'likely / unknown effects'. If the former, the process ends. If the latter, move to Stage 2.
Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment	<p>Gather more information</p> <p>Predict impacts</p> <p>Identify and consider alternative options, and assess whether alternative options would have any adverse effects on integrity</p> <p>If it can be concluded there are no longer any adverse effects on integrity, then the process ends.</p> <p>If likely effects still remain, define and evaluate mitigation measures and move to Stage 3.</p>
Stage 3 – If adverse impact remains, assessment of need / mitigation	<p>Identify 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI)</p> <p>Identify potential compensatory measures</p> <p>It should be noted that the Regulations prohibit a competent authority, such as Fenland District Council, from undertaking or giving consent to any plan or project unless the appropriate assessment concluded that it would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of a site, or specific criteria are met and the Secretary of State has been informed. Full details around these courses of action are set out in the Regulations.</p> <p>(Note: Stage 3 should be avoided if at all possible. If it is reached, it is extremely difficult to 'pass'. In all likelihood, if stage 3 is reached, the development plan is unlikely to be able to be taken forward in its present form.)</p>

1.8. It is important to note that the stages described above must be undertaken with the rigorous application of the precautionary principle. It therefore requires those undertaking the exercise to be confident that the plan will not have a significant impact on these conservation objectives. **Where uncertainty or doubt remains, an adverse impact should be assumed.**

1.9. The duty to undertake a HRA falls on the 'competent authority'. In the case of the Fenland Core Strategy, this is Fenland District Council.

Consultation with Natural England

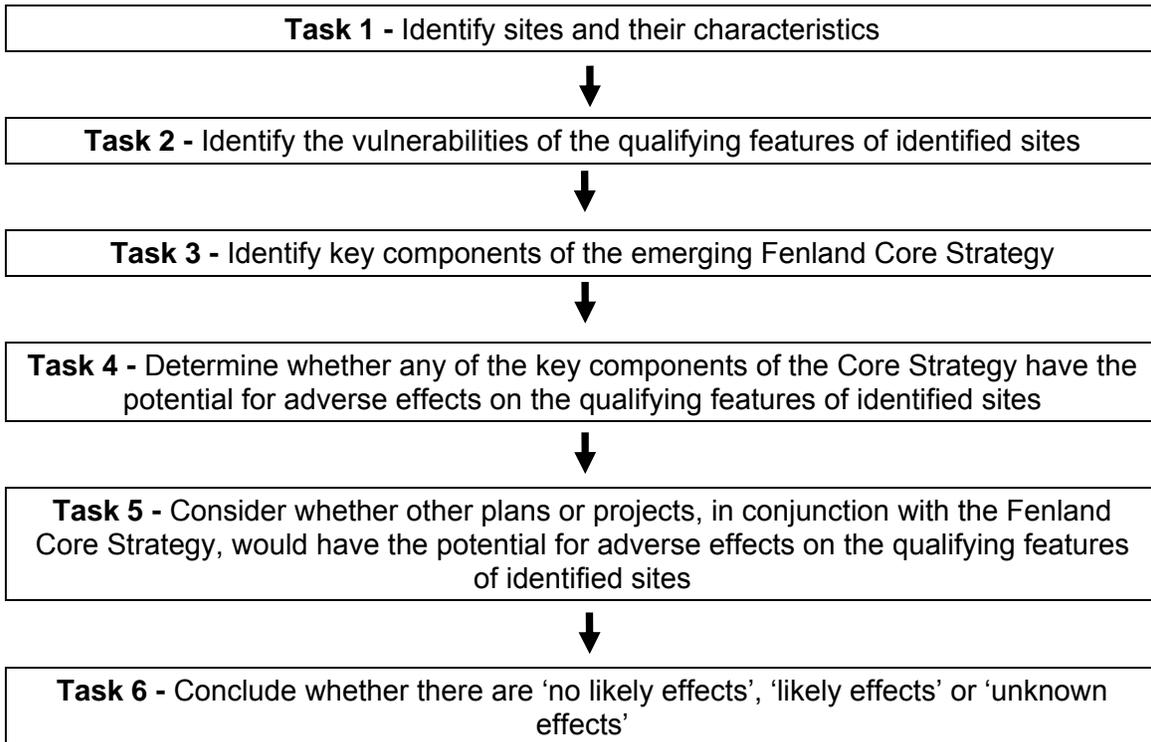
1.10. Natural England (NE) is the statutory nature conservation body who will assist in obtaining the necessary information, help agree the process, and work with the competent authority on agreeing the outcomes and mitigation proposals.

1.11. Regulation 85B(2) in the Amended Habitat Regulations 2007 requires plan-making authorities to consult the appropriate nature conservation body regarding the assessment 'within such reasonable time as the plan-making authority may specify'. The July 2011 version, July 2012 version and this latest version of the Screening Report have each been sent to Natural England to obtain their formal response. Its views at the two earlier stages have been considered and taken into account in refining this Screening Report, though in general terms Natural England was supportive at those two earlier stages. Natural England has not indicated, on the basis of the two earlier versions of the Screening Report, that a Stage 2 'Appropriate Assessment' is required.

2. METHODOLOGY

SCREENING ASSESSMENT TASKS

2.1. The following diagram illustrates the tasks involved in the screening process



2.2. This Screening Report takes each of those tasks in turn, and explains briefly the methodology undertaken in each case.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF SITES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS (Task 1)

3.1. First, we must identify the N2K sites within or adjacent to Fenland with the potential to be affected by the Fenland Core Strategy. In line with the precautionary principle, N2K sites lying wholly or partially within Fenland's administrative boundary and a 15km buffer area around it are included to reflect the fact that the Core Strategy may affect sites outside the plan area.

3.2. The following tables identify the sites:

Within (or at least partially within) Fenland District

Site Name	SAC	SPA	Ramsar
Nene Washes	✓	✓	✓
Ouse Washes	✓	✓	✓

Outside Fenland District, but within 15 km

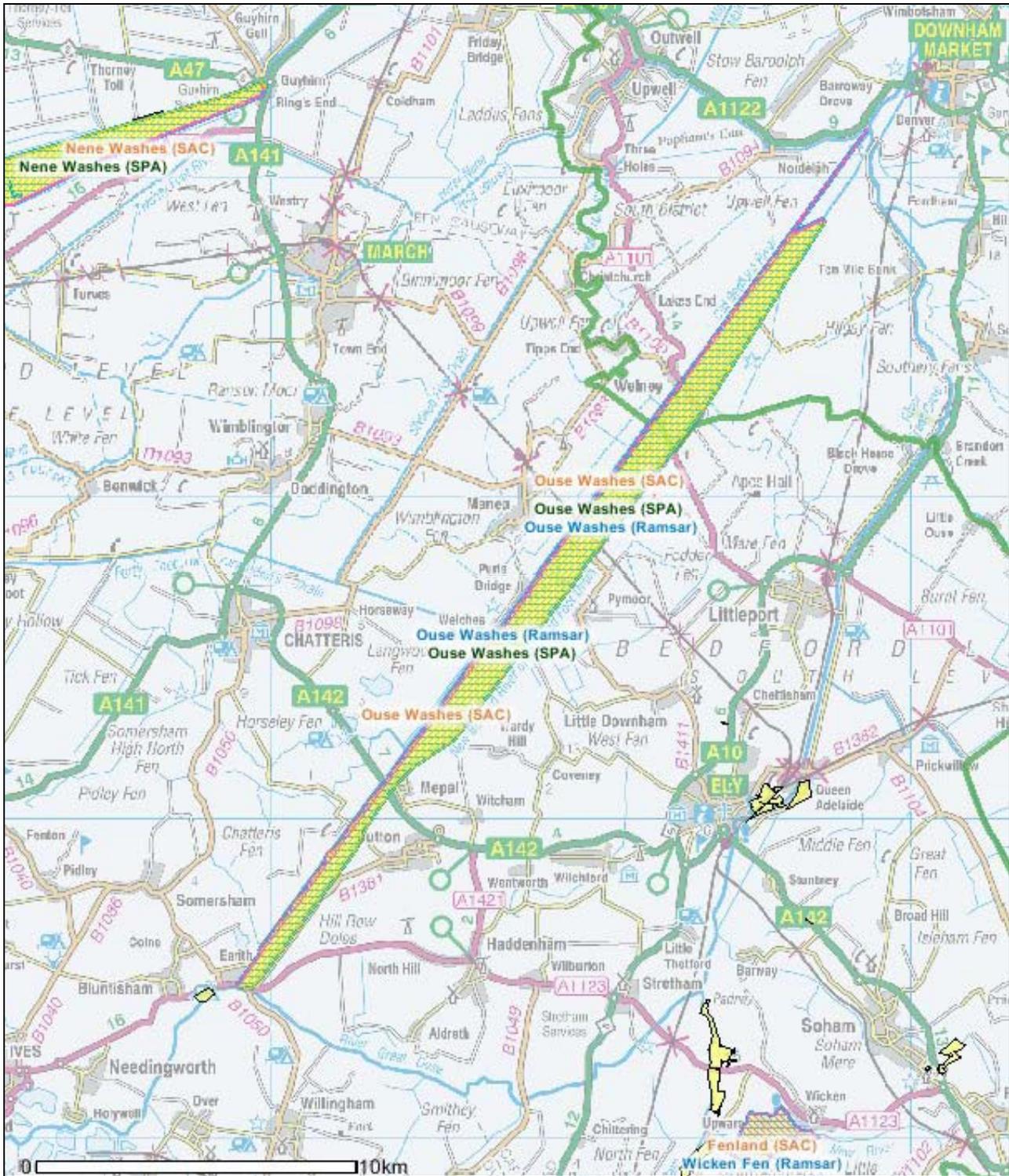
Site Name	SAC	SPA	Ramsar
Orton Pit (Peterborough)	✓		
The Wash & North Norfolk Coast (Various Districts)	✓		
The Wash (Various Districts)		✓	✓
Woodwalton Fen (Huntingdonshire) (and forms part of a set of sites collectively known as Fenland SAC)	✓		✓

