Biodiversity and Development Supplementary Planning Development Document 2020

Stafford BOROUGH COUNCIL

Contents

1. Executive Summary

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) expands upon policies of the Stafford Borough Local Plan Strategy.

The SPD guides developers through the ecological mitigation hierarchy of: Information; Avoidance; Mitigation; Compensation; and New Benefits, clearly detailing:

- When to Survey, What to Survey for,
- & how Surveys should be conducted,

It provides developers with a clear "plain English" step-by-step guide for working with protected and priority species and habitats which are likely to be impacted upon by their proposed developments. The SPD details Stafford Borough Council's requirements for applicants to build nature conservation features into developments, ensuring that a measurable net-gain to the Borough's biodiversity is always achieved.

This SPD highlights the importance that applicants protect and enhance existing nature conversation features within proposed developments, following best practice guidance and the mitigation hierarchy. On occasions where it is not possible the SPD details what Stafford Borough Council requires a developer to consider when incorporating ecological compensation (including Biodiversity Offsets) within their development scheme.

The SPD also provides developers with a list of useful links and contacts where further information on all the issues discussed can be found (Appendix 1).

2. Introduction

Biodiversity can be simply defined as the 'variety of life on earth'. This (SPD) forms part of the Stafford Borough's Local Plan and expands on policies that ensure biodiversity is adequately protected and enhanced throughout the development process. The SPD provides additional information on how these policies will be implemented and provides guidance on biodiversity and nature conservation for development applicants concerned with the conservation of biodiversity in development.

The aim of this guidance is to provide step-by-step advice throughout the planning process and to supplement the policies within the Natural Environment chapter of the current Stafford Borough Local Plan which provides a framework for development in the Borough.

This document explains what Stafford Borough Council expects to be considered with any planning application and the detailed information that needs to be submitted.

Included in this SPD is a list of internet links to other documents and guidance which may be of help to an applicant (Appendix 1). These documents are often specific to one habitat type or species, or to a particular type of development's impact on biodiversity.

Many of these documents and the methodologies they refer to are in a state of constant review and can be expected to be amended and updated periodically. Only the most recent version of any document should be referred to.

3. Legislation & Policy Context

There is a wide variety of legislation and policy provision relating to biodiversity conservation ranging from international to local level. The key legislation, policies and strategies includes:

- **The Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994 (as amended 2010);** often referred to as the habitat regulations. They are the mechanism through which the EU Habitats and Species Directive is implemented in the UK.
- **The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended 2010);** the principal act relating to the protection of wildlife in Great Britain. Species listed for protection are in Schedules 1, 5 and 8. The Protection of Badgers Act 1992; an act that brings together all legislation that is specific to badgers with the exception of their inclusion in Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- **Natural Environment And Rural Communities Act 2006** – Stafford Borough Council has a statutory duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 to have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.
- **The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000**
- **National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949**
- **The Environment Act 1990**
- **The Hedgerow Regulations 1997**
- **The National Planning Policy Framework 2018** - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- **Governments Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services**
- **Government circular 06/2005**
- **UK Biodiversity Action Plan**
- **West Midlands Biodiversity Pledge Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan**
- **Stafford Borough Council Biodiversity Strategy**

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) specifically states that Authorities should:

"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries." (Chapter 15, para 171, NPPF 2018)

And:

"To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and

b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats,

ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

(Chapter 15, para 174, NPPF 2018)

Nature conservation is regarded as a key test of sustainable development. The local planning process addresses this duty by the inclusion of a number of nature conservation polices in local planning documents. These include:

- Policy N4: The Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure
- Policy N5: Sites of European, National and Local Nature Conservation Importance
- Policy N6 Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Policy N7 Cannock Chase AONB
- Policy N8 Landscape Character

Policy N4: The Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure explicitly states that:

"Any new development where damage to the natural environment is unavoidable must include measures to mitigate and / or compensate such impacts, through the establishment of replacement habitats or features, including appropriate site management regimes." (Policy N4: The Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure, criterion f, Local Plan 2014)

See Appendix 5 for all Local Plan policies.

4. The Importance of Biodiversity within Development

Any development has the potential to impact (both negatively and positively) on local biodiversity through its effects on nature conservation features.

Within this document the term "Nature conservation features" refers to:

- Species (both plant and animal) and their habitats (including feeding, resting and breeding areas)
- Natural and Historic Landscapes
- Semi natural elements of the landscape with particular cultural or historical significance; and
- Features which provide links or stepping stones from one habitat to another.

Nature conservation features can be defined as having dual functions of contributing to local biodiversity and providing opportunities for people to experience and benefit from them. The benefits to local people provided by nature conservation features can be far ranging. They include valuable ecosystem services such as mitigating the damaging effects of air pollution and climate change, as well as aesthetic and amenity benefits.

Developments have the potential to impact upon nature conservation features both within the boundaries of the development as well sites adjacent and in certain circumstances a significant distance away. As part of the development process these impacts need to be assessed and (if found to be negative) avoided, mitigated or as a last resort compensated for.

Nature conservation features can vary greatly from site to site in both appearance and size.

Some features are obvious to identify and the impact of a development upon them equally obvious: the destruction through development of mature gardens or large areas of habitat, the removal of hedgerow, the removal of mature trees, destruction of badger setts within the development area etc. However, other nature conservation features are cryptic and can often be overlooked: bat roost under raised roof tiles and within roof voids, Great Crested Newt breeding pools in water bodies that dry out for part of the year etc.

Developments which take into account the role and value of biodiversity can support economic diversification and contribute to delivering high quality environments throughout the Borough's (Policy E1: Local Economy). Developments should seek to minimise fragmentation of existing habitats (Policy N4); incorporate beneficial nature conservation features; and must deliver a net gain for Biodiversity.

5. Stafford Borough's Biodiversity

Stafford Borough supports a variety of wildlife rich priority habitats. These priority habitats include heathland, ancient semi-natural woodland and semi-improved grasslands, along with rivers and ponds which support a wide range of flora and fauna including many different mammals, birds, insects and plants. A list of Action Plans are identified in the SBC Biodiversity Strategy and most updated version of the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (Appendix 1).

International and European Sites (i.e. Natura 2000 site)

The Natura 2000 network consists of sites that are of exceptional importance for the protection of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species within the European Community. These sites comprise of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and include Ramsar sites of international importance for wetland habitats.

In Stafford Borough there are four SACs and three Ramsar sites and may need to be taken into consideration in some planning applications. These are:

- Cannock Chase SAC
- Pasturefields SAC
- Mottey Meadows SAC
- Chartley Moss Ramsar / SAC
- Cop Mere Ramsar
- Aqualate Mere Ramsar

These sites are of international importance for nature conservation and are strictly protected from damaging activities.

It is possible for a development to have a negative impact on a SAC whilst being a significant distance from it. For Cannock Chase SAC, a map of Zones are included (Appendix 3) to help to identify if a development would be required to consider its potential impact on the SAC. Where there is a potential impact for Cannock Chase SAC, policy N6 should be referred to.

Methods of calculating the potential impact a development could have on Cannock Chase SAC and mitigation are covered in greater detail in:

Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation Guidance to Mitigate the Impact of New Residential Development (Appendix 3)

Certain developments have the potential to impact upon Natura 2000 sites which are some distance from the Borough'ss boundary via impacting air quality, hydrology etc. Where there is a possibility of this occurring the applicant must recognise these impacts within their application and suggest appropriate methods of avoidance of mitigation which can be incorporated into the development scheme.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

There are currently 16 statutory SSSI's in the Borough which can be found in the Local Plan. They are designated by Natural England. In addition to the SAC and Ramsar sites already listed there are:

- Allimore Green SSSI
- Baswich Meadows SSSI
- Burnt Meadow SSSI
- Doley Common SSSI
- Doxey Marshes SSSI
- Kings & Hargreaves Wood SSSI
- Loynton Moss SSSI
- Milford Quarry SSSI
- Rawbones Meadow SSSI
- Stafford Brooks SSSI

These sites are considered to be of national importance for nature conservation and are protected from damaging activities.

It is possible for a development to have a negative impact on a SSSI whilst being a significant distance from it. Please consult the SSSI location map (Appendix map 3) for the location of these sites within the Borough. If a development is near to a SSSI, Natural England's Risk Impact Zone GIS System should be consulted.

Sites of Biological Importance (SBI's) and Biodiversity Alert Sites (BAS's)

These sites are important for nature conservation at the county or Borough's level and represent habitats of uncommon quality which are often difficult to recreate. Many support UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and species. These sites are not statutorily protected, but are a material consideration in the planning process.

SBI's and BAS's in the Borough's generally fall into the following categories:

- Ancient semi natural woodland and pasture woodland
- Hedgerows
- Grasslands, both semi and unimproved
- Heathland
- Wetland and open water
- Sites that support priority species as defined by the UKBAP and SBAP

There are currently 173 SBI's within Stafford Borough; however the total number of sites changes periodically according to site survey results supplied to Staffordshire Wildlife Sites Partnership by the Wildlife Trust. Up to date information on these sites and their boundaries is then held by Staffordshire Ecological Record on behalf of the Council (Appendix 1).

Local Nature Reserve's (LNR's)

LNR's are statutory protected sites designated under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. A LNR designation demonstrates a commitment by the local authority to manage land for biodiversity, protect it from inappropriate development and provide opportunities for local people to enjoy wildlife.

There are seven local nature reserves within Stafford Borough.

- Ferndown LNR
- Barlaston & Rough Close LNR
- Goodall Meadow LNR
- Southern Meadow LNR
- Astonfields LNR
- Kingston Pool Covert LNR
- Kingsmead Marsh LNR

Protected Species

Stafford Borough contains a wide variety of species which are defined by and receive protection under domestic or European legislation. The protection could be partial (prohibiting sale, for example) or full, in which case disturbance, killing or injuring of just one of these species, or interfering with its habitat could constitute a criminal offence.

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The presence of a protected species is a material consideration when determining a planning application. Particular protected species that have been encountered within Stafford Borough include:

- bats
- birds
- great crested newts
- white clawed crayfish
- water voles
- otters
- badgers
- invertebrates
- reptiles
- plant species

Priority Habitats and Priority Species

Priority species and priority habitats are those that have been identified as being the most

threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). The UK BAP priority list is produced by the Join Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and currently contains 1150 species, and 65 habitats (Appendix 1). These priority habitats and species are listed on the Section 41 list of the National Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and are considered to be Species of Principle Importance for the conservation of biodiversity. A proposed developments impact on any of the species or habitats there listed is therefore a material consideration in the determination of an application.

Additionally, the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan identifies those habitats of importance for the county and includes plans for their conservation and management. impacts on any of these priority habitats, whether within a locally designated site or not (i.e. non-protected sites), is also a material consideration in the planning process

6. Biodiversity Information & Impact Assessments Required to Support Planning Proposals

Stafford Borough Council advises all applicants to enter pre-application discussions. Such discussions may establish the potential impact of a development; helping to outline the scope of surveys and assessments required to support an application.

Where there is potential for a proposed development to cause harm to internationally, nationally or locally designated sites, protected or priority species or habitats, then the applicant shall undertake appropriate surveys and assessment to a nationally recognised standard prior to the submission of a planning proposal (see Natural England Standing advice on protected species survey requirements for more details, Appendix 1).

The information gained from the site survey and assessment should be up-to-date (i.e. less than two years since the survey was conducted) and sufficient to allow the impact of the development to be appropriately assessed.

The likelihood that a nature conservation feature will be affected by development proposals should be established before a planning application is submitted. For further guidance to assess the likelihood of a nature conservation feature being affected by a development proposal see the Natural England's Standing Advice (Appendix 1).

Failure to provide accurate information in relation to biodiversity is a reason to refuse the registration of a planning application or will result in its subsequent refusal when considered against policy.

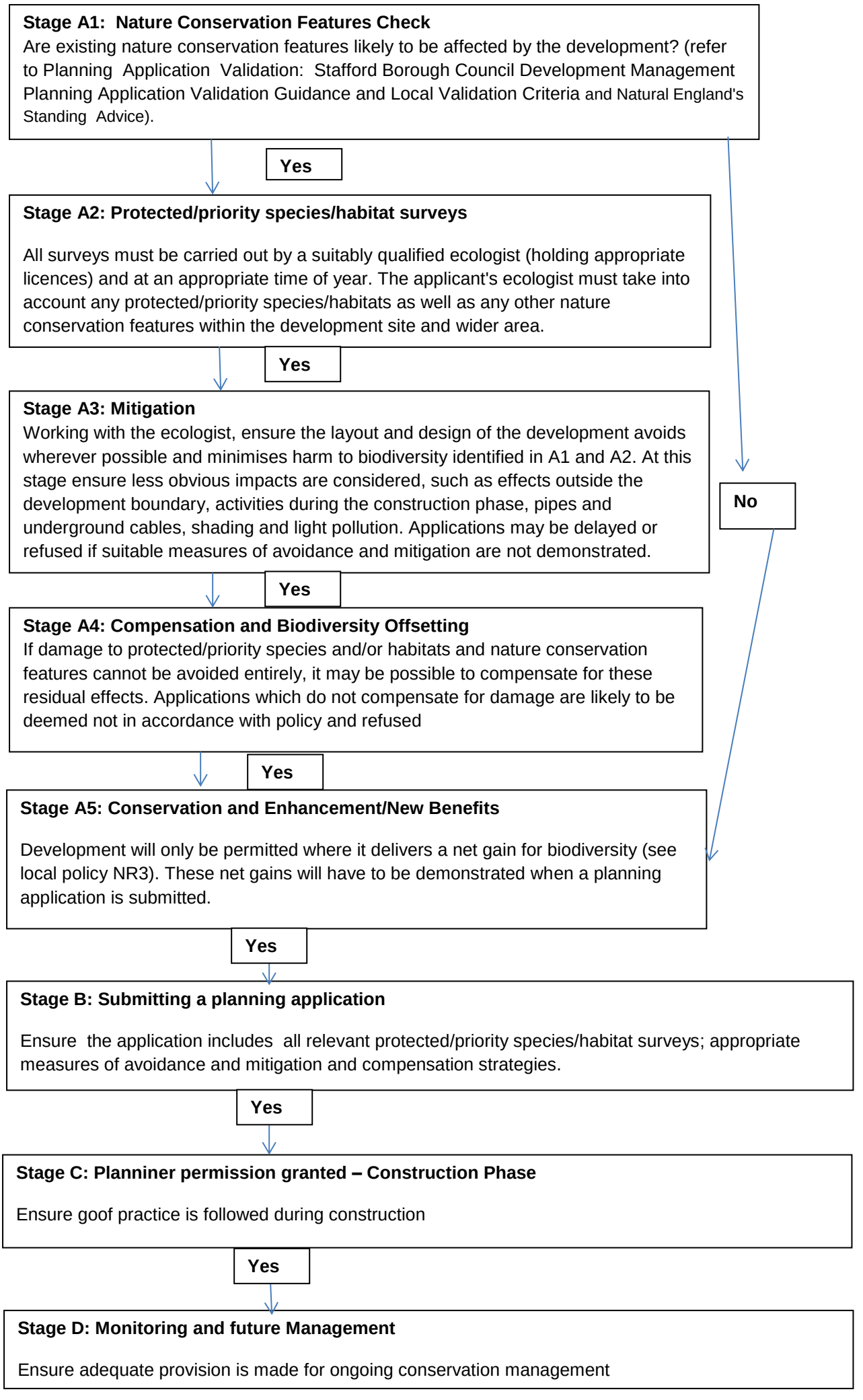
The advance planning of ecological works should always be considered early in a project. Some developments may require the collation of ecological data over an extended period of time in order to present the most suitable scheme of mitigation.

The provision of mitigation strategies and compensatory habitats are likely to be required in advance of a development project. This ensures that any newly created habitat and/or nature conservation feature is of a suitable standard prior to the loss of the existing habitat or feature. This then allows for the safe relocation of protected species and/or ensures that there is no net-loss to biodiversity caused by the development.

All development in Stafford Borough is required to deliver a net gain for biodiversity. These net gains will have to be demonstrated when a planning application is submitted.

7. A Step by Step Guide to Building Biodiversity into Development

By adopting the approach summarised in Table 1, applications are likely to progress expediently in relation to ecology and will comply with domestic and European legislation and demonstrate best practice. Each stage is expanded in greater detail after the table.