3.3. A map identifying the above sites can be found on the following pages.

3.4. There are a number of sites not much further beyond 15km away from the Fenland District boundary, such as the Breckland SPA/SAC and the Portholme SAC adjacent to Huntingdon. However, all these localities have growth-led core strategies considerably further advanced and with their own HRA process undertaken (which concluded no harm). There is also no known impact pathways which exist between Fenland and these protected areas. It is not, therefore, considered necessary to investigate any additional sites other than those listed in the above two tables.

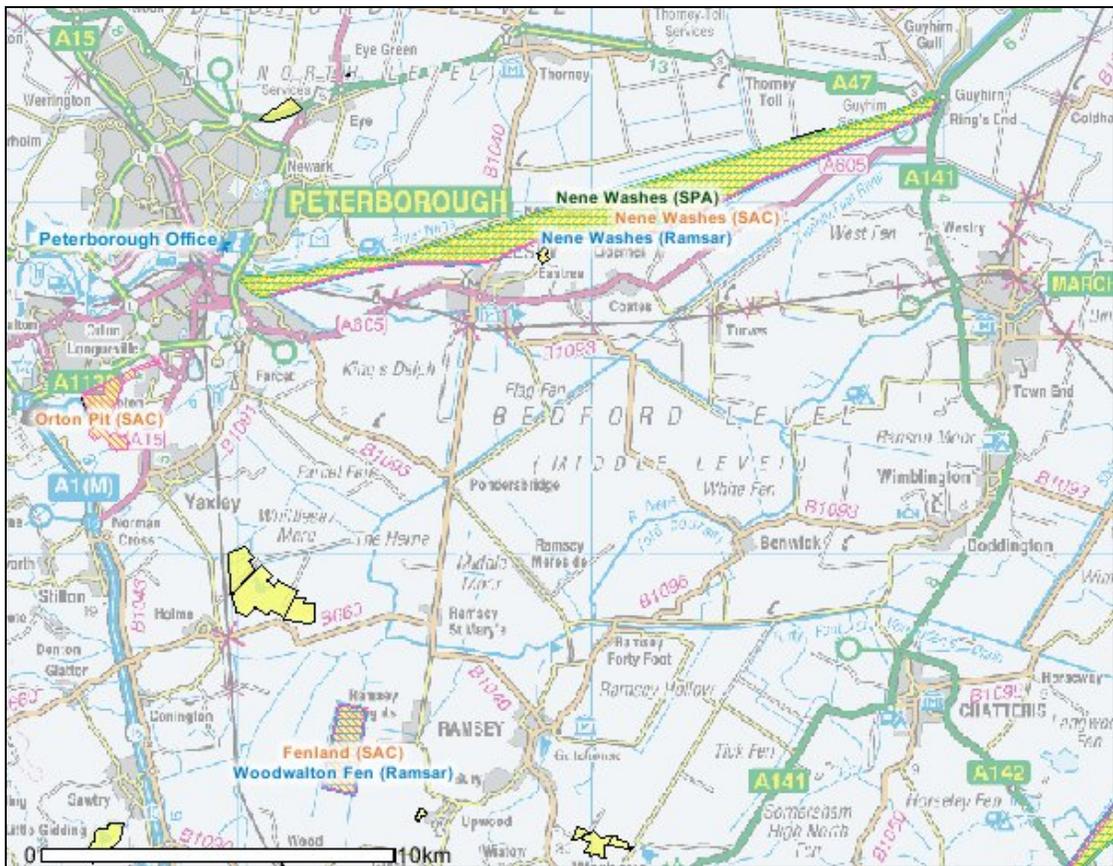
Baseline Information

3.5. To enable a screening to be undertaken, the description and information on each site has been collated. This information is set out as part of Appendix A. Such information is then used to determine whether the policies and proposals of the Fenland Core Strategy will lead to deterioration, disturbance or other negative impact on the designated features of those sites. The core information was sourced from Natural England and Joint Nature Conservation Committee website, plus previously undertaken HRA work for neighbouring districts' Core Strategies (namely Peterborough, Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire) and HRA work associated with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste development plans.

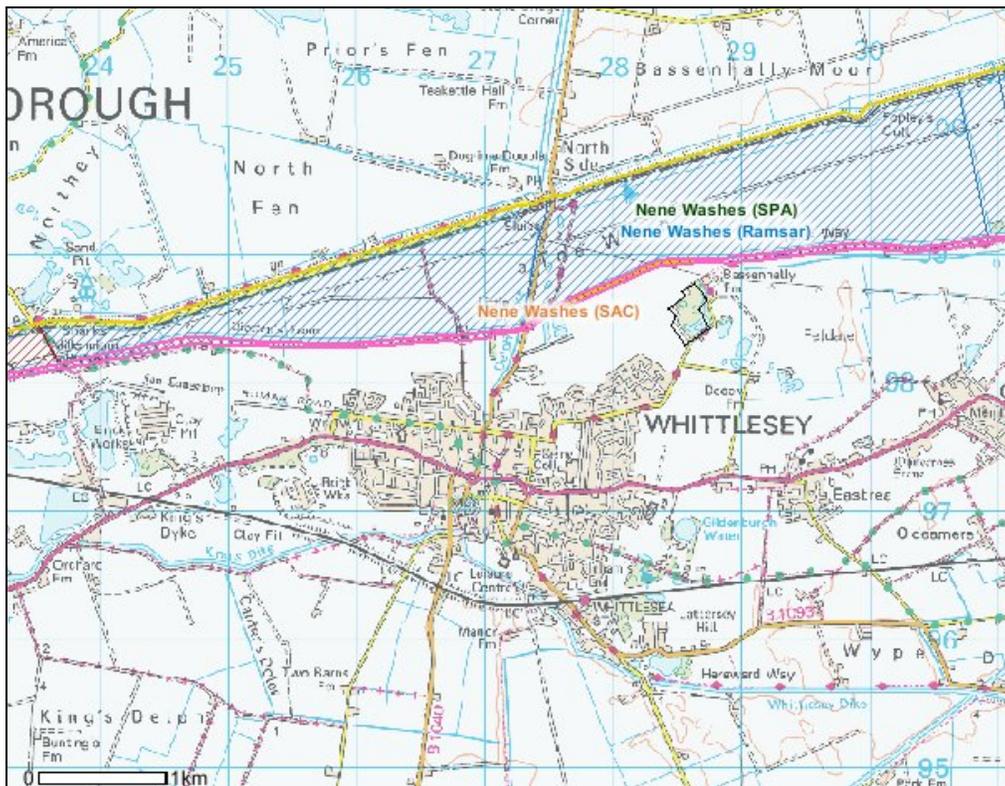


Map of Ouse Washes (SAC, SPA and Ramsar), with other types of wildlife sites also identified by yellow shading

Source: <http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/> (16.6.11)



Above: Map of Nene Washes (SAC, SPA and Ramsar), Orton Pit (SAC), Fenland (SAC)/Woodwalton Fen (Ramsar), with other types of wildlife sites also identified by yellow shading. Below: Map of Nene Washes in relation to Whittlesey. Source: <http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/> (16.6.11)



4. VULNERABILITIES OF QUALIFYING FEATURES (Task 2)

Vulnerabilities

- 4.1. To help assess any likely effect, it is important to set out what the vulnerabilities of each N2K site are. These vary from site-to-site. However, to simplify (but not undermine) the screening process a number of generic categories of vulnerability is often used in HRA work, and this has been done in this report.
- 4.2. The following generic vulnerability categories are sourced from the Peterborough Core Strategy HRA work (which in turn were agreed with Natural England), and covering the following six categories:
- Physical Habitat Loss
 - Physical Damage
 - Non-Physical Disturbance
 - Contamination / Pollution
 - Water Quantity
 - Biological Disturbance
- 4.3. The table below can be used to highlight which sites under investigation as part of this screening study are 'vulnerable' to the broad vulnerabilities outlined, from which we can subsequently assess whether such vulnerabilities are impacted as a result of proposals in the Core Strategy.

Vulnerability Overarching Category and Ref No.	Vulnerability Sub Category and Ref No.	Commentary / Assumptions
<p>1. Physical habitat loss:</p> <p>A common Conservation Objective for N2K sites in general is to maintain the extent of the designated habitats or habitats upon which designated species depend.</p> <p>Therefore any land take within an N2K site would be likely to have an adverse impact upon integrity. This may also relate to non-designated habitat features where land take beyond site boundaries results in the loss of foraging resource for designated bird or bat species.</p>	(A) Removal	N2K sites are protected under European (SACs; SPAs) or international (Ramsar sites) law, and the Fenland Core Strategy is not promoting development within N2K site boundaries. As such, direct physical loss through removal of habitat/species for house building, employment sites, related infrastructure etc is deemed unlikely.
	(B) Smothering	N2K sites are protected under European (SACs; SPAs) or international (Ramsar sites) law, and the Fenland Core Strategy is not promoting development within N2K site boundaries. As such, direct physical loss through building over and smothering is deemed unlikely.

<p>2. Physical damage</p> <p>Physical damage may occur from on-site or off-site activities. Dewatering or dredging activities and associated impacts on water levels, may affect wetland stability/composition, and changes in sediment dynamics could result in damage to marginal estuarine habitats for example. After-use that increases public access (including recreational activities) could also result in damage through trampling. Damage may also relate to the removal of habitat adjacent to or within the vicinity of a designated habitat, adversely affecting that habitat, for example, through a reduction in buffering potential or due to changes in local hydrology.</p>	(A) Change in land management practice	Changes in land management practices as a result of the Fenland Core Strategy assumed to relate only to allocations for development or change of use. Therefore, only an allocation within the boundary of N2K sites is assumed to be capable of impacting vulnerable sites. As there are no such allocations, physical damage as a result in changes to land use management due to proposals in the Fenland Core Strategy is deemed unlikely.
	(B) Prevention of natural erosion (e.g. through coast or flood defences)	Improvements to flood defences are not prescribed by proposals in the Fenland Core Strategy. Additionally, Fenland does not have a coastal boundary. Therefore, physical damage from prevention of natural erosion is deemed unlikely.
	(C) Water abstraction	Physical damage to N2K sites as a result of increased water abstraction could have the potential to impact any vulnerable N2K site at or downstream of an abstraction point. However, when granting new abstraction licences, the Environment Agency is required to undertake an appropriate assessment of the implications for N2K sites.
	(D) Recreational pressure	Medium or large scale housing development can be assumed to facilitate local increases in population and hence increase the potential for physical damage (e.g. trampling; erosion) from recreational pressure on locally accessible open spaces, including N2K sites if they exist locally. The theoretical potential for adverse impacts due to recreation can, therefore, be initially assumed to exist for all vulnerable N2K sites within 15km of the Fenland boundary. However, as demonstrated in the East of England RSS Appropriate Assessment and the East Cambridgeshire Core Strategy Screening Report ¹ it is generally assumed that additional recreational pressure from major new housing sites can be discounted if such a site is more than 5km away. In addition, these general assumptions can be modified by any available site specific information about factors affecting the likelihood of the site to attract recreation e.g. availability of (or proposed provision of new) alternative recreation spaces, site accessibility, site attractiveness and so on.

¹ See: http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ldf/core_strategy_submission_habitats_directive_assess_81814.pdf

<p>3. Non-physical disturbance</p> <p>Disturbance impacts may occur either from on-site or off-site activities. Off-site land uses may lead to species disturbance, due to noise, vibration or light pollution. The visual presence of humans at recreation sites, the noise they make or the presence of pet dogs may also cause disturbance, which may deter designated species from using certain habitat areas on an N2K site, deter prey species or reduce reproductive success.</p>	<p>(A) Noise / visual presence e.g. from recreation, industry or transport</p>	<p>As above for 'Physical disturbance – recreational pressure'. However disturbance from other forms of development within Fenland was assumed to only have the potential to impact N2K sites within 500m of the Fenland administrative boundary, rather than up to 15km for disturbance due to recreational pressure.</p>
<p>4. Contamination/pollution</p> <p>Contamination of habitats may occur from a number of sources on or off site, and may be toxic or non-toxic. Sources of ground water contamination at some distance from a site may potentially affect its integrity, depending on the presence and strength of pathways between the source and N2K site. Wetland habitats may be particularly vulnerable to pollution with surface or ground water potentially transporting contaminants over great distances. This can have wide reaching impacts, for example through reductions in prey species (aquatic invertebrates, amphibians and fish which may be particularly vulnerable), bioaccumulation of toxins in the food chain or eutrophication and increased dominance of algal communities at the expense of higher plant communities (with resultant knock-on effects).</p> <p>Air pollution may also comprise a significant negative impact. In the past half century smoke and sulphur dioxide pollution has declined significantly since the Clean Air Act (1956) was introduced, but pollutants from motor vehicles have come to</p>	<p>(A) Water pollution e.g. from agricultural runoff, domestic or industrial sources</p>	<p>Point pollution discharges to water are regulated by the Environment Agency and it is assumed they would not be permitted if they posed a threat to the integrity of an N2K site. The development-related water pollution risks can therefore assumed to be:</p> <p>a) Overloading of combined sewers (where present) during storm surges, leading to untreated wastewater flowing into water courses; or</p> <p>b) Contaminated surface run-off from roads and built-up areas discharging directly to watercourses or groundwater (where combined sewer system not present).</p>
	<p>(B) Air pollution e.g. from road traffic</p>	<p>For deposition of air pollutants associated with transport, the Highways Agency guideline measure of 200 metres from a road is used. In the absence of specific information, increases in road traffic are assumed to be the main cause of additional air pollution arising from the development options.</p> <p>The issue of diffuse pollution is more problematic where a direct source – pathway – receptor cannot be identified. This can only be properly addressed at the national and International level.</p>
	<p>(C) Nutrient enrichment</p>	<p>Point pollution discharges to water are regulated by the Environment Agency and it is assumed they would not be permitted if they posed a threat to the integrity of an N2K site. Diffuse pollution from agricultural sources can also be a threat to biodiversity sites but this can be</p>

<p>prominence. The impacts of nitrogen (N) and nitrogen oxides (NOx) deposition on vegetation growth are of particular concern, with other pollutants including sulphur dioxide, ozone and particulate matter. Air pollution has been linked to ill health amongst trees, particularly over mature specimens, and also a failure to regenerate, either from coppice, pollard or seed. Due to species specific sensitivities it may also cause changes in species assemblages as seen, for example, in lichens. These changes may result in the reduced condition and integrity of N2K sites.</p> <p>For deposition of air pollutants associated with transport, the Highways Agency guideline measure of 200 metres is often applied.</p> <p>Other sources of contamination may include dust from adjacent works and increased sediment loads in water courses.</p>	<p>(D) Changes in water quality (e.g. changes in water temperature due to industrial cooling; changes in turbidity due to flood defences)</p>	<p>assumed to be unaffected by proposals in the Fenland Core Strategy. The main development related nutrient enrichment risk can therefore be assumed to be overloading of combined sewers (where present) during storm surges, leading to untreated wastewater flowing into water courses.</p> <p>The Fenland Core Strategy can be assumed to be unlikely to result in changes to thermal regimes and resulting impacts on N2K sites.</p> <p>Improvements to flood defences are not prescribed by the Core Strategy. Additionally, Fenland does not have a coastal boundary. Therefore, non toxic contamination of N2K sites caused by changes in turbidity can be deemed unlikely.</p>
<p>5. Water quantity</p> <p>Decreased (for example as a result of abstraction) or increased (for example due to an impeded water flow or following restoration) ground or surface water levels may impact upon designated habitats depending on the hydraulic continuity between an activity or operation and the N2K site. This could impact upon the integrity of the site by causing alterations in the species composition or reducing the extent of susceptible qualifying habitats or species.</p> <p>Decreasing water levels may be a particular problem during drought years, given the increased pressure on water resources from</p>	<p>(A) Changes in water quantity e.g. change in salinity or concentration of non-toxic contaminants due to water abstraction</p>	<p>Non-toxic contamination to N2K sites as a result of increased water abstraction could have the potential to impact any vulnerable N2K site at or downstream of an abstraction point. However, when granting new abstraction licences, the Environment Agency is required to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment of the implications for N2K sites.</p>

<p>domestic users. Falling water levels in water courses and water bodies would have direct impacts, in particular on wetland habitats. Increased seasonal variation in water levels, for example with drought and periods of increased abstraction, may affect marginal habitats necessary for target species. Also, reduced volumes of water would increase the concentration of any contaminants.</p> <p>Any significant or long term changes in ground water levels may also affect wooded sites, either having a direct effect on species (canopy, basal flora or epiphytes) or indirectly by increasing stress and vulnerability to other factors (such as re-pollarding or air pollution, and particularly for mature/over mature trees).</p>		
<p>6. Biological disturbance</p> <p>Introduced or invasive species (with associated problems including out-competition and reductions in biodiversity) have been identified as a potential threat to N2K sites. Examples include vulnerability to encroachment of invasive scrub and trees due to cessation of traditional grazing management, or the introduction of invasive species from public and private gardens (after-use). Any activity which led to the introduction, or increased abundance, of potential invasive species could result in an adverse impact on the integrity of a N2K site.</p>	<p>(A) Introduction of non-native species</p>	<p>Introduction of non-native species is considered unlikely to occur as a result of implementation of the Core Strategy.</p>
	<p>(B) Selective extraction of species</p>	<p>Medium or large scale housing development is assumed to potentially facilitate local increases in population and hence the potential for increased recreational activities such as fishing. This has the potential to lead to selective extraction of species from water bodies within N2K sites. The potential for additional fishing or other activities resulting in species extraction could initially be classed as uncertain for all aquatic N2K sites within 15km of Fenland. This is due to the fact that, initially, it was unclear whether the N2K sites currently support fishing (or other species extraction) activities, or are likely to do so in the future. This point is explored further in this Screening Report</p>

4.4. Using the above information, the table on the next three pages sets out the specific vulnerabilities of the specific sites investigated as part of this Habitats Regulations Assessment.