Stage A1: Nature Conservation Features Check
Are existing nature conservation features likely to be affected by the development? (refer to Planning Application Validation: Stafford Borough Council Development Management Planning Application Validation Guidance and Local Validation Criteria and Natural England's Standing Advice).
Yes
No
Stage A2: Protected/priority species/habitat surveys
All surveys must be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist (holding appropriate licences) and at an appropriate time of year. The applicant's ecologist must take into account any protected/priority species/habitats as well as any other nature conservation features within the development site and wider area.
Yes
Stage A3: Mitigation
Working with the ecologist, ensure the layout and design of the development avoids wherever possible and minimises harm to biodiversity identified in A1 and A2. At this stage ensure less obvious impacts are considered, such as effects outside the development boundary, activities during the construction phase, pipes and underground cables, shading and light pollution. Applications may be delayed or refused if suitable measures of avoidance and mitigation are not demonstrated.
Yes
Stage A4: Compensation and Biodiversity Offsetting
If damage to protected/priority species and/or habitats and nature conservation features cannot be avoided entirely, it may be possible to compensate for these residual effects. Applications which do not compensate for damage are likely to be deemed not in accordance with policy and refused
Yes
Stage A5: Conservation and Enhancement/New Benefits
Development will only be permitted where it delivers a net gain for biodiversity (see local policy NR3). These net gains will have to be demonstrated when a planning application is submitted.
Yes
Stage B: Submitting a planning application
Ensure the application includes all relevant protected/priority species/habitat surveys; appropriate measures of avoidance and mitigation and compensation strategies.
Yes
Stage C: Planniner permission granted – Construction Phase
Ensure goof practice is followed during construction
Yes
Stage D: Monitoring and future Management
Ensure adequate provision is made for ongoing conservation management

Stage A: Preparing to submit a planning application.

Stage A1 Nature Conservation Features Check

The likelihood of a proposed development negatively impacting upon a protected or priority species and/or habitat and/or other nature conservation can be understood by referring to the checklists and flow charts within both Natural England's Standing Advice and Stafford Borough Council Development Management Planning Application Validation Guidance and Local Validation Criteria (Appendix 1).

Natural England's Standing Advice and Stafford Borough Council Development Management Planning Application Validation Guidance and Local Validation Criteria set out the level of biodiversity information required by the local authority to validate a planning application.

If after consulting the aforementioned documents it appears likely that protected/priority species/habitats and/or other nature conservation features may be affected by the proposed development then ecological surveys will be required to be conducted and their results submitted to the authority. Applicants are welcome to contact the council's in house Ecology Team at any point for guidance regarding the different ecological surveys they may need to conducted prior to submitting an application and the minimum required survey effort.

Attempts to exclude or remove nature conservation features could constitute a criminal offence and should never be undertaken.

The majority of developments in the Stafford Borough have no significant effect on existing nature conservation features. However, to encourage and support our ecological networks and improve wildlife across the Borough's every development (even ones which cause no impact) must provide a net-gain to biodiversity. This could be as simple as planting new trees or erecting a bird box.

Stage A2 – Protected/Priority species and Habitat Surveys

Applicants are advised to refer to Stafford Borough Council Development Management Planning Application Validation Guidance and Local Validation Criteria (Appendix 1), as well as Natural England's Standing Advice for required survey standards (Appendix 1).

Prior to commissioning habitat or protected species surveys, applicants are advised to contact the Ecology Team should they have any doubt about the methodology or the standard of ecological surveys required as part of their application.

Surveys must be carried out by suitably qualified, licensed and experienced ecologists.

Certain protected species (i.e. bats, great crested newts) can only be handled or trapped by personnel holding government licenses; hence it is important to ensure that the appointed ecologist is qualified in those ecological fields that require surveys.

To allow for applications to progress expediently it is recommended that during the survey process all habitats are compared against the Guidelines for the selection of Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) in Staffordshire (Appendix 1); this is especially so if the application is for a major development. If any habitats are found to be of SBI quality (as stated in the guidelines) they should be clearly described as part of the habitat survey.

All required ecological surveys must be in the context of the development proposal and methods, limitations of survey (including evidence where appropriate), results and conclusions must be compiled and submitted as part of a planning application.

It is important to note that even should an ecological survey conclude that no protected or priority species are present on the application site, or that the development proposed will not cause habitat loss or have negative effect on biodiversity it is still required that the survey be submitted in full as part of the planning application.

Sharing Data

Survey data submitted with planning applications should also be provided to the Staffordshire Ecological Record (SER) to ensure that knowledge of the sites nature conservation features is not lost. To submit your information please email info@staffs-ecology.org.uk.

Stage A3: Mitigation and Measures of Avoidance

Mitigation consists of measures taken to avoid or reduce negative impacts on species or habitats. Measures may include: locating a development and its working areas and access routes away from areas of high ecological interest, fencing-off sensitive areas during a construction period, or timing works to avoid sensitive periods.

Where, development would result in significant harm to a protected/priority species/habitat appropriate planning conditions or obligations will be required to adequately mitigate and/or compensate for the harm.

Some forms of mitigation may be relatively simple such as avoiding the bird breeding season whilst undertaking vegetation clearance. Other requirements such as those associated with avoiding harm to bats during building works at a known bat roost may be more complex. Such works may require the input of a licensed ecologist to oversee the work.

The findings of ecological surveys should be taken into careful consideration at the earliest design stage of a development. Possible conflicts can be addressed by having the information available at the right stage and by taking an imaginative approach to site design to avoid harm, informed by advice from an ecologist as part of the design team. The objective should be to mitigate potentially negative impacts and integrate existing biodiversity into the scheme. Impacts on existing nature conservation features should be avoided wherever possible and any residual impacts should be minimised.

In assessing the potential impact of a proposal on biodiversity, applicants should ensure that all stages of the development are considered. Frequently the disturbed area of the development site during construction is greater than that normally shown on application drawings. Impacts may also extend beyond the site boundary long after construction has completed, for example due to shading, increased light pollution or predation by domestic pets. Damaging impacts on the integrity of networks of habitat through fragmentation should also be considered.

Applicants should ensure that they take account of the potential effects of a development on all the life stages of protected/priority species, taking account of the following essential

requirements:

- Food Water Shelter
- Reproduction
- Dispersal

For example, preserving a Great Crested Newt breeding pond within a development would not be sufficient to conserve the species if its terrestrial habitats (which provide the Great Crested Newts with both shelter and food) are destroyed.

The potential habitat fragmentation and isolation effects of a development on the wider environment should be considered. For example, removing a hedgerow or line of trees could sever a bat feeding route with consequential effects on a breeding colony, even if the colony itself is preserved. Developers should therefore consider the use of appropriate plant species (in relation to planting and landscaping schemes), the creation of buffer zones, stepping stone habitats and wildlife corridors to ensure the development is integrated into the wider environment.

Applicants should also consider that some potential effects will be acute and easily detectable, while others may be long term and may only become apparent some months or years after construction is complete. Damaging impacts on nature conservation features may be identified which cannot be avoided without jeopardising the viability of the development. These impacts should be clearly described and a full explanation given, as a part of both outline and full planning applications.

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Stage A4 Compensation and Biodiversity Offsetting

Compensation is the process of providing species or habitat benefits specifically to make up for the loss of, or permanent damage to, biodiversity through the provision of replacement habitats. Any replacement habitat should be of same or greater biodiversity value and be guided by the Stafford Biodiversity Opportunity Map.

Compensation shall be considered as the last resort, with preference always given to protection in entirety followed by appropriate mitigation. Where the benefits of a proposal are demonstrated to clearly outweigh the importance of biodiversity conservation, conditions will be imposed and obligations negotiated with the aim of securing compensatory habitat

creation to prevent biodiversity loss.

Compensation should not be regarded as an alternative to avoidance and should only be considered if avoidance is unachievable. The integrity of a nature conservation site as a whole can be adversely effected by a damaging development affecting a proportion of it, even if compensatory measures are carried out elsewhere. Furthermore there is often a degree of uncertainty over whether compensatory habitats/features will achieve the value of the original nature conservation feature to be lost, at least within a reasonable period of time. Therefore proposals involving compensatory measures must demonstrate why mitigation is not possible to achieve. Alternative solutions should be described and discussed in the planning application. For compensation to be acceptable, the importance of the development must also clearly outweigh the harm caused.

Some compensatory measures can be relatively inexpensive in the scheme of a development, such as the provision of new swift nest sites. Other measures may require the construction of entirely new features, such as a bat roost building and may require planning consent in their own right.

The council requires all losses/gains to the biodiversity value occurring to a site through development to be measured. Where habitat is to be lost its value must first be calculated to ensure any compensatory habitat creation is of greater value. Delivering biodiversity compensation in a measurable way is essential to demonstrating that a net-gain to biodiversity value is likely to be achieved by a development. Where measurable compensation is delivered beyond the boundaries (red and blue lines) of an application it is termed 'biodiversity offsetting'.

Before compensation or biodiversity offsetting can occur the value of the habitat to be lost must be calculated (Appendix 1) Calculating biodiversity units comprises of 7 distinct steps:

- **Step 1** – Apply the 'avoid, mitigate, compensate' hierarchy to understand the residual biodiversity loss.
- **Step 2** – Map the habitat type(s) impacted by your development
- **Step 3** – Assess the baseline condition of each habitat
- **Step 4** – Combine the habitat type and condition weighting to calculate an overall number of biodiversity units.
- **Step 5** – Work out if you have particular requirements for the type of offset you will need to provide
- **Step 6** – Managing hedgerows (only applicable if hedgerows are to be lost) Step 7: Decide how you want to provide compensation
- **Step 7** - Decide how you want to provide compensation

All applicants entering compensation stage must engage with the local authority at this time if they have not already done so.

On site compensation and biodiversity offsetting schemes must produce habitats of measurably greater biodiversity value than will be lost through the development. Stafford Borough Council considers the minimum increased amount or 'replacement percentage' to be set at 20% above the biodiversity unit value of the habitats lost. Hence habitats to be lost valued at 10 biodiversity units, must be compensated for by the creation of habitats valued in

total at no less than 12 biodiversity units. This is the minimum that would be accepted and the replacement percentage may be increased if for example: ecological networks have to be maintained or to avoid fragmentation of important existing habitats.

To assist developers with the offsetting scheme a Biodiversity Map has been created. The habitat type of greatest desire for each scheme will depend on the location of the original development within the Stafford Biodiversity Opportunity Maps. To further assist developers, Stafford Borough Council aim to produce a Biodiversity Offsetting Strategy. This Strategy, when complete, will establish a hierarchy of preference as to the compensatory habitats desired to be created through an offsetting scheme.

Compensation and Irreplaceable Nature Conservation Features

It is not practically possible to compensate for the loss of some nature conservation features. Applications involving proposals to compensate for loss or damage to the following nature conservation features will be refused unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location has been demonstrated to outweigh their loss:

- ancient woodland, veteran trees ancient hedgerows
- Compensation Options

Compensation must be measurable and can take the form of:

- The translocation of existing nature conservation features to:
    - a new location within the development site, or (if this is not possible)
    - a new location within the Stafford Borough.
- The creation of new nature conservation features/habitats within the development site to replace those lost or damaged.
- The creation of new nature conservation features/habitats Stafford Borough to replace those lost or damaged i.e. biodiversity offsetting scheme.
- A commuted sum paid to the council to improve or create equivalent nature conservation features elsewhere in the Stafford Borough.

Development applications involving compensation proposals should consider the above options in that order, for example only including proposals to create nature conservation features (as part of a compensation package) if translocation is not possible.

If it is not possible to translocate or create nature conservation features within the development site as part of compensation, an applicant may choose to carry out equivalent measures on land elsewhere in the Stafford Borough.

Translocation

Both species and habitats can be translocated. Where habitats are translocated it is considered to be a form of compensation, re-using existing vegetation and soils to create a new habitat elsewhere. It is considered very likely that translocated habitats will lose a portion of their biodiversity value through the translocation process; hence additional habitat creation should be included in a development scheme to adequately account for this reduction in biodiversity value.

If legally protected species are involved, in some cases translocation may be the only compensation option available. As part of a submitted planning application, translocation

proposals must be described in detail. To be acceptable to the local planning authority, proposals must include descriptions of:

- The location, size and physical characteristics of the donor and receptor sites and presented on site plans
- The technique to be used to collect and move the feature, including timing
- The equipment to be used
- The personnel involved
- Any habitat management of the donor and receptor areas which may be required before and after the proposed translocation.
- Future ecological monitoring of the habitat translocation.

Guidance on the appropriateness of suitable translocation sites should be sought from the Council's Ecology Team prior to the application being submitted.

Creation of Nature Conservation Features/habitats

The creation of habitats as part of a compensation package must adhere to best practice guidance and be measurable and follow the principles of biodiversity offsetting in calculating compensation. The Authority suggests the use of the Environment Bank Impact calculator to calculate habitat value.

As part of a submitted planning application, habitat creation proposals must be described in detail. To be acceptable to the local planning authority, the following general principles should be applied to development schemes involving habitat creation and proposals must include descriptions of:

- The location, size and physical characteristics of the receptor sites and presented on site plans
- Details of the conservation features to be created and identified on site plans The technique to be used to create the feature, including timing
- The equipment to be used
- The personnel involved
- Any habitat management proposed for the creation of the nature conservation feature/habitat which may be required before creation and ongoing
- Future ecological monitoring of the habitat translocation.

All details regarding the creation of areas of compensatory habitat as part of a development scheme should be presented to the local authority as part of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) or Habitat Management Plan (HMP) as appropriate.

To achieve sustainable development, the compensation measures for species and habitats in the Stafford Borough should include ongoing habitat management measures to further increase the ecological value of the site and include subsequent ecological monitoring to demonstrate success. Where ecological monitoring details a project is failing, contingency measures must be included to rectify this.

The following translocation or habitat creation proposals are therefore unlikely to be acceptable:

- Translocation of habitats or species to sites outside of the Borough's boundary,

Creation of habitats outside the Borough's boundary,

- Translocation of species to sites which already support good populations of the same species, or when habitat enhancement to accommodate the increased population size cannot be reasonably achieved,
- Where the translocated species may have a detrimental impact on other species of conservation importance at the proposed donor site.

Commuted Sums

As previously detailed, in certain circumstances it may not be possible for a developer to either mitigate or compensate for the negative impact of their development on nature conservation features within the development site or wider Stafford Borough; however the development may still be justified. In such circumstances a biodiversity offset is required. Applicants are encouraged to locate and bring forward sites on which their biodiversity offset can occur. The types of habitats to be created or enhanced upon these sites should be reflective of the desired habitat for the sites location as depicted by the Stafford Borough Opportunity Map (Appendix Map 2) as well as any further requirements detailed in the future Stafford Borough Biodiversity Offsetting Strategy.

The appropriateness of all "developer led" biodiversity offsetting schemes shall be assessed by the Ecology Team. Should the scheme be deemed as inappropriate (i.e. the wrong habitat in the wrong location; considered unlikely to succeed etc.), then the scheme will need to be amended or a biodiversity offsetting scheme on an alternative site put forward.

If an applicant is unable to locate and secure an appropriate site on which an approved biodiversity offsetting scheme can be created then this will often necessitate a financial payment to the council via a planning obligation, secured through a S.106 Agreement.

The purpose of such a payment would be to pay for the council to secure adequate compensatory measures and to ensure the sustainable development objectives of local planning policy are achieved. In each instance the required commuted sum is determined by the Ecology Team via a bespoke calculation which accounts for the real costs of habitat creation/enhancement, the costs of ongoing management over a period of 25 years and a management fee to provide the offset. A brokerage fee may also be required.

Stage A5: Conservation and Enhancement/New Benefits

Planning policy requires development to protect where possible and enhance nature conservation features; local planning authorities are expected to actively pursue and maximise such improvements. All development in Stafford Borough is required to deliver a net gain for biodiversity. This must be demonstrated when a planning application is submitted.

Developments should enhance, restore or add to biodiversity. Development can incorporate a range of ecological enhancements from bird nesting and bat roosting opportunities, to sustainable urban drainage systems and green roofs through to providing major new areas of biodiversity habitat alongside development. The type of ecological enhancements and measures introduced must be guided by Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and the Stafford Borough Biodiversity Opportunity Map (Appendix Map 2). All development must clearly distinguish between the new nature conservation benefits offered and any existing features retained or compensated for. For major planning developments measurable net

gains will need to be demonstrated.

Applicants should ensure that new biodiversity benefits are fully integrated through the development scheme, and not fragmented into isolated pockets or restricted to peripheral parts of the development site. Applicants must also take account of the wider landscape and ecological context of the development to ensure opportunities to promote the connectivity of habitats are maximised (as detailed in policy N4 and N5).

The emerging Stafford Borough Council Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan will also include targets for biodiversity enhancements in new developments and applicants should refer to this for guidance.

Applicants must provide details of proposed biodiversity enhancements and net gains, informed by expert advice, with planning applications. The council may attach planning conditions to ensure that biodiversity enhancements are implemented.

Stage B: Submitting a Planning Application

By the time a planning application is ready for submission the applicant must be able to provide to the authority:

1. All protected/priority species/habitat surveys highlighted as required by Natural England's standing advice and Stafford Borough Council Development Management Planning Application Validation Guidance and Local Validation Criteria;
2. A detailed mitigation and or compensation scheme guided by the results of previously undertaken surveys (where applicable);
3. And be able to demonstrate a net benefit to biodiversity will be delivered by the application.

Submission of these documents will greatly assist in the speedy arrival of a decision on your planning application.

Stage C: Planning Permission Granted: the Construction Phase

During construction it is essential that steps are taken to ensure all personnel understand the nature conservation objectives of the development. On developments which include a mitigation strategy; ensuring that appropriate steps are taken to safe-guard nature conservation features and that all individuals working on the development are suitably informed will likely be a condition of planning approval. Temporary signage of sensitive areas is advisable and regular checks of the nature conservation features and any protective fencing should be carried out. Nature conservation reports should describe the measures which will be taken to ensure existing nature conservation features are conserved during the construction phase.

Such reports should also address:

- Identification of and contact details for responsible personnel.
- Timing of works to minimise the risk of disturbance to protected and other species.
- Procedures for dealing with unexpected discoveries, such as previously undetected protected species or injured wildlife. If a protected species is found, even after planning permission has been granted, the developer should stop work immediately

and contact Natural England for further advice. Planning permission being granted does not in any way relinquish or diminish the applicant's legal responsibilities when dealing with any protected species (National or European), (Appendix 1).

Stage D: Monitoring and Future Management

Planning applications should include costed maintenance specifications and monitoring proposals for each of the nature conservation features addressed and describe how these aspects would be implemented. This could include a description of the resources required, the personnel involved and a procedure for ensuring that any new owner/occupiers are made aware of their responsibilities.

Appendix 1 Internet hyperlink list

Internet hyperlinks list to further information and relevant documents to assist applications

Stafford Borough Council Development Management Planning Application Validation Guidance and Local Validation Criteria https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cme/DocMan1/planning/Validation_Guidance_and_Local_Validation_Criteria.pdf

British Standard Institute- Biodiversity- Code of practice for planning and development (please note that this document requires purchasing prior to viewing) http://shop.bsigroup.com/ProductDetail/?pid=000000000030258704

Natural England Standing Advice (links to all UK protected species in development guidance, i.e. bats, birds, great crested newts, white clawed crayfish, water voles, otters, badgers, invertebrates, reptiles): www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/planningdevelopment/spatialplanning/standingadvice/

Natural England Technical Information Note 51, Bats and Onshore Wind Turbines (interim guidance) http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35010

Natural England Technical Information Note 69, Assessing the Effects of Onshore Wind Farms on Birds http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/23024

DEFRA Biodiversity Offsetting Pilot Scheme Guidance www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13743-bio-guide-developers.pdf

& http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/offsetting/documents/1204-bio-offset-pilot-appendix.pdf

Bat Conservation Trust; Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines 2012 www.bats.org.uk/pages/batsurveyguide.html

Guidelines for the selection of Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) in Staffordshire www.sbap.org.uk

Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation, Interim Guidance to Mitigate the Impact of New Residential Development www.sstaffs.gov.uk

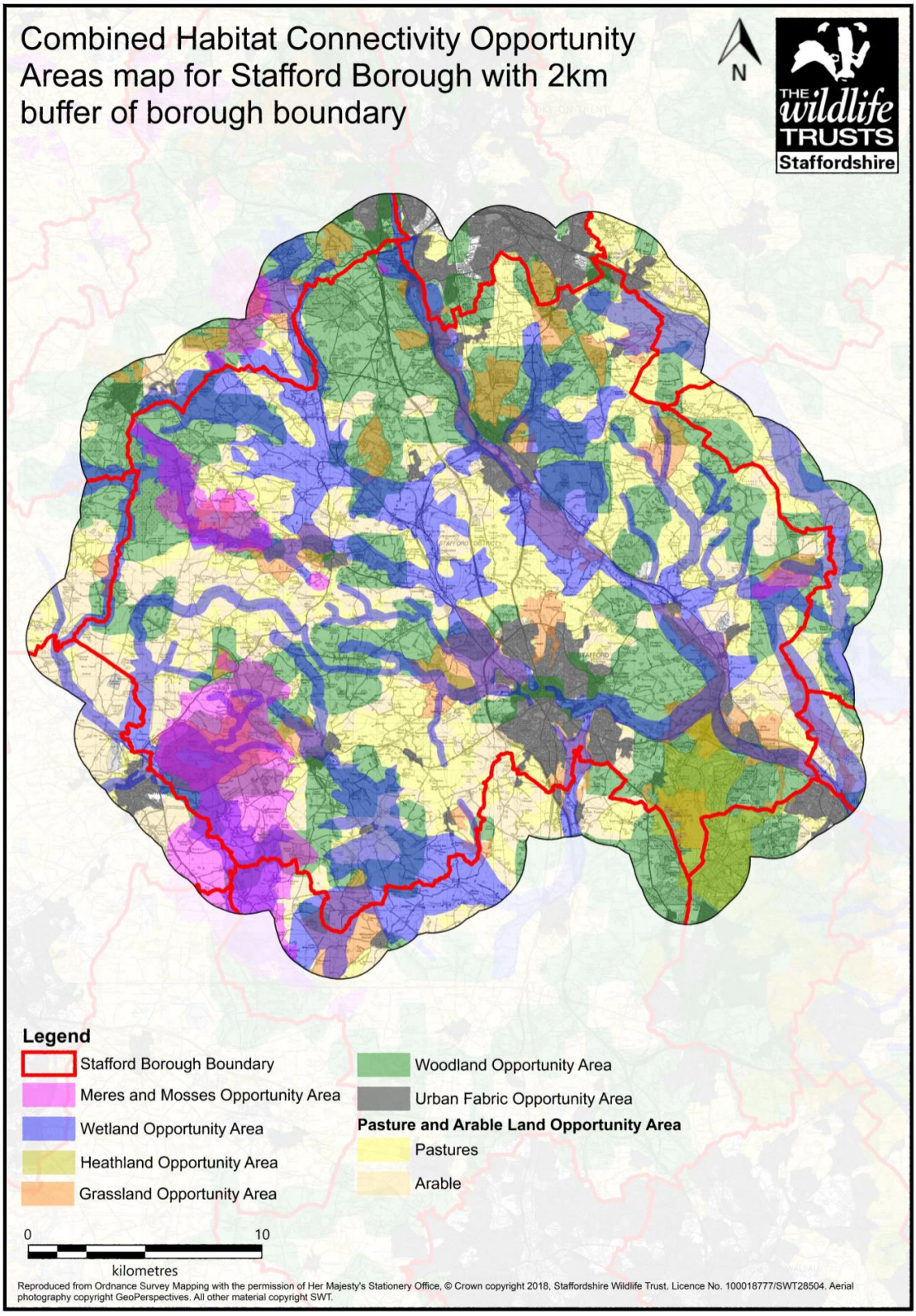
Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan www.sbap.org.uk/

Staffordshire Ecological Record www.staffs-ecology.org.uk

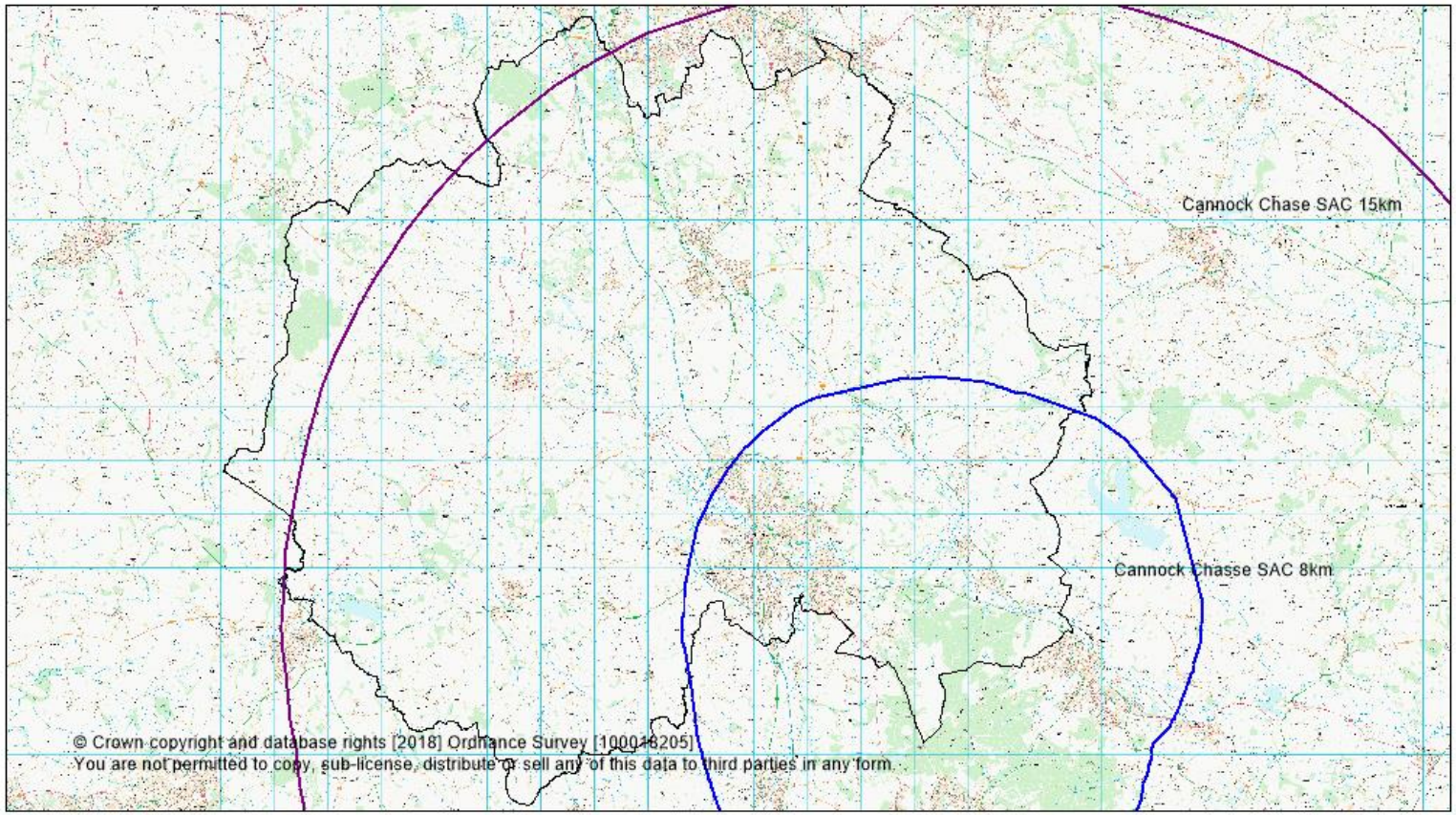
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (providing lists for all current UK BAP species and UK BAP habitats) www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5705

Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership http://www.cannock-chase.co.uk/

Appendix 2: Nature Recovery Network Map



Appendix 3: Cannock Chase Map of Zones



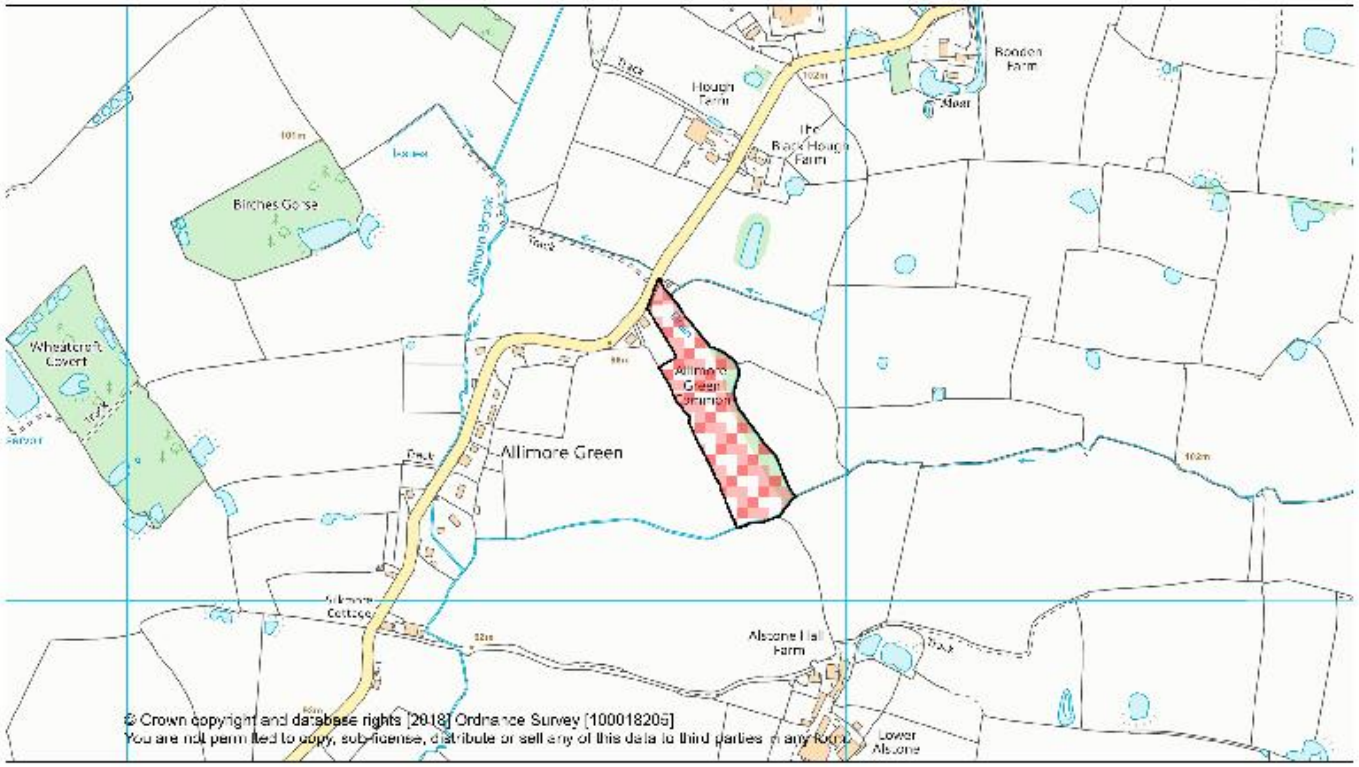
Appendix 4: Designated Biodiversity Sites

Site Name	Description	Designation	Size (ha)	Accessibility
Allimore Green Common	Wet pasture	SSSI	2.7	Public
Aqualate Mere	Largest natural lake in the West Midlands	SSSI, NNR, RAMSAR	72	Public
Astonfields Balancing Lakes	Created for flood defence but has evolved over the years to provide a number of habitats	LNR	4	Public
Barlaston and Rough Close Common	Dry heath and dry acid grassland, abundant with heather, bilberry and bell heather	LNR	14.9	Public
Baswich Meadows	Unimproved, low-lying permanent pasture.	SSSI	13.1	Private
Burnt Wood	Semi-natural woodland, with remnants of ancient broadleaved woodland.	SSSI	41.3	Private/Forestry Commission – paths through
Cannock Chase	Heathland and woodland	AONB, SSSI, SAC	68.65 (sq kilometre)	Public
Chartley Moss	Largest floating bog. A raft of peat about 3, thick floats on a 13m deep lake.	SSSI, NNR, RAMSAR	107.4	Public
Cop Mere	Lake. Areas of dry and marshy and unimproved pasture fringe of dry woodland.	SSSI, RAMSAR	37.4	Private
Doley Common	Acid grassland/heath	SSSI	17.4	Private
Doxey Marshes	Wet grassland habitat	SSSI	129.3	Public
Ferndown	Meadow and scrub woodland	LNR	6.7	Public
Goodall Meadow (formerly known as Stone North meadow)	Floodplain meadow	LNR	8.4	Public
Kings and Hargreaves Woods	Wood	SSSI	45.7 and 11.8	Public
Kingsmead Marsh	Wetland	LNR	7.8	Public
Kingston Pool Covert (south)	Damp woodland	LNR	4.6	Public
Loynton Moss	Grassland, wetland, woodland.	SSSI	13.7	Public
Mottey Meadows	Wet meadow	SSSI, NNR, SAC	43.6	Private