Sites and their vulnerability

Site	Vulnerability Overarching Category and Ref No														Commentary
	1 Physical habitat loss		2 Physical damage				3 Non physical disturbance	4 Contamination /pollution				5 Water quantity	6 Biological disturbance		
	Vulnerability Sub Category and Ref No.														
	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(A)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(A)	(A)	(B)	
Removal	Smothering	Land Management	Prevention of erosion	Water abstraction	Recreational pressure	Noise / visual	Water pollution	Air pollution	Nutrient enrichment	Water quality (eg cooling)	Water quantity	Non native species	Extraction of species		
Nene Washes SAC	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	The site is currently threatened by abstraction from several sources including angling lakes and SSSI's. Water levels are frequently maintained by nutrient rich water from sewage treatment works. Off-site changes in hydrology have the potential to affect the site's integrity. The site is particularly dependent upon the maintenance of suitable water level and quality and is therefore vulnerable to abstraction, and agricultural drainage and run-off.
Nene Washes SPA	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	As above
Nene Washes Ramsar	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	As above
Ouse Washes SAC	x	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	The Ouse Washes are extremely vulnerable to changes in hydrology and the site is currently suffering from eutrophication and changes in water quality as a result of agricultural run-off and the input of water with high nutrient levels from sewage treatment works. Off-site changes in hydrology have the potential to affect the site's integrity.
Ouse Washes SPA	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	As above
Ouse Washes Ramsar	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	As above

Site	Vulnerability Overarching Category and Ref No														Commentary
	1 Physical habitat loss		2 Physical damage				3 Non physical disturbance	4 Contamination /pollution				5 Water quantity	6 Biological disturbance		
	Vulnerability Sub Category and Ref No.														
	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(A)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(A)	(A)	(B)	
Removal	Smothering	Land Management	Prevention of erosion	Water abstraction	Recreational pressure	Noise / visual	Water pollution	Air pollution	Nutrient enrichment	Water quality (eg cooling)	Water quantity	Non native species	Extraction of species		
Orton Pit SAC	x	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	<p>The site is vulnerable to natural succession and requires regular management of ponds to retain the early successional stages favoured by both great crested newt and vegetation of the Chara spp., for which the site is designated. In addition there is a variety of terrestrial habitats such as grassland and woodland, suitable for the various life stages of great crested newt.</p>
The Wash & North Norfolk Coast SAC	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	<p>This site is vulnerable to changes in the physical environment through activities such as dredging and coastal protection works which restrict natural processes upon which the designated features are dependent.</p> <p>Seal populations are vulnerable to disturbance and hydrological changes.</p> <p>The site is potentially vulnerable to future gas exploration although the implications of such an activity upon the site's integrity are unclear.</p>
The Wash SPA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	<p>This site is vulnerable to dredging, coastal protection works and other factors which could affect the hydrological regime and inter relationships of habitats upon which the bird populations are dependent.</p> <p>There are two Air Weapons Ranges on this site owned by the MOD which have the potential to disturb birds although their management is currently considerate to nature conservation concerns.</p> <p>The site is potentially vulnerable to future gas</p>

Site	Vulnerability Overarching Category and Ref No														Commentary
	1 Physical habitat loss		2 Physical damage				3 Non physical disturbance	4 Contamination /pollution				5 Water quantity	6 Biological disturbance		
	Vulnerability Sub Category and Ref No.														
	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(A)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(A)	(A)	(B)	
Removal	Smothering	Land Management	Prevention of erosion	Water abstraction	Recreational pressure	Noise / visual	Water pollution	Air pollution	Nutrient enrichment	Water quality (eg cooling)	Water quantity	Non native species	Extraction of species		
															exploration although the implications of such an activity upon the sites integrity are unclear.
The Wash Ramsar	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	<p>This site is vulnerable to dredging, coastal protection works and other factors which could alter the hydrology of the site and affect the fragile inter relationships between habitats.</p> <p>Bird and seal populations are vulnerable to disturbance.</p> <p>The site is potentially vulnerable to future gas exploration although the implications of such an activity upon the sites integrity are unclear.</p>
Woodwalton Fen Ramsar	x	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	<p>This site is vulnerable to vegetation succession and requires management to retain fen characteristics.</p> <p>Hydrological changes associated with off-site agricultural drainage and land reclaim threatens the sites designated features.</p>
Woodwalton Fen (forming part of Fenland) SAC	x	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	<p>The site has suffered loss of fen habitat as a result of encroachment of woodland and scrub. In addition nutrification from agricultural run-off and abstraction from the underlying aquifer.</p>

5. KEY COMPONENTS OF THE EMERGING FENLAND CORE STRATEGY (Task 3)

Introduction

- 5.1. The Fenland Core Strategy is reaching its final stage and is considered sound by Fenland District Council. It is of course, prior to its adoption, subject to the outcome of the final round of consultation and associated independent examination. However, it is at a sufficiently advanced stage to determine the likelihood of adverse effects arising based on the policies it is currently (February 2013) promoting.
- 5.2. This following section describes the proposals of the Core Strategy, which will subsequently (in Task 4) be considered against the vulnerabilities of the sites identified in the previous sections.

Evolution of broad elements of the Core Strategy

- 5.3. The current planning policy framework for Fenland relies upon many policies that date back to the Local Plan adopted in 1993. The replacement for these policies is primarily in the form of a Core Strategy.
- 5.4. Considerable time and investment has been made in producing the necessary background studies to support the new Core Strategy. Recent announcements from Central Government have endorsed a more community focused approach to strategic planning, encompassing social, economic and environmental aspects. Fenland District Council is promoting a pragmatic and flexible approach to planning in Fenland in order to encourage sustainable growth and deliver the necessary infrastructure improvements to improve the quality of life of not only new residents but the existing community.
- 5.5. The Council is proposing a single all embracing Core Strategy, which contains 19 policies that will provide a strategic context and enable all development proposals to be considered against important criteria. It will also be supported by a Policies Map, a key diagram for the District and a Key Diagram for each of the four market towns, which collectively identifies specific and broad areas of growth in which development will generally be permitted.

Proposed Spatial Option and Growth Targets

- 5.6. The Core Strategy focuses its growth on the district's four market towns. Its housing growth target matches that as agreed in the now revoked Regional Spatial Strategy, albeit tested again via up to date local evidence.
- 5.7. The approach of the Core Strategy means that only one core Local Plan document is required which is a short, concise and user friendly development plan document that increases the level of understanding and awareness among all of our stakeholders.
- 5.8. A summary of the 19 policies is set out on the next page.

Fenland Core Strategy – Summary of Policies (as at Feb 2013). See Core Strategy for Details.

	Policy	Summary
Overarching Strategy And Targets	CS1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development	A general policy as required to be included by central government to complement the National Planning Policy Framework
	CS2 – Facilitating Health and Wellbeing of Fenland Residents	Policy requiring developers to take full account of health issues when preparing development proposals
	CS3 - Spatial Strategy & Settlement Hierarchy	Policy determining which towns and villages fall into what category of the settlement hierarchy. Development and investment will be prioritised to those places higher up the hierarchy.
	CS4 – Housing	Policy which sets the housing growth targets (11,000 new homes). Policy directs the majority of growth to the four market towns, plus other criteria.
	CS5 – Meeting Housing Needs	Policy setting affordable housing policy. Policy also sets out criteria for meeting wider housing need, including Gypsy and Traveller related development.
	CS6 – Employment, Tourism, Community Facilities and Retail	Policy to promote employment growth, with a target for new jobs and release of employment land. Criteria are used to determine appropriate types of employment development. Policy also protects community facilities, promotes tourism and directs new retail growth to market town centres.
Proposals for Places	CS7 – Urban Extensions	Policy setting out a number of important criteria (mix of uses, schools, open spaces, landscaping etc) which every urban extension should meet.
	CS8 – Wisbech	Policies and Proposals specific for Wisbech.
	CS9 – March	Policies and Proposals specific for March.
	CS10 – Chatteris	Policies and Proposals specific for Chatteris.
	CS11 – Whittlesey	Policies and Proposals specific for Whittlesey.
	CS12 – Rural Areas Development Policy	Policy specifically for rural areas, covering matters such as appropriate development, re-use of rural buildings and replacement dwellings.
Delivering Infrastructure	CS13 – Supporting & Mitigating the Impact of a Growing District	Policy confirming the need for infrastructure to be provided alongside development, as well as an expectation for developers to contribute towards infrastructure provision.
	CS14 – Responding to Climate Change and Managing the Risk of Flooding	Policy sets out an expectation for development to contribute to minimising resource consumption. Criteria are also set out in relation to how renewable energy proposals will be considered. Policy confirms the approach the Council will take in relation to Flood Risk and Drainage matters.
	CS15 – Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network	Policy covering strategic as well as site specific transport matters.
Environment Quality	CS16 – Building Quality	An important policy to ensure all development proposals are of the highest quality, with criteria covering matters such as heritage, biodiversity, local character, waste collection, amenity issues and designing out crime.
	CS17 – Community Safety	Policy setting criteria to ensure new development helps facilitate safe communities.
	CS18 – Historic Environment	Policy with criteria to preserve or enhance historic assets
	CS19 – Natural Environment	Policy with criteria to protect the natural environment