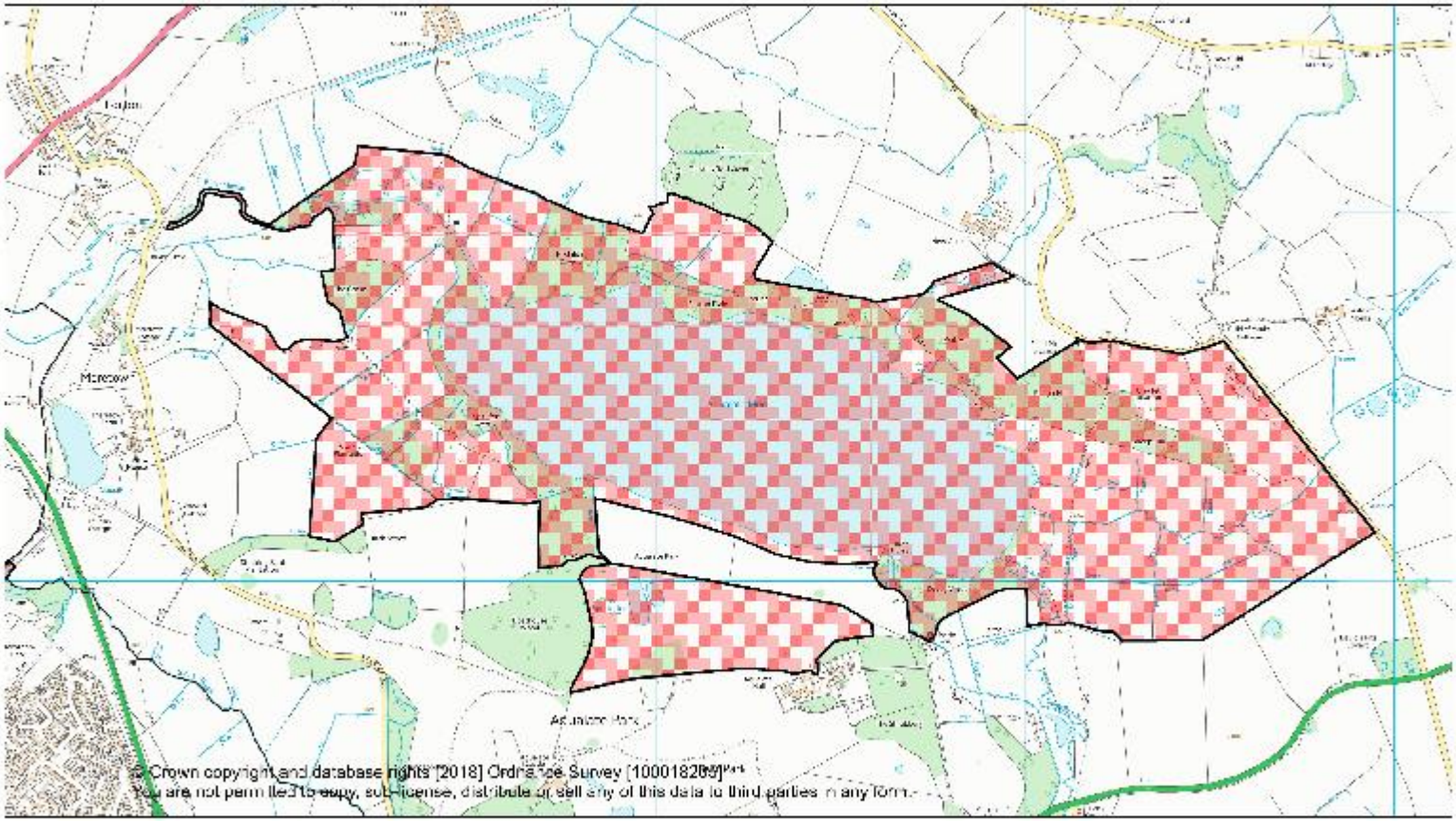
Milford Quarry	Old gravel pit, exposures of the Lower Triassic Bunter Pebble Bed	SSSI	6.3	Public
Pasturefields Saltmarsh	Saltmarsh	SSSI, SAC	7.8	Private (Owned by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust)
Rawbones Meadow	Wet meadow	SSSI	21.3	Private
Stafford Brook	Carr woodland, acidic marshy grassland and fen	SSSI	6.9	Owned by Stafford
Stone Meadows and Crown Meadow	Three separate meadows	LNR	14.2 3 (Crown Meadow)	Public

Appendix 5: Maps of designated sites

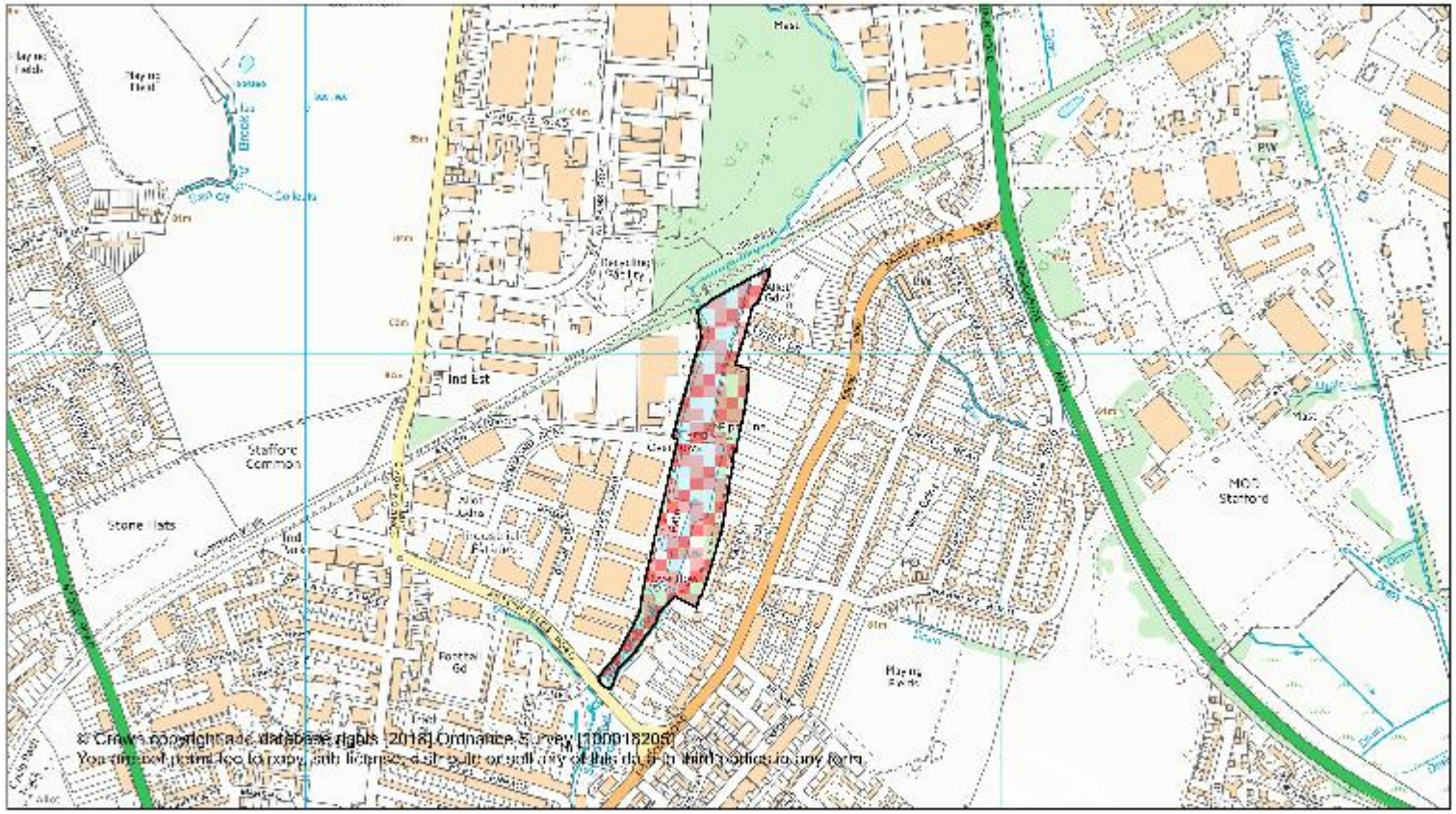
Allimore Green Common SSSI



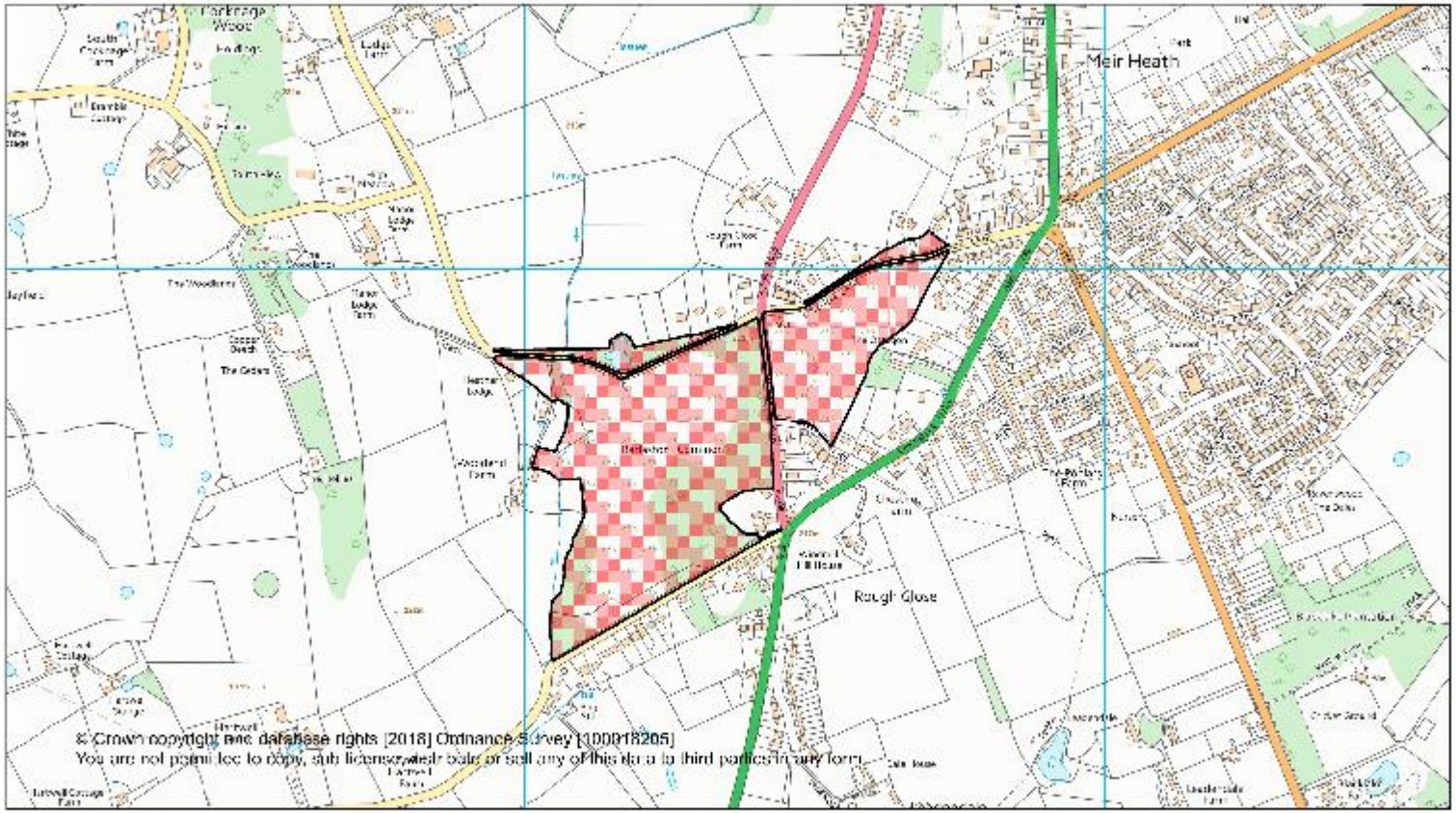
Aqualate Mere SSSI, NNR, RAMSAR



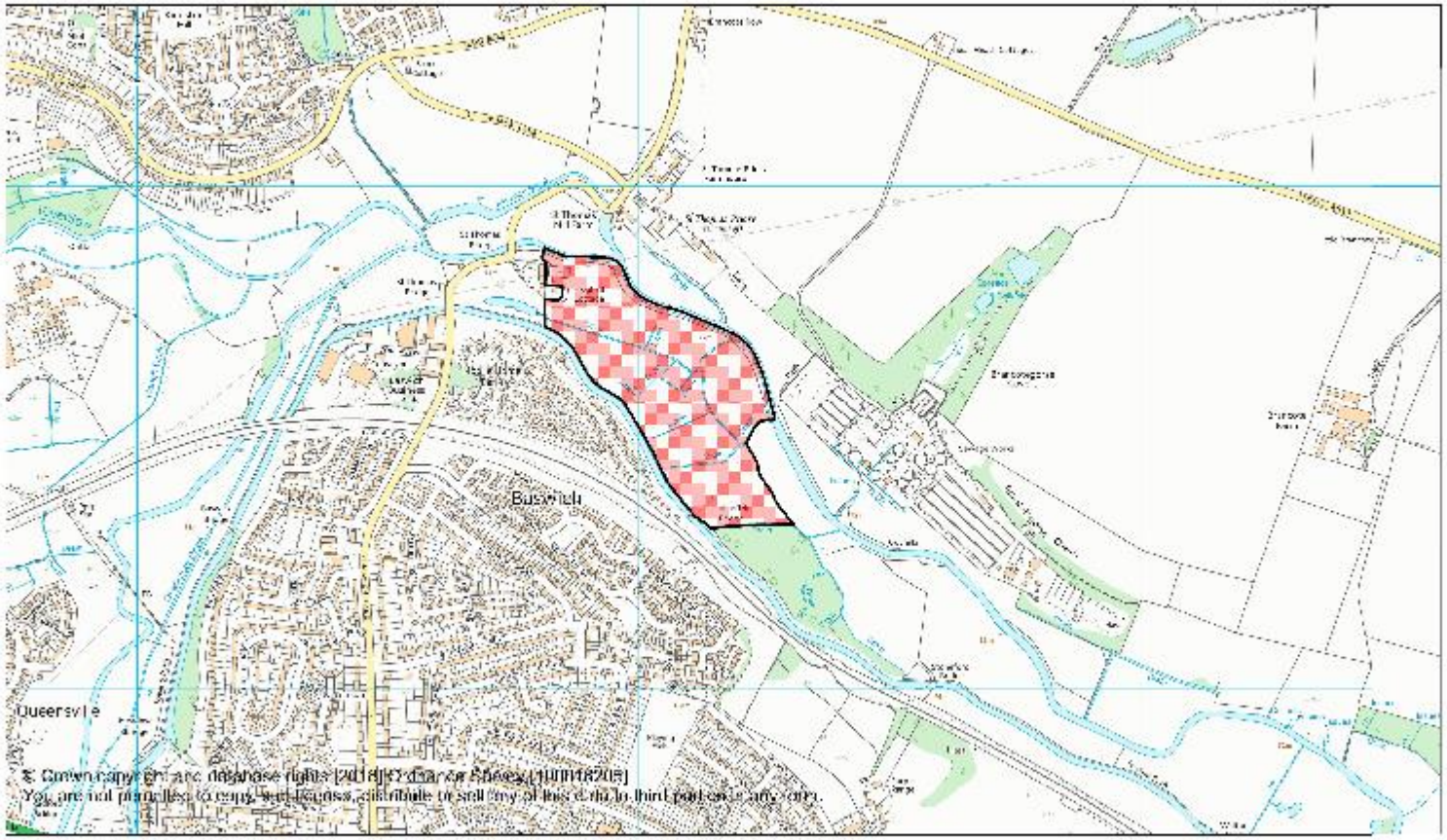
Astonefields Balancing Lakes LNR



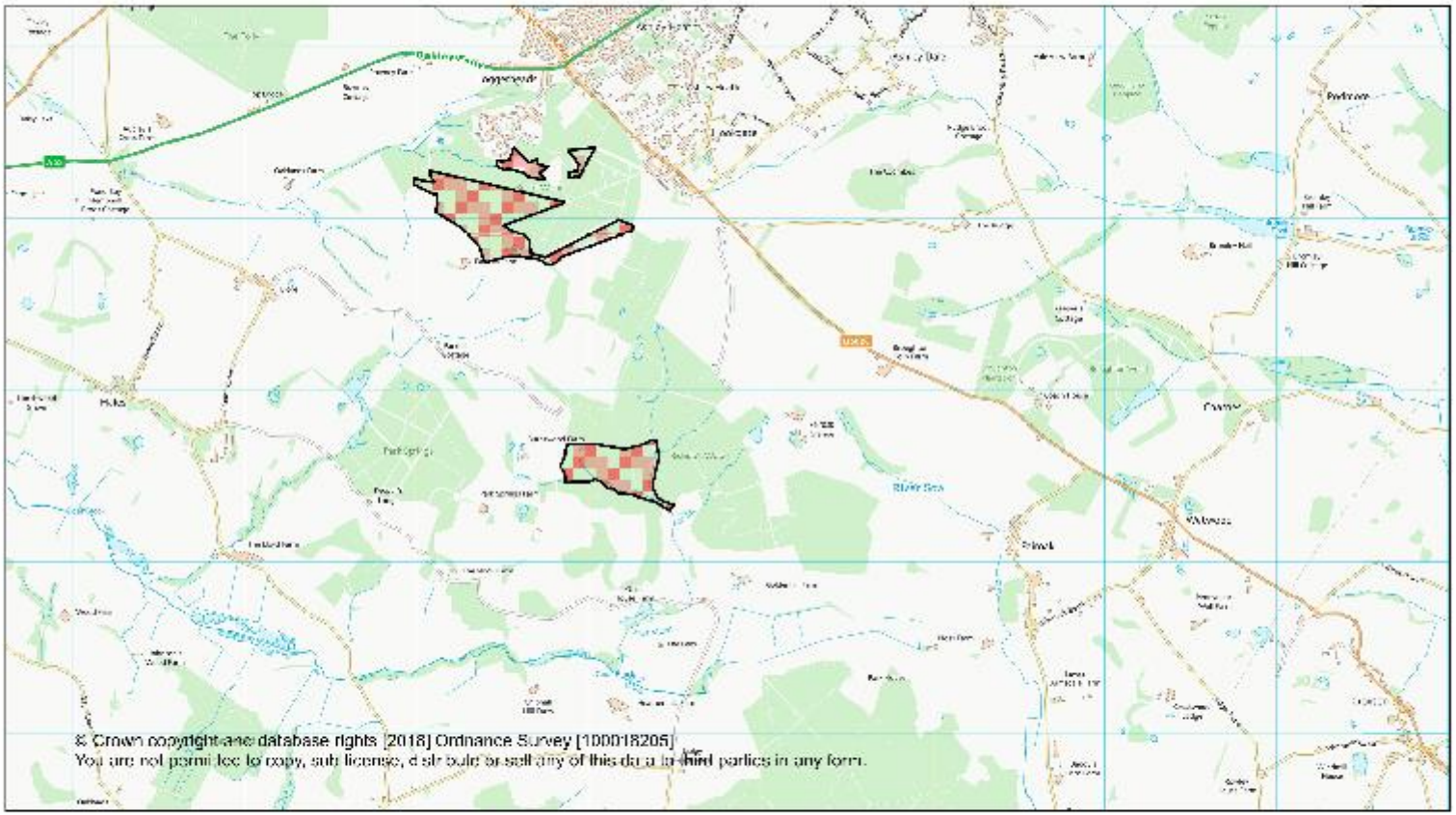
Barlaston and Rough Close Common LNR



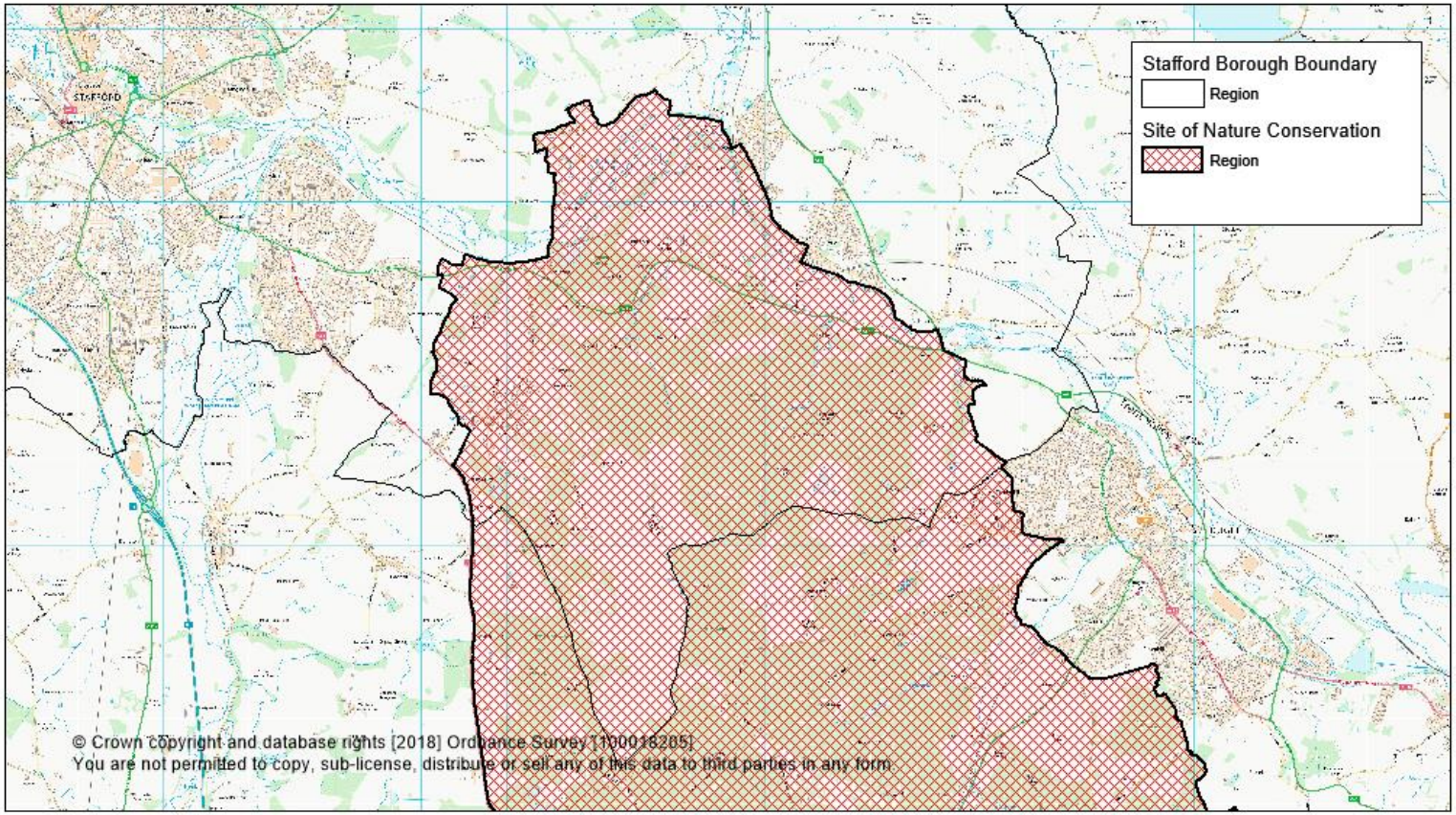