6. ASSESSMENT OF THE KEY COMPONENTS OF THE CORE STRATEGY (and the potential for adverse effects) (Task 4)

Introduction

- 6.1. An assessment has been undertaken to identify the likely significant effects of the emerging Fenland Core Strategy on the integrity of N2K sites within the Fenland District boundary and a 15km buffer area surrounding it.
- 6.2. This analysis first takes each of the 19 **proposed policies in turn**, and the conclusions are summarised below. Appendix 1 is crucial to this process and this sets out the likely effect on **each site in turn**. Appendix 1 sets out:
 - Each N2K site's qualifying features.
 - The types of deterioration or disturbance to which those features are vulnerable.
 - A summary of the effects that the Fenland Core Strategy DPD may have on each N2K site, and whether these effects are likely to be significant in relation to the qualifying features for which each site is designated.
- 6.3. The potential for other plans or projects to produce in-combination effects with those described in the Screening Matrix is discussed in Chapter 7.
- 6.4. The screening assessment of the policies summarised in Chapter 5 is as follows:

Table 6.1 Likelihood of individual policies resulting in significant effects on N2K sites

	Policy	Screening Assessment
Overarching Strategy And Targets	CS1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development	Whilst this policy promotes development, it is worded carefully so that only 'sustainable' development which complies with the NPPF and Local Plan is supported. In itself, this policy cannot be seen to have any potential impact on any protected N2K site. The policy therefore can be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.
	CS2 – Facilitating Health and Wellbeing of Fenland Residents	This non spatially specific policy is designed to improve the health and wellbeing of Fenland residents through creating new development which positively contributes to creating a healthy, safe and equitable living environment. Whilst it largely sign-posts the reader to other detailed policies, some elements are important to this Screening Report. In particular, the policy talks about the need to create flourishing communities, with high residential amenity and good access to recreation and leisure. In doing so, this should reduce the need for residents of such new communities having to seek recreation and leisure opportunities elsewhere, thus minimising recreational impact on N2K sites. The policy can, therefore, be seen to have a positive impact on protecting N2K sites. The policy therefore can be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.
	CS3 - Spatial Strategy & Settlement Hierarchy	As this policy neither sets any growth targets, nor identifies sites for development, it cannot be seen to have any potential impact on any protected N2K site. The policy therefore can be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.
	CS4 – Housing	This policy sets the housing growth targets for 2011-31, and directs the majority of that growth to the four market towns. The screening of this policy is in two parts – the overarching target of growth and, secondly, the distribution of that growth.

		<p>Overarching growth target: The growth target (around 11,000 homes, or 550 homes per annum) is in line with the now revoked Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (2001-21) target and the draft (but now abandoned) RSS Review (2011-2031). Both the revoked RSS and more recent draft RSS have been subject to extensive Appropriate Assessment work and found, in general terms and on information available at the regional level, there to be no harm to protected sites as a result of such levels of growth in Fenland.</p> <p>As such, for 11,000 homes, there is no known local reasoning or evidence to suggest that the previously agreed and tested RSS targets should be subject to further Appropriate Assessment testing. This policy can, therefore, be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.</p> <p>Distribution of Growth: By directing the growth to the market towns broadly means that the potential for negative impact associated with the vulnerabilities for which the N2K sites are prone to are minimised, because three of the four market towns are some considerable distance away from N2K sites (5km or more).</p> <p>However, Whittlesey is within 1km of the boundary of the Nene Washes SAC / SPA / Ramsar. For Whittlesey, the growth target is 1,000 homes in CS4 (down from 1,250-1,950 target range in the July 2011 version of the draft Core Strategy, and down from 1,100 target in the July 2012 version), which could be assumed to accommodate around 2,000-2,500 people. However, over the same period, Aecom's evidence² suggests Whittlesey's population will decline from 17,160 (2009) to 14,900 (2031) if no homes were built, a drop in population of around 2,260. As such, if the target for Whittlesey was achieved (i.e. 1,000 homes), the actual population of Whittlesey will remain broadly static. As such, it can reasonably be assumed that such a static population, combined with wider policy requirements set out in the plan (such as infrastructure, open space, etc), would have no material effect on the integrity of the Nene Washes site and thus this element can be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.</p> <p>(Note: see CS9 Whittlesey policy, below, which discusses where in Whittlesey growth should go, which is a different matter to the target for growth in Whittlesey set out under CS4)</p>
	CS5 – Meeting Housing Needs	This policy is, from a habitat and biodiversity perspective, negligible because it relates to the type of housing, not how much or where housing should go. As such this policy can be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.
	CS6 – Employment, Tourism, Community Facilities and Retail	This policy promotes economic growth (including tourism), but is not site specific other than to 'mirror' the general approach as established by policies CS3 and CS4. In essence, the policy is predominantly about ensuring that as part of the overall growth of housing appropriate amounts of job and retail opportunities are created alongside any population growth, with a clear focus on such provision in the market towns. There is, therefore, no reason to indicate that the economic growth as anticipated by this policy would have a detrimental effect on the vulnerabilities of the N2K sites. As such, as a standalone policy, it can be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.
Proposals for Places	CS7 – Urban Extensions	This policy is non-site specific, but rather provides detailed matters for urban extensions wherever they happen to be. In essence, the policy is about ensuring urban extensions provide all the detailed soft and hard infrastructure necessary to make the extension function properly, including open space provision (which will assist in residents, new and existing, using such sites for recreational activity rather than potentially using N2K sites for leisure activities). As such it can be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.

² See: <http://www.fenland.gov.uk/article/1718/Fenland-Neighbourhood-Planning-Vision>

CS8 – Wisbech	<p>This policy, and the associated map of locations of growth for Wisbech, identifies broadly where growth (housing and employment) will be located in the form of urban extensions to Wisbech. Wisbech is not close to a N2K site, the closest being the Nene Washes about 7km to the south west. The precise location of growth around Wisbech, therefore, is not sensitive to any N2K site, especially as the locations for growth identified will not reduce such a separation distance. As such the policy can be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.</p>
CS9 – March	<p>This policy, and the associated map of locations of growth for March, identifies where growth (housing and employment) will be located in the form of urban extensions to March. March is not very close to a N2K site, the closest being the Nene Washes about 4km to the north west. The precise location of growth around March, therefore, may be sensitive to that N2K site, especially if a location for growth would reduce such a separation distance. However, locations for growth identified are predominantly to the south and west i.e. broadly in the opposite direction from the N2K site. A broad location for growth is indicated to the north-west of March, but this is focussed on the existing employment area and would not reduce the separation distance between March and the Nene Washes. A Strategic Allocation is also located to the north-east of March, but this policy has a strong emphasis on the creation of high quality open space, which would help direct leisure and recreational activities away from N2K sites. As such, overall, the policy can be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.</p>
CS10 – Chatteris	<p>This policy, and the associated map of locations of growth for Chatteris, identifies where growth (housing and employment) will be located in the form of urban extensions to Chatteris. Chatteris is not close to a N2K site, the closest being the Ouse Washes which are over 5km away at the nearest point, in a south easterly direction. Whilst it is noted that the locations of growth around Chatteris may reduce that distance to around a 5km separation, such a distance remains considerable and thus can be regarded as not being sensitive to any N2K site. It is also worth noting that one of the three identified locations for growth has a particularly strong emphasis on the need to create significant public open space area, which should improve opportunities for recreational activity to take place within Chatteris rather than on N2K sites. As such the policy can be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.</p>
CS11 – Whittlesey	<p>This policy, and the associated map of locations of growth for Whittlesey, identifies where growth (housing and employment) will be located in the form of urban extensions to Whittlesey. Whittlesey is close to a N2K site, the closest being the Nene Washes which is about 250-300m away from the northern edge of the existing Whittlesey urban boundary. Thus, the location of proposed growth in Whittlesey is sensitive.</p> <p>An earlier emerging Core Strategy (July 2011) had three broad locations for growth at Whittlesey. The earlier Screening Report (July 2011) regarded that two of these, namely to the east and to the south west, were further away from the Nene Washes than large parts of the existing built up area, and therefore could be screened out (especially when considered in terms of the other policies in the plan on infrastructure and other consent regimes such as water and waste water).</p> <p>However, the third broad location for growth was to the north. The earlier Screening Report noted that this site would not reduce further the already short distance between the urban edge and the Nene Washes, but it will match it and will be of a relatively significant scale. In addition, the site was adjacent to the B1040 which cuts right through the middle of the Nene Washes (which is not the case for the existing built up edge of Whittlesey currently nearest to the Nene Washes). Thus, this broad location for new growth was not only matching the existing closest point to the Nene Washes (at around 250-300m), but would be adjacent to a road which crosses the Nene Washes. It was also noted in the earlier Screening Report that the Nene Washes is identified as being vulnerable to recreational pressures.</p>