Baswich Meadows SSSI

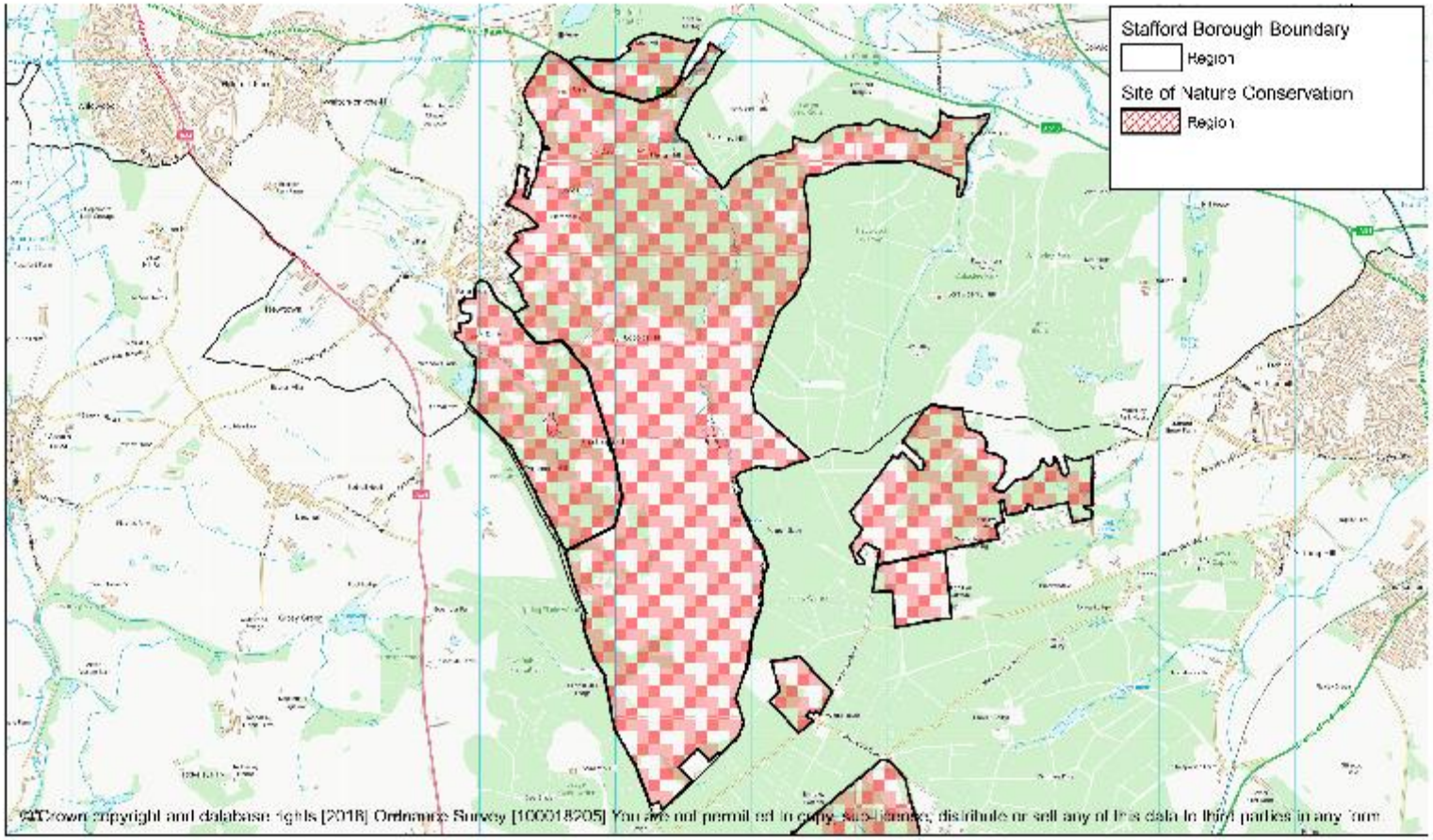


Burntwood SSSI



Cannock Chase AONB, SSSI




Stafford Borough Boundary
Region
Site of Nature Conservation
Region
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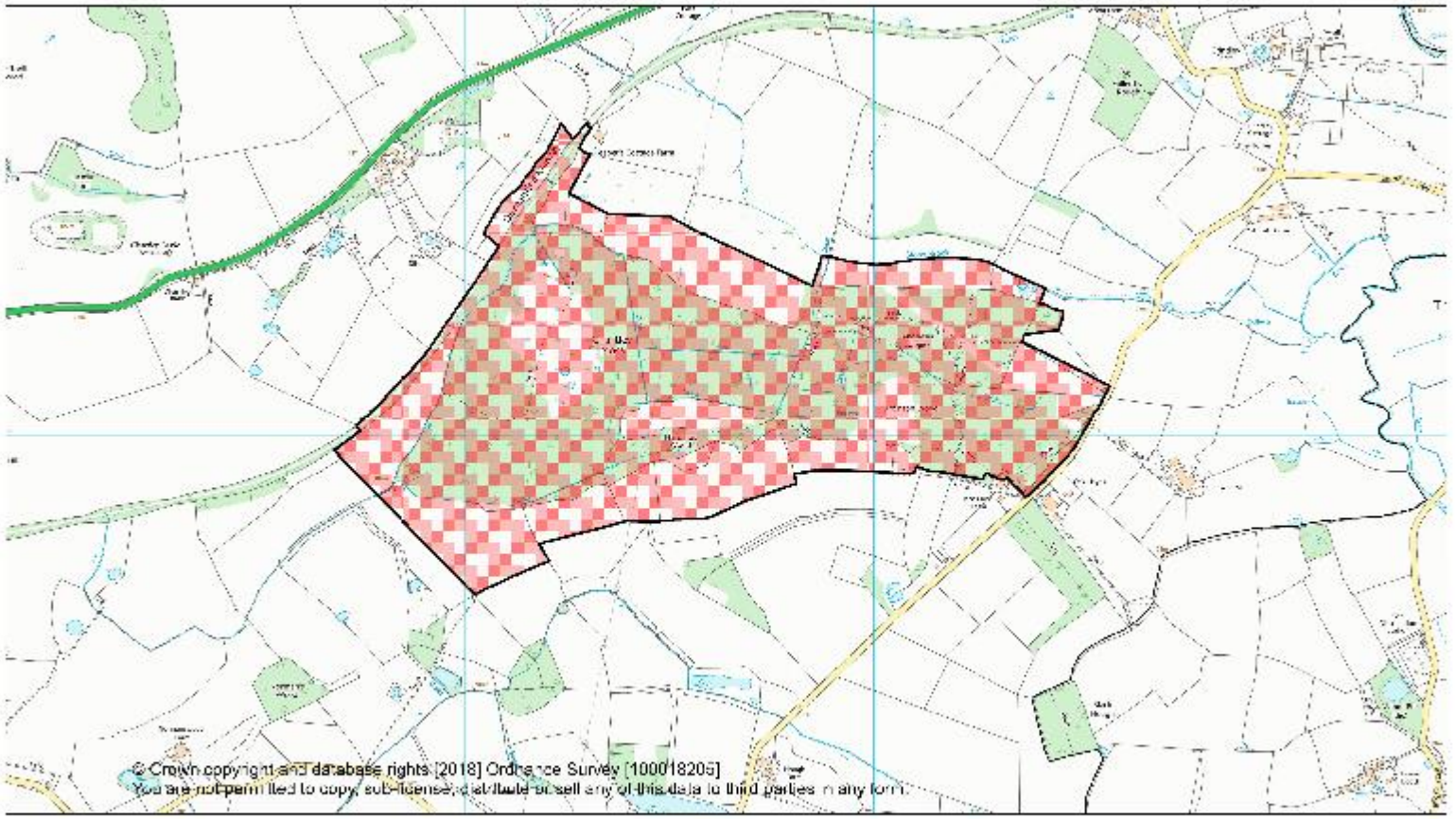
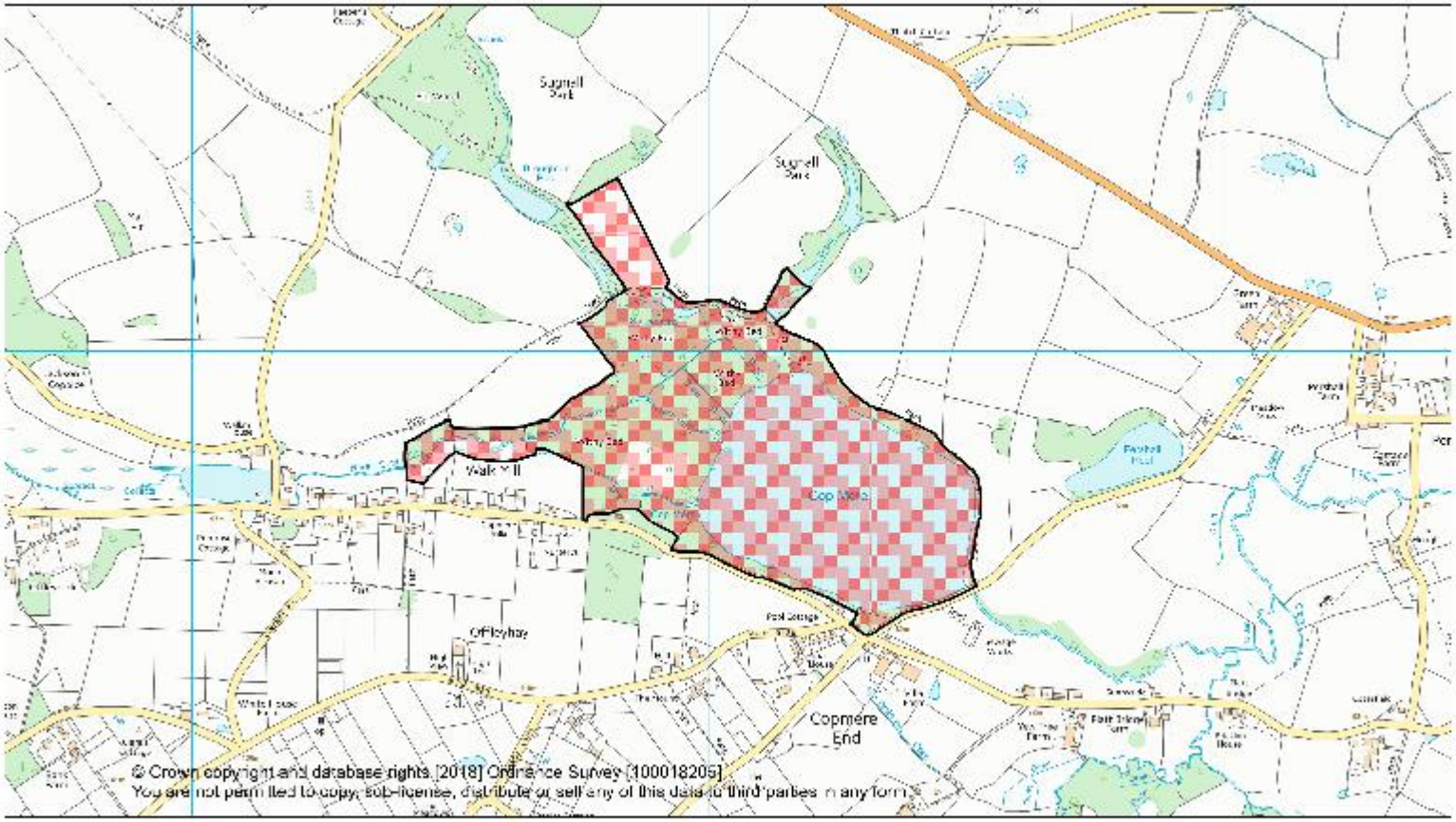
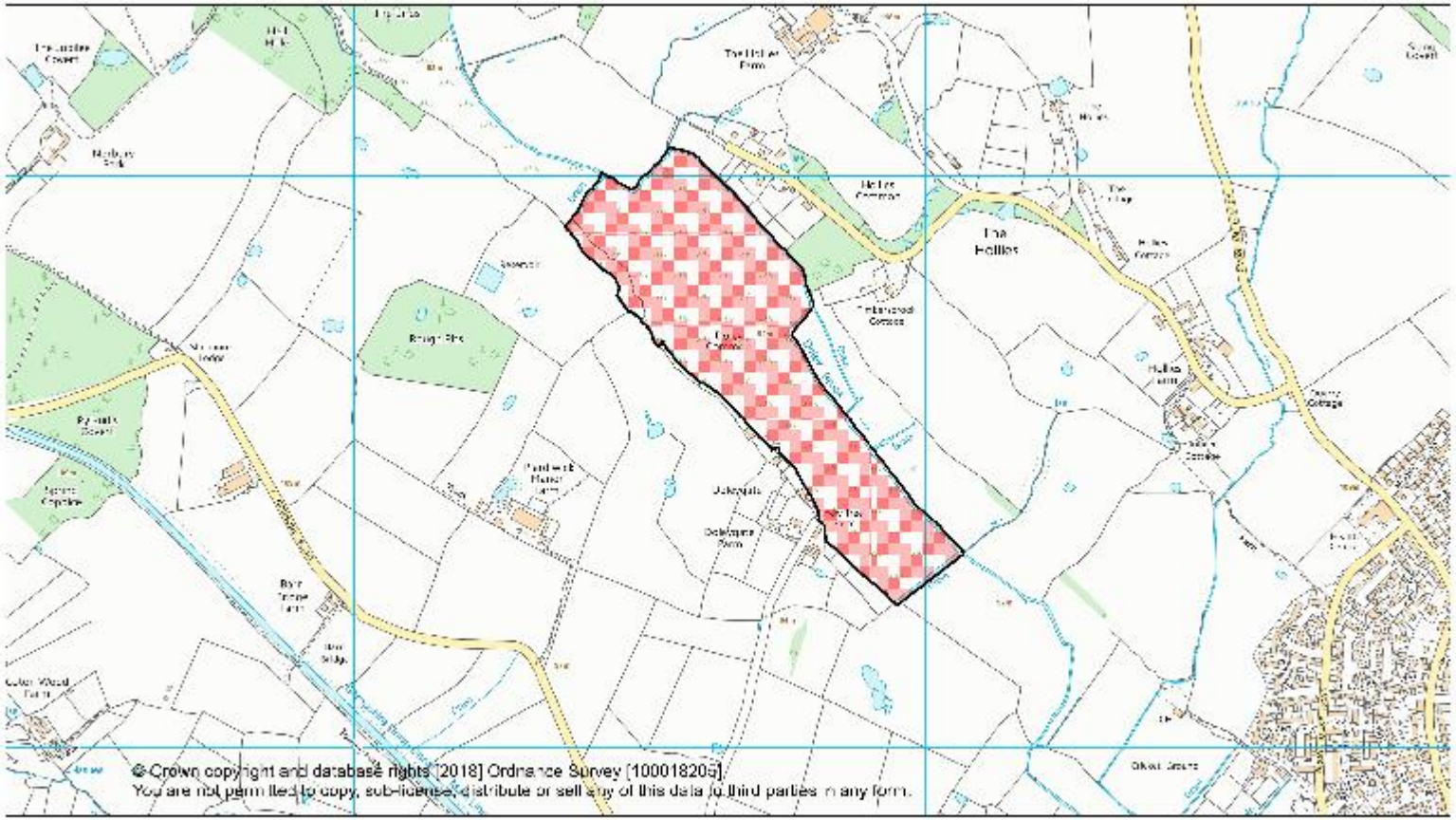
Chartley Moss SSSI, NNR, RAMSAR