		<p>It was therefore concluded that that it was not certain that development to the north of Whittlesey (as proposed in the earlier draft policy CS9 and associated map) would not result in harm especially through the risk of increased recreational pressure on the protected site. As such, that particular broad location to the north of Whittlesey was not screened out from any Appropriate Assessment (i.e. if the site was to remain in the Core Strategy a full Appropriate Assessment would be necessary).</p> <p>However, following further consideration of the options, and taking account of all the evidence (including the earlier Screening Report), the revised draft Core Strategy (July 2012) and the Proposed Submission Core Strategy (February 2013) no longer allocates growth to the north of Whittlesey, and instead only has a strategic allocation to the east.</p> <p>As such the policy can now be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.</p>
	CS12 – Rural Areas Development Policy	This policy is non-site specific, and deals with generic and detailed rural issues. As such it can be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.
Delivering Infrastructure	CS13 – Supporting & Mitigating the Impact of a Growing District	<p>Whilst general in its wording, this policy confirms the need for infrastructure to be provided alongside development. This would include, amongst many other matters, all necessary infrastructure measures associated with water, sewerage and open space. This will, therefore, ensure mechanisms are in place to ensure no harm to N2K sites through matters such as (a) water related issues (matters for which the N2K sites are vulnerable to) and (b) open space etc (which will ensure appropriate amounts of recreational space is available for the new populations so as to offset any increased population which may otherwise use N2K sites for recreational purposes).</p> <p>An element of the policy relates to developer contributions to infrastructure but does not specify the scale, location or type of infrastructure development, only the funding mechanisms for it.</p> <p>Overall, the policy is either positive or not relevant towards protecting N2K sites and therefore this policy can be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy</p>
	CS14 – Responding to Climate Change and Managing the Risk of Flooding	This policy has no direct impact on N2K sites. However, indirectly it has the potential for positive effects as a result of the positive aspects implementing such a policy will have on the wider environment. Overall, it can be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.
	CS15 – Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network	This policy has no direct impact on N2K sites. However, indirectly, its implementation may help N2K sites which are prone to transport related pollutants as a result of its promotion of a more sustainable transport network. Overall, this policy can be screened out from any appropriate assessment of the Core Strategy.
Environment Quality	CS16 – Building Quality	This policy specifies good design for the new built environment, including the need to protect and enhance biodiversity (though see CS19 for a more detailed policy on this matter) . This is not relevant to N2K sites and the policy can be screened out from the Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.
	CS17 – Community Safety	This policy promotes development which is inherently ‘safe’ for its users. This is not relevant to N2K sites and the policy can be screened out from the Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.
	CS18 – Historic Environment	This policy specifies protection of historic assets. This is not relevant to N2K sites and the policy can be screened out from the Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.

	CS19 – Natural Environment	<p>This policy, introduced at the Proposed Submission stage at the request of Natural England, specifies the need to conserve, enhance and promote biodiversity. The comprehensive policy will be of benefit to N2K sites in that it reaffirms protection of such sites but also seeks to protect other existing, and the creation of new, habitats which could assist protected species with, for example, increased feeding or foraging grounds.</p> <p>This beneficial policy can, therefore, be screened out from the Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy.</p>
--	----------------------------	--

6.5. The next table summarises the Screening Matrix in Appendix 1 and sets out the likelihood of significant effects on N2K sites, taking the Core Strategy policies as a whole.

Table 6.2 Summary of likelihood of significant effects on N2K sites

Sites within Fenland District Council boundary

N2K Site	Significant effects unlikely	Significant effects uncertain	Significant effects likely
Nene Washes (SAC)	✓		
Nene Washes (SPA)	✓		
Nene Washes (Ramsar)	✓		
Ouse Washes (SAC)	✓		
Ouse Washes (SPA)	✓		
Ouse Washes (Ramsar)	✓		

Sites outside Fenland District Council boundary

N2K Site	Significant effects unlikely	Significant effects uncertain	Significant effects likely
Orton Pit (Peterborough) (SAC)	✓		
The Wash & North Norfolk Coast (Various Districts) (SAC)	✓		
The Wash (Various Districts) (SPA)	✓		
The Wash (Various Districts) (Ramsar)	✓		
Woodwalton Fen (Huntingdonshire) (as part of a set of sites known as Fenland SAC)	✓		
Woodwalton Fen (Huntingdonshire) (Ramsar)	✓		

7. OTHER RELEVANT PLANS AND PROJECTS (Task 5)

Effects of other plans or projects and background influences

- 7.1. Other plans which could lead to potentially significant ‘in-combination’ effects when implemented together with the Fenland Core Strategy have been reviewed. This arises as a result of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive which requires an Appropriate Assessment of ‘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 plan or projects’. The review of other plans has tried to identify those components that could have an impact on the N2K sites within the Fenland boundary (+15km).
- 7.2. However, this is considered a relatively straight forward task. First, the HRA of the East of England Plan (2001-2021) concluded that in the light of the Secretary of State’s Further Proposed Changes and other mitigating initiatives and policies, the East of England Plan *alone* will have no effect on the integrity of European or Ramsar sites. Surrounding districts are proposing growth in line with the RSS.
- 7.3. Further, at the district level, the districts adjacent to Fenland have undertaken considerable HRA work as part of their Core Strategy preparation, as the table below demonstrates:

District	DPD type	Status	HRA work undertaken
Peterborough	Core Strategy	Found Sound and Adopted	Appropriate Assessment
Huntingdonshire	Core Strategy	Found Sound and Adopted	Appropriate Assessment
East Cambridgeshire	Core Strategy	Found Sound and Adopted	Screening Assessment
King’s Lynn and West Norfolk	Core Strategy	Found Sound and adopted	Appropriate Assessment
South Holland (East Midlands)	Core Strategy	Not commenced	Nil

- 7.4. On the basis that all surrounding East of England districts have ‘sound’ Core Strategies prepared in line with the adopted RSS (with its respective HRA evidence base), and that the Fenland Core Strategy has been prepared in line with the adopted RSS, there is no evidence to suggest that the policies in the Fenland Core Strategy would result in harm as a result of an in-combination effect with an adjacent district’s Core Strategy.
- 7.5. With respect to the single connecting district in Lincolnshire, situated in the East Midlands regional area, it is understood that South Holland has yet to commence preparation of its Core Strategy and therefore any proposals for that district cannot be considered in this screening report (any major growth near Fenland is considered extremely unlikely). Nevertheless, the RSS for the East Midlands has been adopted (2009) and not yet revoked (at the time of writing) and associated Appropriate Assessment work for that document was undertaken.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

SCREENING ASSESSMENT OF SPATIAL OPTIONS FOR GROWTH (i.e. Policies CS4 and CS8-11)

- 8.1. The overall growth strategy for Fenland between 2011-2031 is, broadly, considered to be acceptable in terms of not resulting in harm to protected habitats. This conclusion is primarily driven by the fact that the growth, in general terms, is strongly directed to the four main market towns which are generally a significant distance from protected sites.
- 8.2. There is, however, one exception. Whittlesey, which is one of the four market towns (albeit the smallest of the four, and has the smallest growth target of the four), is very close to the Nene Washes (SAC, SPA, Ramsar), perhaps only 250m away, north of the town, at its nearest point.
- 8.3. Whilst it has been determined that some growth, in principle, at Whittlesey is acceptable (in terms of no harm to protected sites), it was previously noted in the earlier Screening Report (July 2011) as being uncertain whether growth to the north of Whittlesey would or would not result in significant effects on the Nene Washes especially as a result of the potential for increased recreational use of the Nene Washes which might arise should a significant development (such as residential) take place in this area.
- 8.4. However, unlike the earlier draft Core Strategy (July 2011), no growth is now identified to the north of Whittlesey and therefore this previous concern is alleviated and the proposals for Whittlesey can now be screened out from any Appropriate Assessment.

SCREENING ASSESSMENT OF SPATIALLY GENERIC CORE STRATEGY POLICIES

- 8.5. The Core Strategy generic policies described in Chapter 5 (i.e. policies which were not spatially specific) were screened out from the need for Appropriate Assessment.

NEXT STEPS

- 8.6. In accordance with the Conservation (of Habitats and Species) Regulations 2010, Natural England has been consulted throughout the preparation of this HRA Screening Report to obtain the views of the statutory nature conservation body on the likely effects of the Core Strategy DPD on the Natura 2000 network.
- 8.7. Subject to Natural England's views, Fenland District Council intends to:
 - Refresh this Screening Report prior to Submitting the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State, though such a refresh is not intended to make any material change to the findings of this Screening Report.
 - The refreshed Screening Report will be published and submitted to the Secretary of State, alongside the submission version of the Fenland Core Strategy, around May 2013.

APPENDIX 1

Screening matrix

.

Appendix 1

Site	Qualifying Features and current issues	Vulnerabilities (see footnote for description of categories - full details in Chpt 4)		Potential Effects of the Core Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely • Uncertain • Unlikely
		Cat	Brief Description	
Nene Washes SAC	<p>ANNEX II</p> <p>Primary</p> <p>Spined loach.</p> <p>Current Issues:</p> <p>The site is currently threatened by abstraction from several sources including angling lakes and SSSIs. Water levels are frequently maintained by nutrient rich water from sewage treatment works.</p> <p>Off-site changes in hydrology have the potential to affect the site's integrity.</p>	1	Physical Loss	Unlikely – no policy or proposal would result in the physical loss of the site, as no allocations are made within the site.
		2	Physical Damage	Unlikely – the quantity and location of growth in Whittlesey, combined with the other policies in the plan (such as open space and infrastructure provision), will not result in increased recreational pressure (and thus physical damage) on the N2K site.
		4	Contamination	Unlikely
		5	Water Quantity	Unlikely
		6	Biological disturbance (extraction)	Unlikely – the spined loach is a notoriously hard species to catch (as well as requiring a special license to do so), and therefore even if additional recreation led to increased fishing in the Nene Washes, it is unlikely that the spined loach would be caught and 'extracted'.

Site	Qualifying Features and current issues	Vulnerabilities (see footnote for description of categories - full details in Chpt 4)		Potential Effects of the Core Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely • Uncertain • Unlikely
		Cat	Brief Description	
Nene Washes SPA	<p>This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC).</p> <p>Over winter the area regularly supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bewick's Swan <p>This site qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of the following:</p> <p>Breeding;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoveler • Garganey • Gadwall • Black-tailed Godwit <p>Over winter;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pintail • Shoveler • Teal • Wigeon • Gadwall <p>Current issues:</p> <p>The site is particularly dependent upon the maintenance of suitable water level and quality and is therefore vulnerable to abstraction, and agricultural drainage and run-off.</p>	1	Physical Loss	Unlikely – no policy or proposal would result in the physical loss of the site, as no allocations are made within the site.
		2	Physical Damage	Unlikely – the quantity and location of growth in Whittlesey, combined with the other policies in the plan (such as open space and infrastructure provision), will not result in increased recreational pressure (and thus physical damage) on the N2K site.
		3	Disturbance (recreational)	Unlikely – the quantity and location of growth in Whittlesey, combined with the other policies in the plan (such as open space and infrastructure provision), will not result in increased recreational pressure (and thus disturbance) on the N2K site.
		4	Contamination	Unlikely
		5	Water Quantity	Unlikely

Site	Qualifying Features and current issues	Vulnerabilities (see footnote for description of categories - full details in Chpt 4)		Potential Effects of the Core Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely • Uncertain • Unlikely
		Cat	Brief Description	
Nene Washes Ramsar	<p>Ramsar criterion 2 Important assemblage of nationally rare breeding birds. Range of raptors occurring throughout the year.</p> <p>The site also supports several nationally scarce plants, and two vulnerable and two rare British Data Book invertebrate specie.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 6 – species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.</p> <p>Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):</p> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tundra Swan, <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i> <p>Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6.</p> <p>Species with peak counts in spring autumn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black-tailed godwit, <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Pintail, <i>Anas acuta</i> <p>Current Issues: The site is particularly dependent upon the maintenance of suitable water level and quality and is therefore vulnerable to abstraction, and agricultural drainage and run-off. Off-site changes in hydrology have the potential to affect the sites integrity</p>	1	Physical Loss	Unlikely – no policy or proposal would result in the physical loss of the site, as no allocations are made within the site.
		2	Physical Damage	Unlikely – the quantity and location of growth in Whittlesey, combined with the other policies in the plan (such as open space and infrastructure provision), will not result in increased recreational pressure (and thus physical damage) on the N2K site.
		3	Disturbance (recreational)	Unlikely – the quantity and location of growth in Whittlesey, combined with the other policies in the plan (such as open space and infrastructure provision), will not result in increased recreational pressure (and thus disturbance) on the N2K site.
		4	Non-toxic Contamination	Unlikely
		5	Water Quantity	Unlikely

Site	Qualifying Features and current issues	Vulnerabilities (see footnote for description of categories - full details in Chpt 4)		Potential Effects of the Core Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely • Uncertain • Unlikely
		Cat	Brief Description	
Ouse Washes SAC	<p>ANNEX II</p> <p>Non primary</p> <p>Spined loach (<i>Cobitis taenia</i>).</p> <p>Current Issues: The Ouse Washes are extremely vulnerable to changes in hydrology and the site is currently suffering from nutrient enrichment and changes in water quality as a result of agricultural run-off and the input of water with high nutrient levels from sewage treatment works.</p> <p>Off-site changes in hydrology have the potential to affect the site's integrity.</p>	1	Physical Loss	Unlikely – no policy or proposal would result in the physical loss of the site, as no allocations are made within the site.
		2	Physical Damage	Unlikely – no development is proposed within at least 5km of the Ouse washes, and therefore there appears no risk of increased recreation or other form of physical damage arising as a result of the Core Strategy.
		4	Contamination	Unlikely
		5	Water Quantity	Unlikely

Site	Qualifying Features and current issues	Vulnerabilities (see footnote for description of categories - full details in Chpt 4)		Potential Effects of the Core Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely • Uncertain • Unlikely
		Cat	Brief Description	
Ouse Washes SPA	<p>Over winter the area regularly supports;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i> • Tundra swan <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i> • Whooper swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> • Ruff <i>Phylomachus pugnax</i> <p>This site qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC):</p> <p>During the breeding season the area regularly supports;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> • Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> • Garganey <i>Anas querquedula</i> • Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i> • Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa limosa</i> <p>Over winter the area regularly supports;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> • Northern shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> • Eurasian teal <i>Anas crecca</i> • Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i> • Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i> • Common pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i> • Tufted duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i> • Mute swan <i>Cygnus olor</i> • Coot <i>Fulica atra</i> • Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> <p>This site qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting an internationally important assemblage of the following species:</p> <p>During the breeding season - The area regularly supports: <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>; <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>; <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>; <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>; <i>Tringa tetanus</i>; <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>.</p> <p>Over winter - The area regularly supports 64428 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 01/04/1998) including: <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>, <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>, <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>, <i>Anas penelope</i>, <i>Anas strepera</i>, <i>Anas crecca</i>, <i>Anas acuta</i> <i>Anus clypeata</i>, <i>Aythya ferina</i>, <i>Aythya fuligula</i>, <i>Fulica atra</i>, <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>.</p> <p>Current issues: The Ouse washes are extremely vulnerable to changes in hydrology and the site is currently suffering from nutrient enrichment and changes in water quality as a result of</p>	1	Physical Loss	Unlikely – no policy or proposal would result in the physical loss of the site, as no allocations are made within the site.
		2	Physical Damage	Unlikely – no development is proposed within at least 5km of the Ouse Washes, and therefore there appears no risk of increased recreation or other form of physical damage arising as a result of the Core Strategy.
		3	Disturbance (recreational)	Unlikely – no development is proposed within at least 5km of the Ouse washes, and therefore there appears no risk of increased recreation or other form of disturbance arising as a result of the Core Strategy
		4	Non-toxic Contamination	Unlikely
		5	Water Quantity	Unlikely
		Qualifying Features and Current Issues (cont)		
<p>agricultural run-off and the input of water with high nutrient levels from sewage treatment works.</p> <p>Off-site changes in hydrology have the potential to affect the site's integrity</p>				

Site	Qualifying Features and current issues	Vulnerabilities (see footnote for description of categories - full details in Chpt 4)		Potential Effects of the Core Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely • Uncertain • Unlikely
		Cat	Brief Description	
Ouse Washes Ramsar	<p>Ramsar criterion 1</p> <p>The site is one of the most extensive areas of seasonally flooding washland of its type in Britain.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 2</p> <p>The site supports several nationally scarce plants, British Red Data Book invertebrates, and a diverse assemblage of nationally rare breeding waterfowl associated with seasonally-flooding wet grassland.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 5 Assemblages of international importance:</p> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <p>59133 waterfowl</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 6 – species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.</p> <p>Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):</p> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tundra swan, <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i> • Whooper swan, <i>Cygnus Cygnus</i> • Eurasian wigeon, <i>Anas Penelope</i> • Gadwall, <i>Anas strepera strepera</i> • Eurasian teal, <i>Anas crecca</i>, • Northern pintail, <i>Anas acuta</i> • Northern shoveler, <i>Anas clypeata</i> <p>Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6.</p> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mute swan, <i>Cygnus olor</i> • Common pochard, <i>Aythya ferina</i> • Black-tailed godwit, <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> <p>The Ouse Washes are extremely vulnerable to changes in hydrology and the site is currently suffering from nutrient enrichment and changes in water quality as a result of agricultural run-off and the input of water with high nutrient levels from sewage treatment works.</p> <p>Off-site changes in hydrology have the potential to affect the sites integrity.</p>	1	Physical Loss	Unlikely – no policy or proposal would result in the physical loss of the site, as no allocations are made within the site.
		2	Physical Damage	Unlikely – no development is proposed within at least 5km of the Ouse washes, and therefore there appears no risk of increased recreation or other form of physical damage arising as a result of the Core Strategy.
		3	Disturbance (recreational)	Unlikely – no development is proposed within at least 5km of the Ouse washes, and therefore there appears no risk of increased recreation or other form of disturbance arising as a result of the Core Strategy
		4	Contamination	Unlikely
		5	Water Quantity	Unlikely