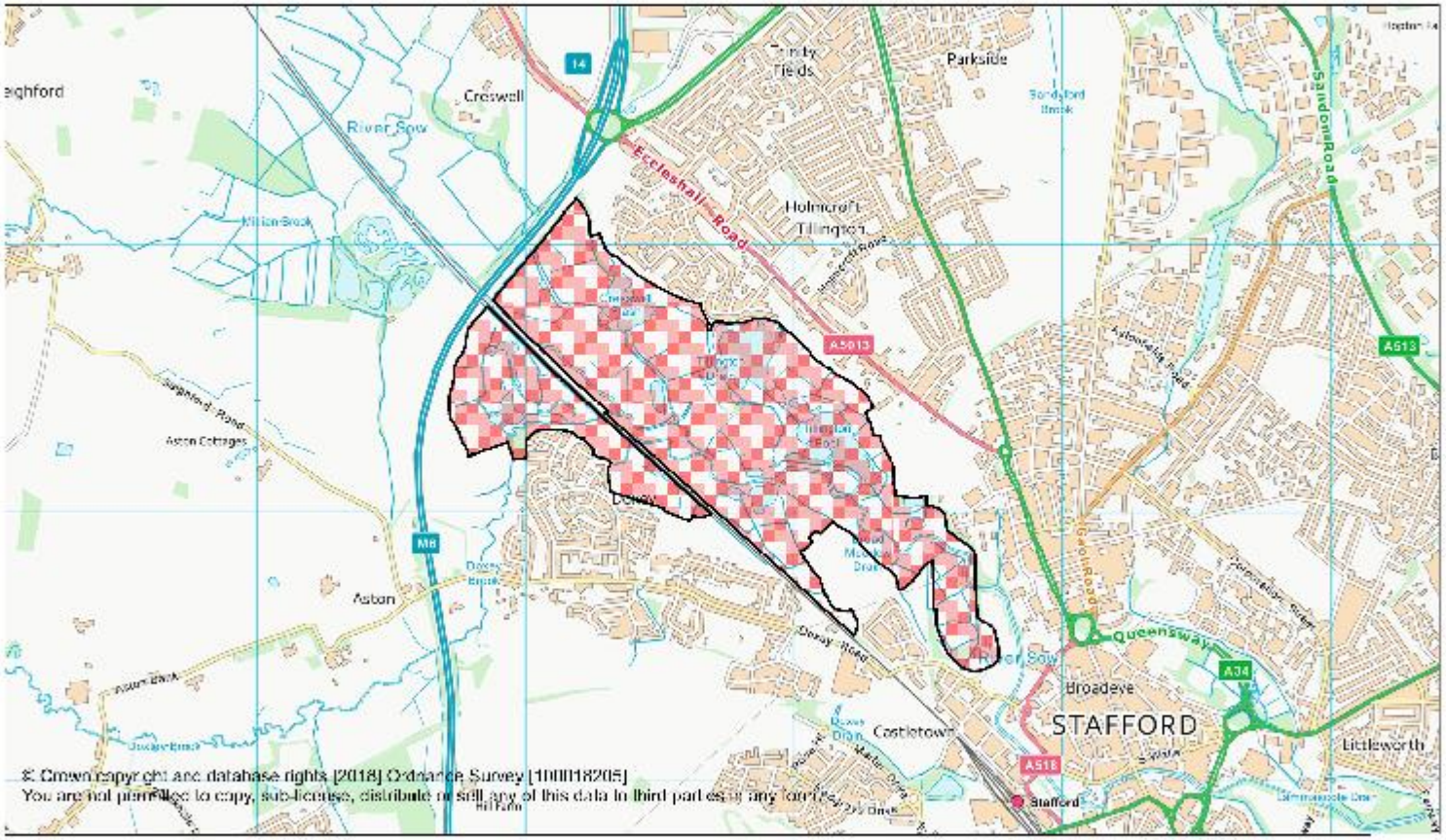
Cop Mere SSSI, RAMSAR



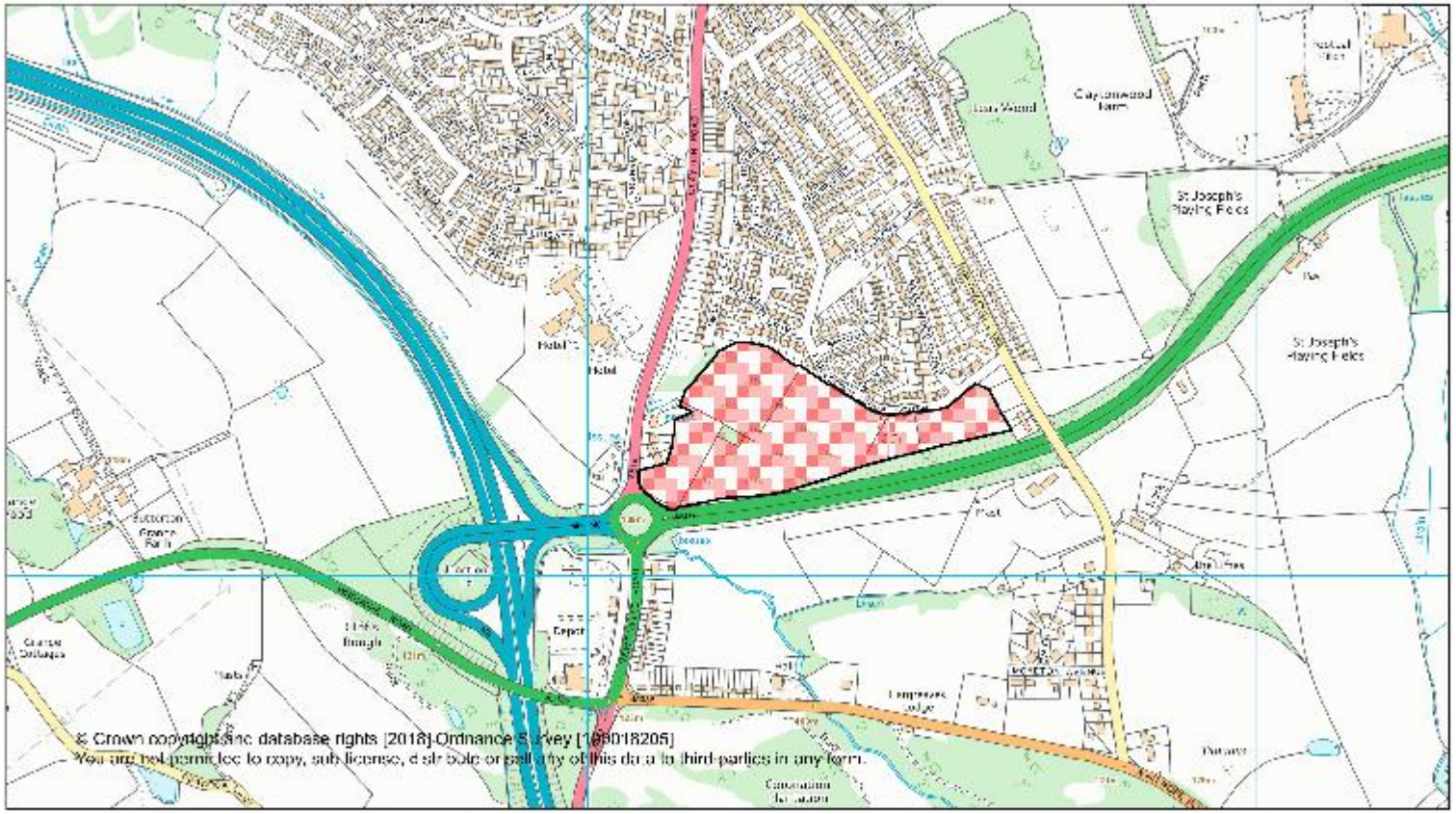
Doley Common SSSI



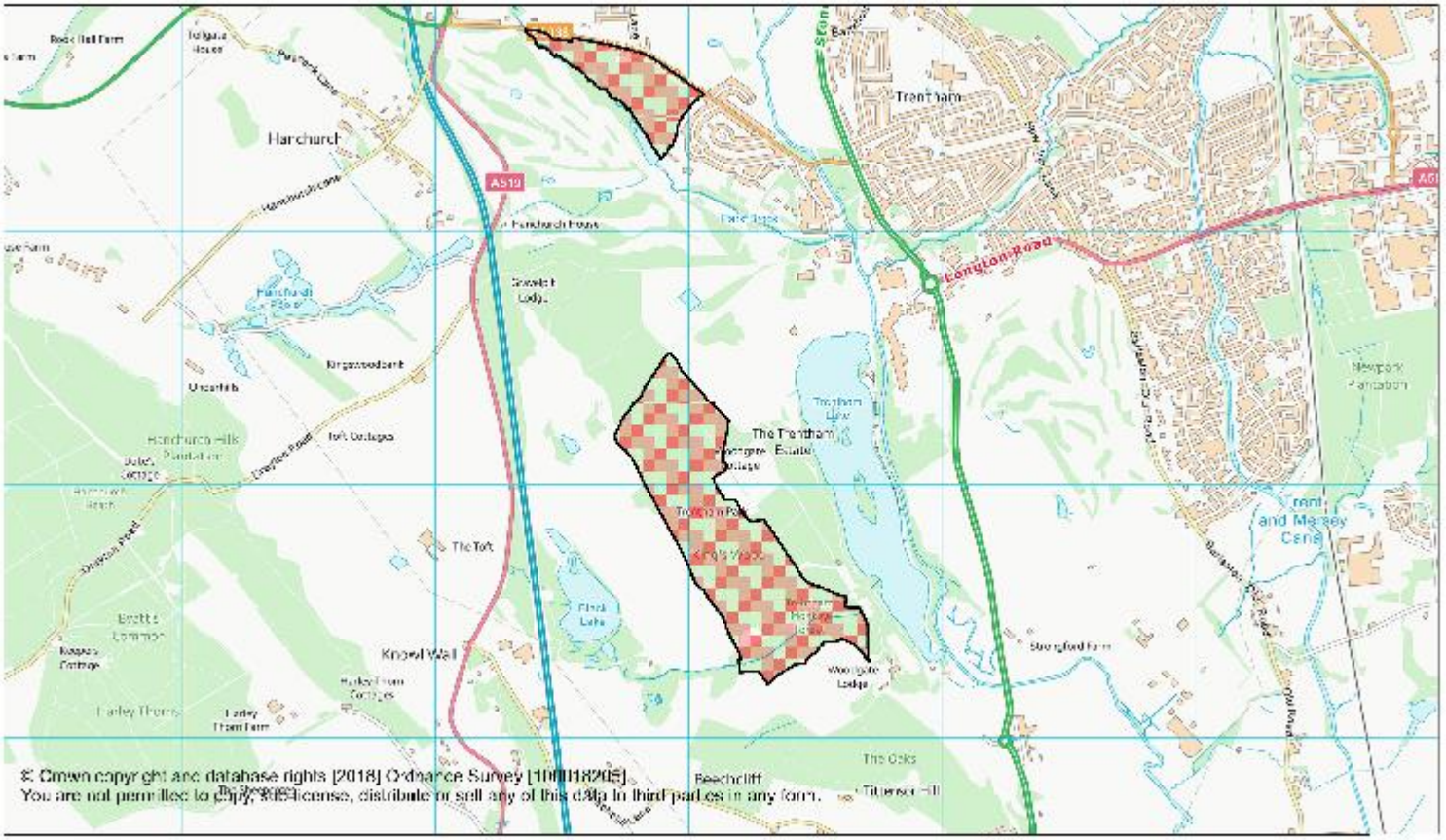
Doxey and Tillington Marshes SSSI



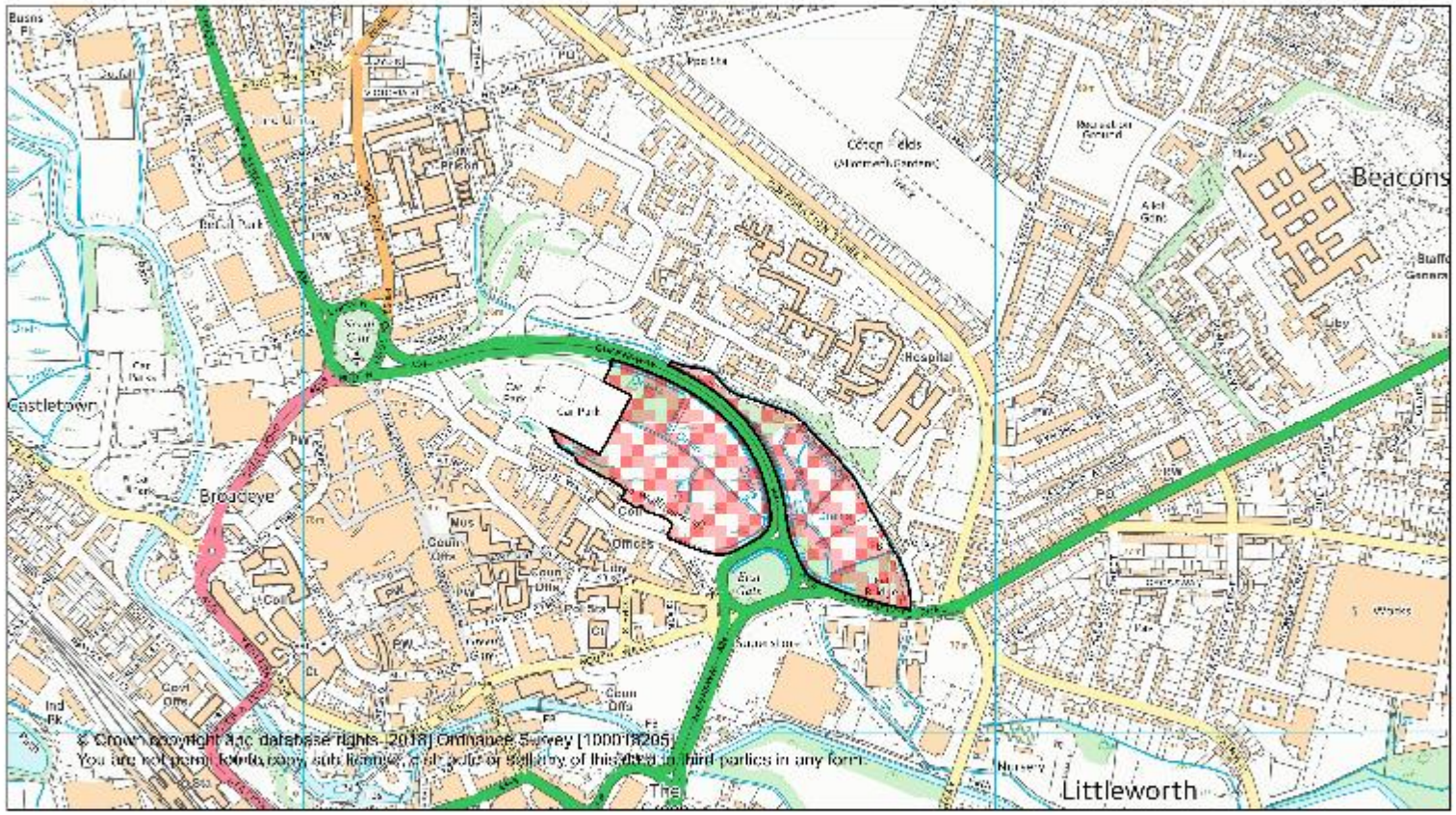
Ferndown LNR



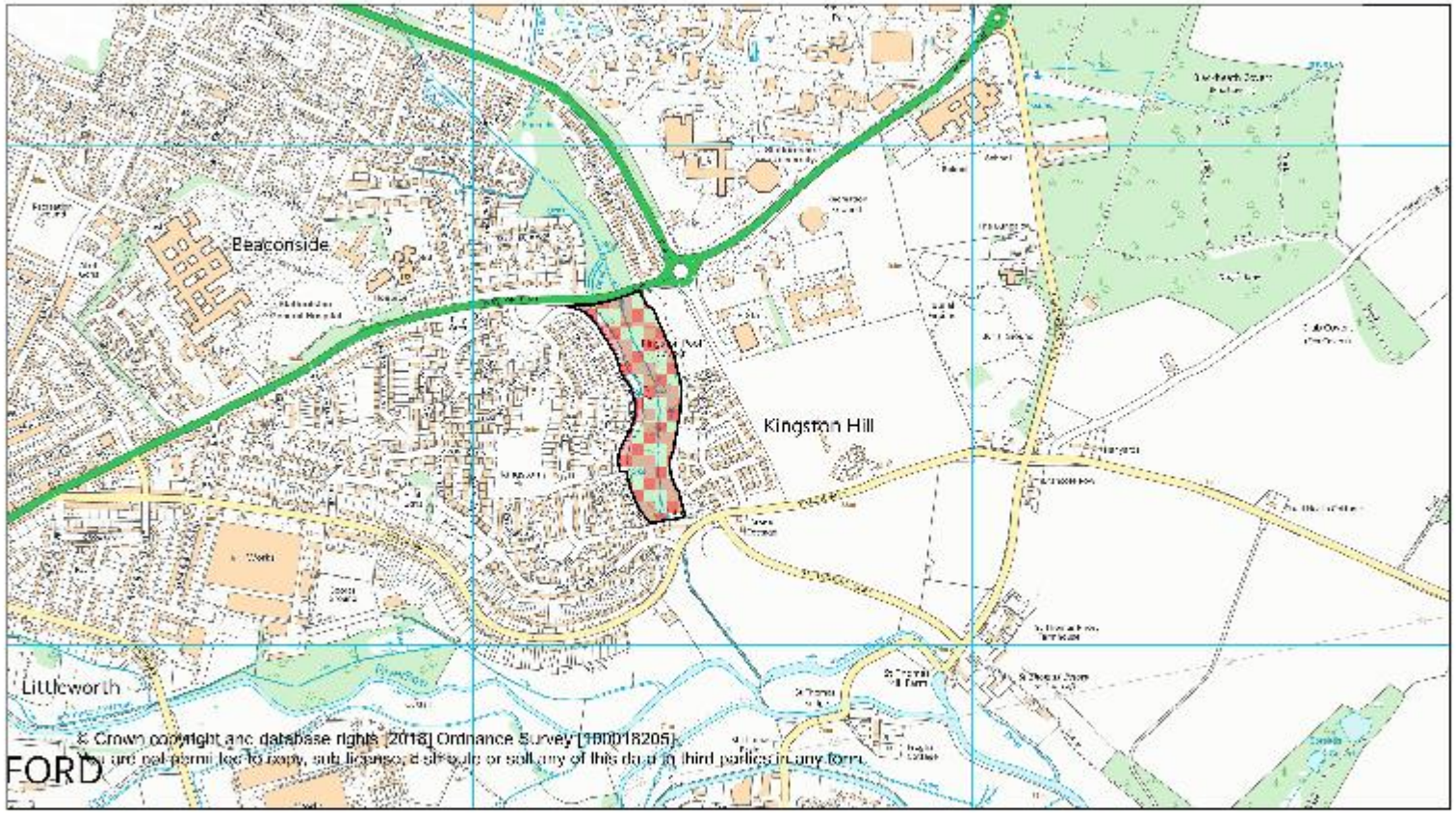
Kings and Hargreaves Wood SSS!