Site	Qualifying Features and current issues	Vulnerabilities (see footnote for description of categories - full details in Chpt 4)		Potential Effects of the Core Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely • Uncertain • Unlikely
		Cat	Brief Description	
Orton Pit SAC	ANNEX 1	1	Physical Loss	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland
	Primary Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp	2	Physical Damage	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland, and wrapped around by major development proposals in Peterborough (which has been subject to extensive appropriate assessment work).
	ANNEX 11	4	Contamination	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland, and considerable distance away from any growth location in Fenland. As such, no risk of additional damaging air pollution arising as a result of the Core Strategy.
	Primary Great crested newt	5	Water Quantity	Unlikely
	Current Issues: The site is vulnerable to natural succession and requires regular management of ponds to retain the early successional stages favoured by both great crested newt and vegetation of the <i>Chara</i> spp., for which the site is designated. In addition to a variety of terrestrial habitats such as grassland and woodland, suitable for the various life stages of great crested newt.	6	Disturbance (non-native species)	Unlikely – site is outside, and some distance from Fenland and wrapped around by major development proposals in Peterborough (which has been subject to extensive Appropriate Assessment work). Fenland's growth would have no impact on this vulnerability.

Site	Qualifying Features and current issues	Vulnerabilities (see footnote for description of categories - full details in Chpt 4)		Potential Effects of the Core Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely • Uncertain • Unlikely
		Cat	Brief Description	
The Wash & North Norfolk Coast SAC	<p>ANNEX 1</p> <p>Primary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time. • Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide. • Large shallow inlets and bays. • Reefs. • <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand. • Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>). • Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs (<i>Sarcocornetea fruticosi</i>). <p>Non Primary</p> <p>Coastal lagoons *</p> <p>Priority feature.</p> <p>ANNEX II</p> <p>Primary</p> <p>1365 Common seal.</p> <p>Non Primary</p> <p>Otter.</p> <p>Current Issues:</p> <p>This site is vulnerable to dredging and coastal protection works. Seal populations are vulnerable to disturbance. This site has the potential for gas exploration.</p>	1	Physical Loss	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland, therefore this vulnerability is not applicable to Fenland Core Strategy
		2	Physical Damage	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland therefore this vulnerability is not applicable to Fenland Core Strategy
		3	Disturbance (recreational)	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland, and some considerable distance away so as to not be affected by how growth is distributed around Fenland.
		4	Contamination	Unlikely
		5	Water Quantity	Unlikely
		6	Disturbance (non-native species)	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland

Site	Qualifying Features and current issues	Vulnerabilities (see footnote for description of categories - full details in Chpt 4)		Potential Effects of the Core Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely • Uncertain • Unlikely
		Cat	Brief Description	
The Wash SPA	<p>During the breeding season;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> • Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i> • Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i> <p>Over winter;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> • Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i> • Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> • Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> <p>This site also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:</p> <p>On passage;</p> <p>Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>; Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i></p> <p>Over winter;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>, • Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> • Dark-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> • Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> • Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> • Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i> • Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> • Pink-footed Goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> • Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> • Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> • Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> • Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i> <p>Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance.</p> <p>The area qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> • Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> • Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> • Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i> • Pink-footed Goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> • 	1	Physical Loss	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland, therefore this vulnerability is not applicable to Fenland Core Strategy
		2	Physical Damage	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland therefore this vulnerability is not applicable to Fenland Core Strategy
		3	Disturbance (recreational)	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland, and some considerable distance away so as to not be affected by how growth is distributed around Fenland.
		4	Contamination	Unlikely
		5	Water Quantity	Unlikely
		Qualifying Features and Current Issues (cont)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dark-bellied Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> • Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> • Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> • Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> • Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> • Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> • Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina alpina</i> • Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i> • Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> • Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> • Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i> • Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> • Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> • White-fronted Goose <i>Anser albifrons albifrons</i> • Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i> • Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> • Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> • Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> • Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i> • Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> <p>Current Issues:</p> <p>This site is vulnerable to dredging and coastal protection works. The site is also potentially vulnerable to gas exploration. There are two Air Weapons Ranges on this site owned by the MOD.</p>				

Site	Qualifying Features and current issues	Vulnerabilities (see footnote for description of categories - full details in Chpt 4)		Potential Effects of the Core Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely • Uncertain • Unlikely
		Cat	Brief Description	
The Wash Ramsar	<p>Ramsar criterion 1: The Wash is a large shallow bay comprising very extensive saltmarshes, major intertidal banks of sand and mud, shallow water and deep channels.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 3: Qualifies because of the interrelationship between its various components including saltmarshes, intertidal sand and mud flats and the estuarine waters. The saltmarshes and the plankton in the estuarine water provide a primary source of organic material which, together with other organic matter, forms the basis for the high productivity of the estuary.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 5 Assemblages of international importance:</p> <p>Species with peak counts in winter: Waterfowl</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 6 – species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.</p> <p>Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):</p> <p>Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eurasian oystercatcher, <i>Haematopus ostralegus ostralegus</i> • Grey plover, <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> • Red knot, <i>Calidris canutus islandica</i> • Sanderling, <i>Calidris alba</i> • Eurasian curlew, <i>Numenius arquata arquata</i> • Common redshank, <i>Tringa lpinge lpinge</i> • Ruddy turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres interpres</i> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pink-footed goose, <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> • Dark-bellied brent goose • Common shelduck, <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> • Northern pintail, <i>Anas acuta</i> • Dunlin, <i>Calidris lpinge lpinge</i> • Bar-tailed godwit <i>Limosa lapponica lapponica</i> <p>Species/populations identified subsequent to designation for possible future consideration under criterion 6</p>	1	Physical Loss	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland, therefore this vulnerability is not applicable to Fenland Core Strategy
		2	Physical Damage	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland therefore this vulnerability is not applicable to Fenland Core Strategy
		3	Disturbance (recreational)	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland, and some considerable distance away so as to not be affected by how growth is distributed around Fenland.
		4	Contamination	Unlikely
		5	Water Quantity	Unlikely
		6	Disturbance (non-native)	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland
		Qualifying Features and Current Issues (cont)		
<p>Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ringed plover, <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> • Black-tailed godwit, <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> <p>Species with peak counts in winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria apricaria</i> • Northern lapwing, <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> <p>Current Issues: This site is vulnerable to dredging and coastal protection works. Seal populations are vulnerable to disturbance. This site has the potential for gas exploration.</p>				

Site	Qualifying Features and current issues	Vulnerabilities (see footnote for description of categories - full details in Chpt 4)		Potential Effects of the Core Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely • Uncertain • Unlikely
		Cat	Brief Description	
Woodwalton Fen Ramsar	<p>Ramsar criterion 1</p> <p>The site is within an area that is one of the remaining parts of East Anglia which has not been drained. The fen is near natural and has developed where peat-digging took place in the 19th century. The site has several types of open fen and swamp communities.</p> <p>Ramsar criterion 2</p> <p>The site supports two species of British Red Data Book plants in addition to a large number of wetland invertebrates including 20 British Red Data Book species</p> <p>Current Issues:</p> <p>Woodwalton Fen Ramsar site is vulnerable to vegetation succession and requires management to retain fen characteristics. Off site drainage, land reclaim and eutrophication has threatened the site's hydrological regime.</p>	1	Physical Loss	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland, therefore this vulnerability is not applicable to Fenland Core Strategy
		2	Physical Damage	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland therefore this vulnerability is not applicable to Fenland Core Strategy
		4	Contamination	Unlikely
		5	Water Quantity	Unlikely
		6	Disturbance (non-native species)	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland, therefore this vulnerability is not applicable to Fenland Core Strategy

Site	Qualifying Features and current issues	Vulnerabilities (see footnote for description of categories - full details in Chpt 4)		Potential Effects of the Core Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely • Uncertain • Unlikely
		Cat	Brief Description	
Woodwalton Fen (as part of Fenland SAC)	<p>ANNEX 1</p> <p>Primary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-siltladen soils (<i>Molinia caeruleae</i>). • Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i>. <p>ANNEX II</p> <p>Non primary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spined loach (<i>Cobitis taenia</i>). • Great crested newt (<i>triturus cristatus</i>) <p>Current Issues: The site has suffered loss of fen habitat as a result of encroachment of woodland and scrub, in addition to nutrient enrichment from agricultural run-off and abstraction from the underlying aquifer.</p>	1	Physical Loss	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland, therefore this vulnerability is not applicable to Fenland Core Strategy
		2	Physical Damage	Unlikely – site is outside Fenland therefore this vulnerability is not applicable to Fenland Core Strategy
		4	Contamination	Unlikely
		5	Water Quantity	Unlikely