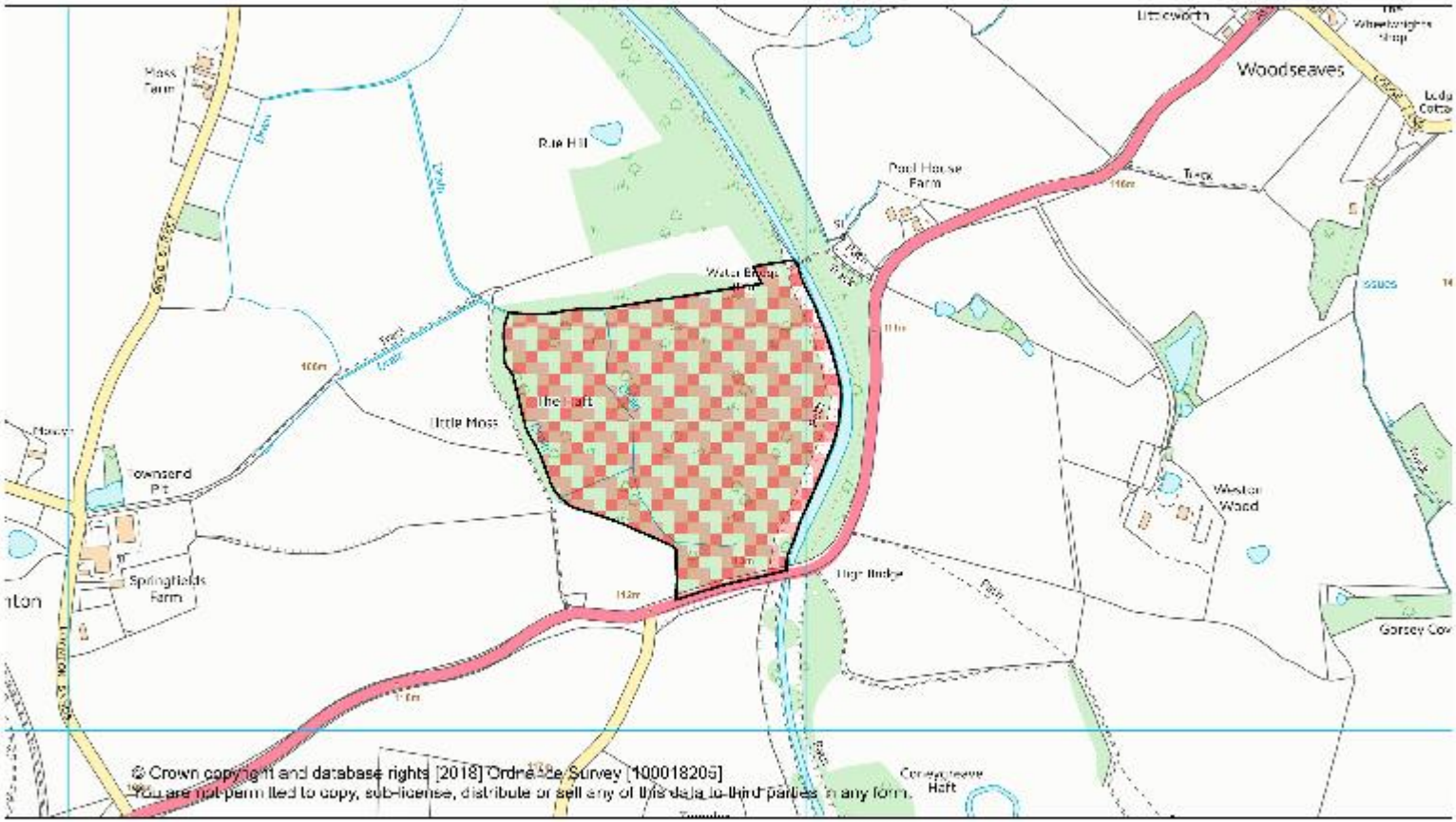
Kingsmead Marsh LNR



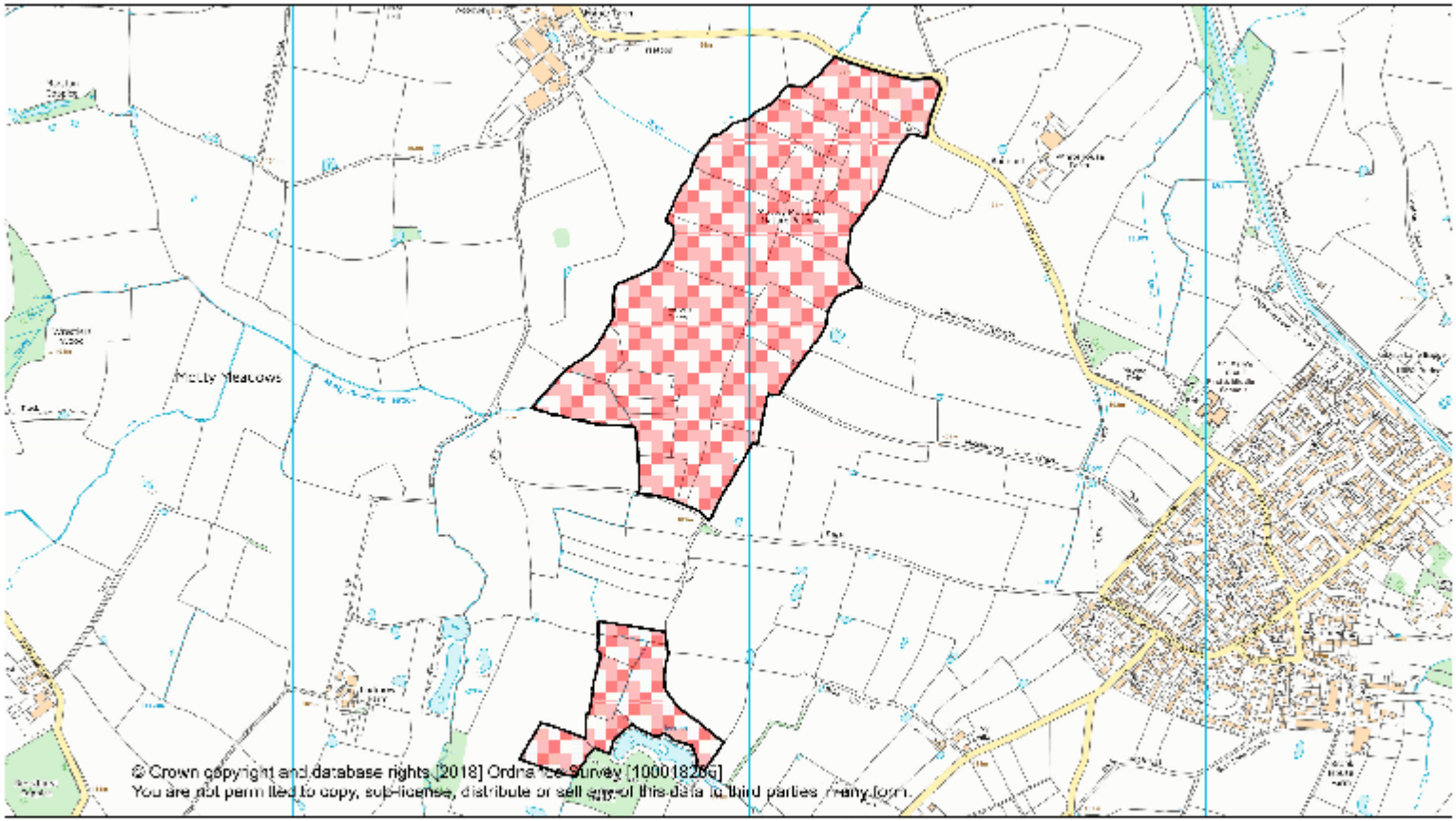
Kingston Pool Covert LNR



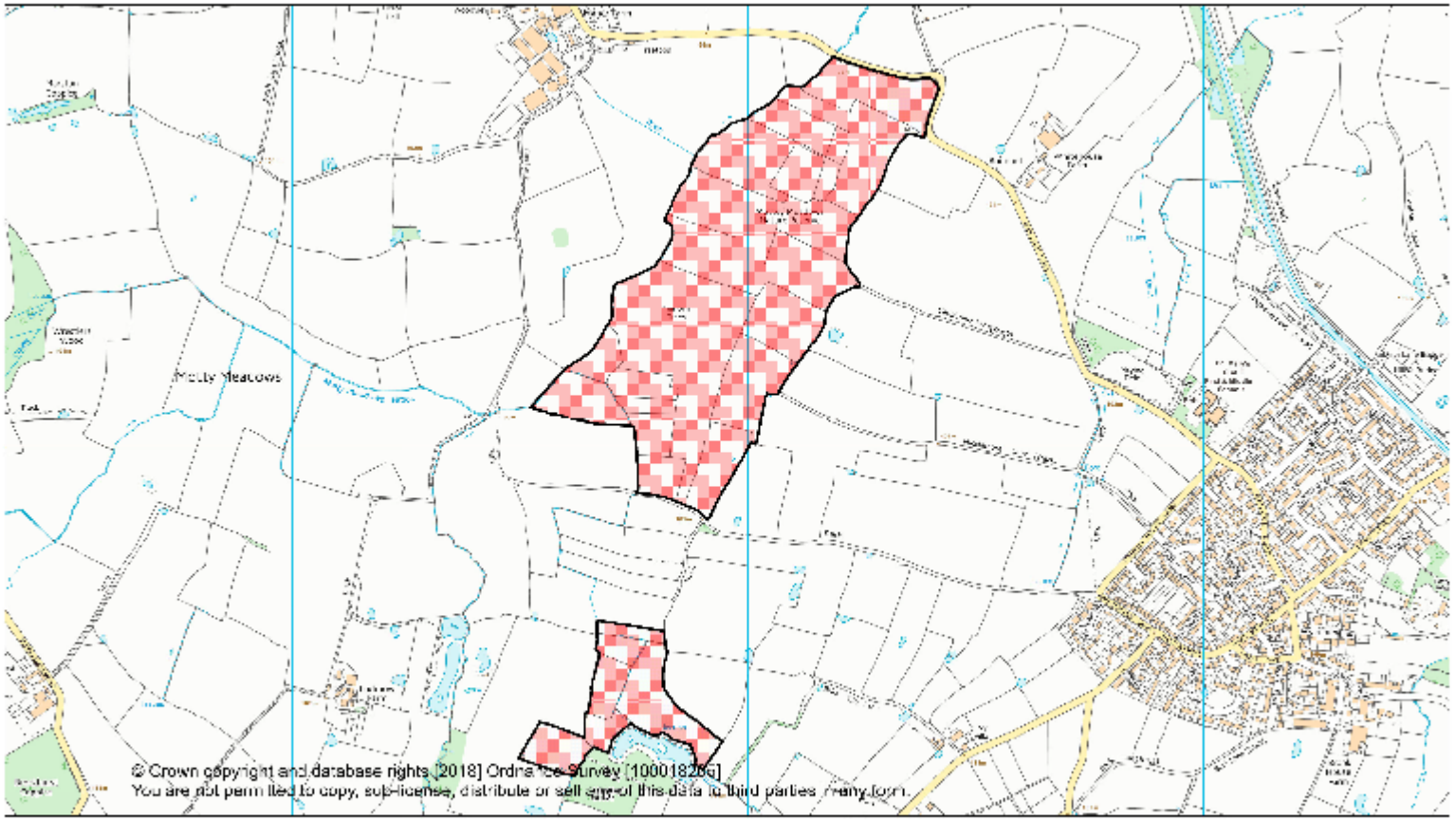
Loynton Moss SSSI



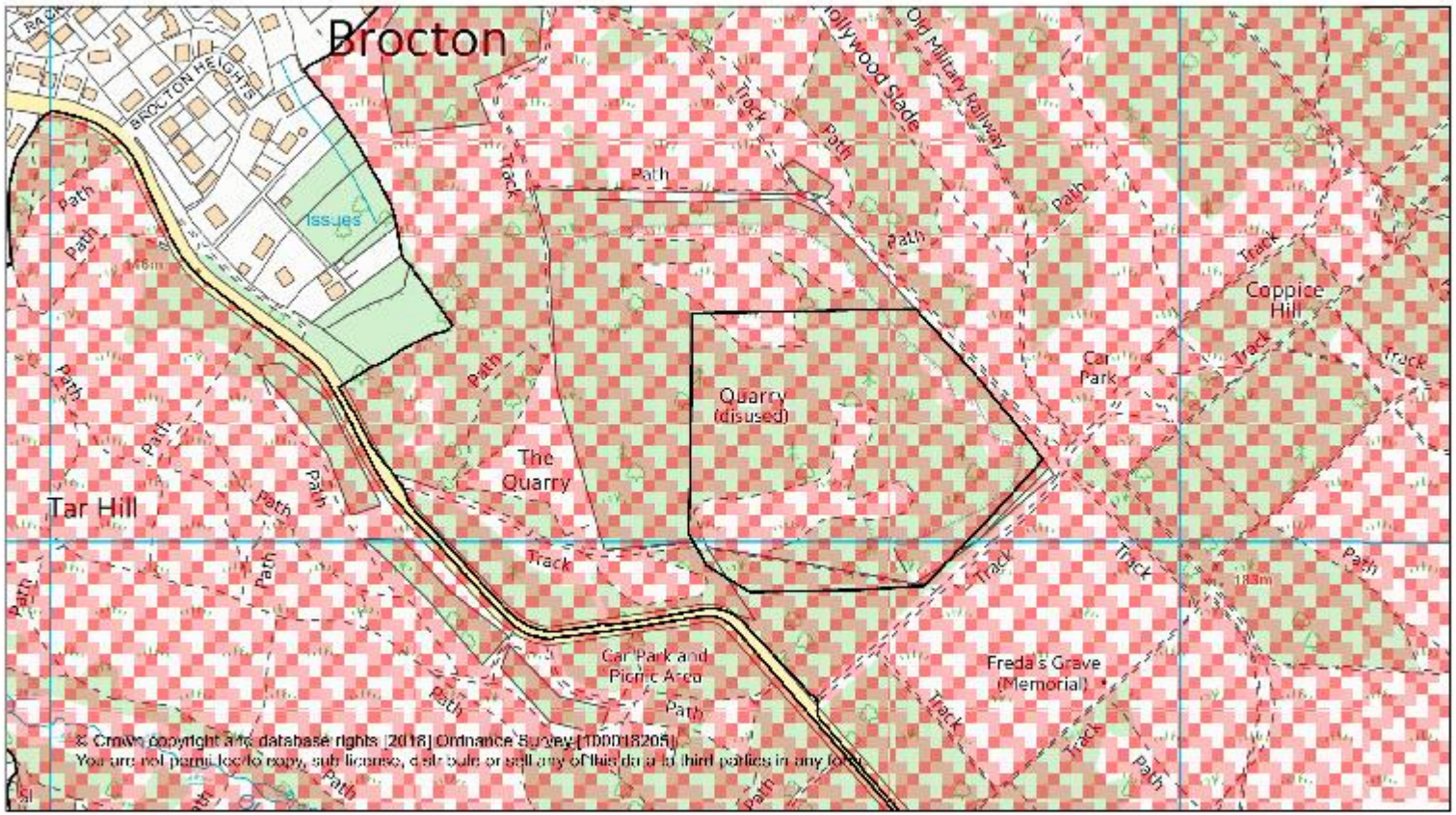
Mottey Meadows SSSI, NNR, SAC



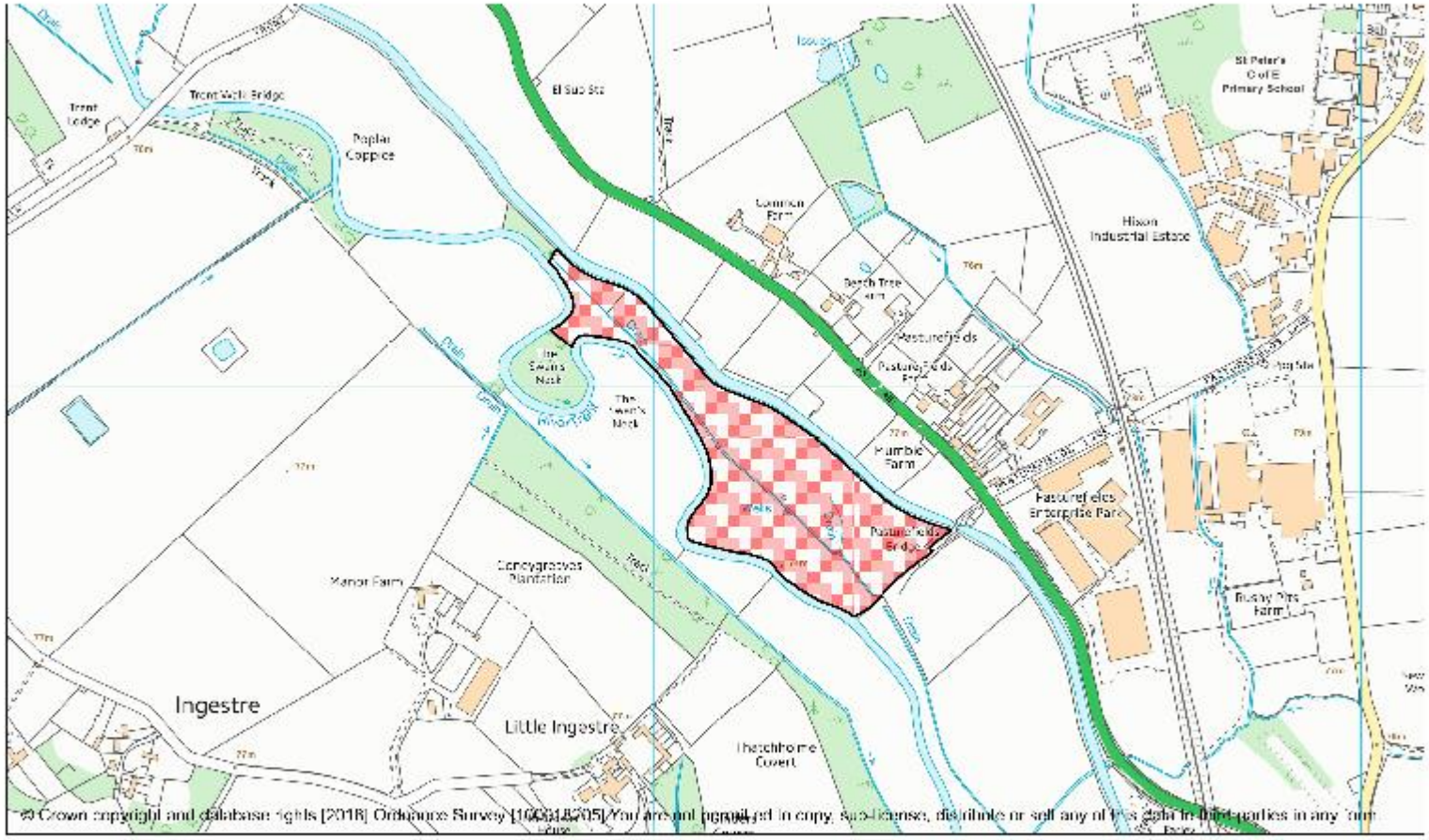
Milford Quarry SSSI (within Cannock Chase AONB)



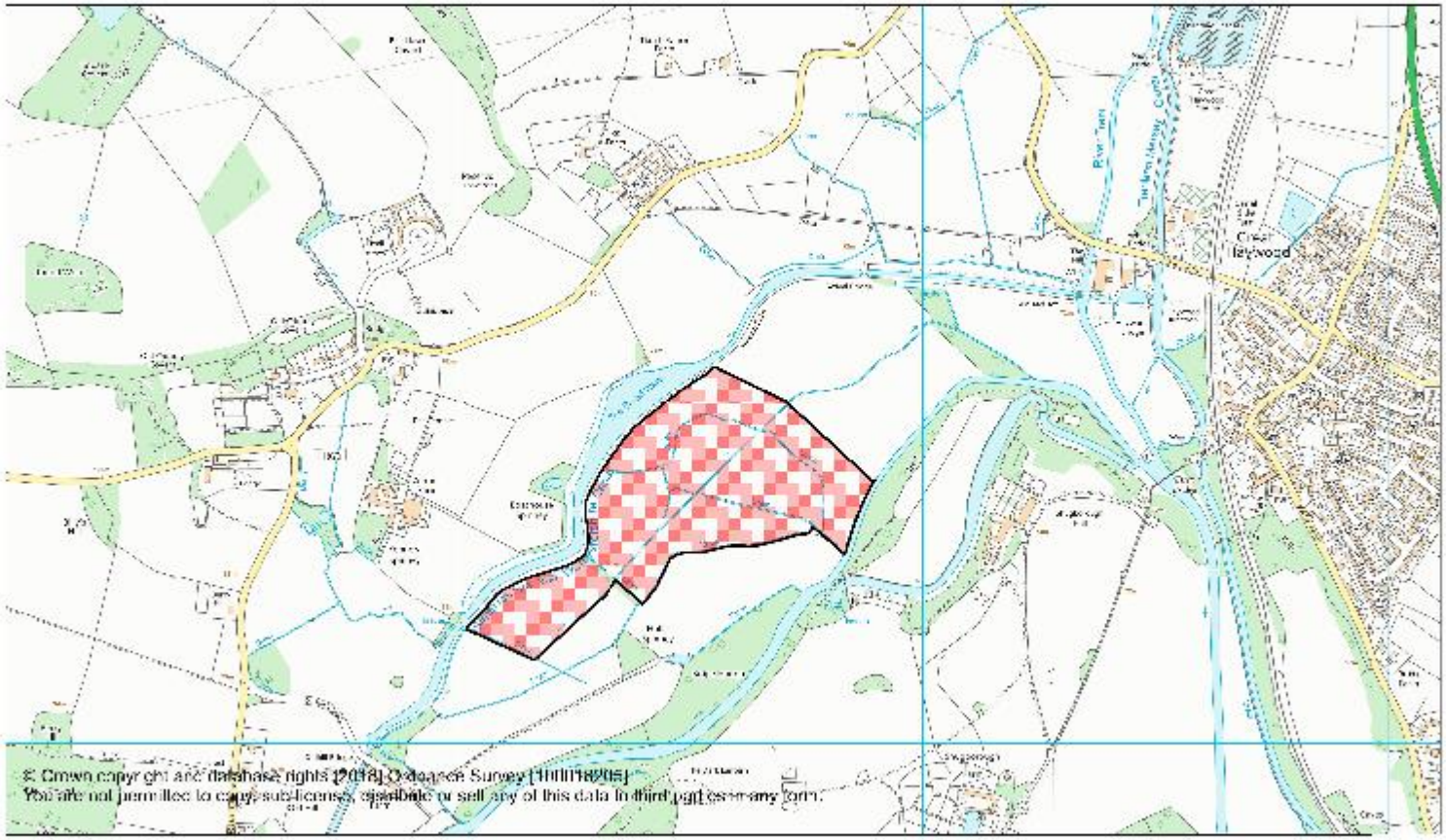
Milford Quarry SSSI



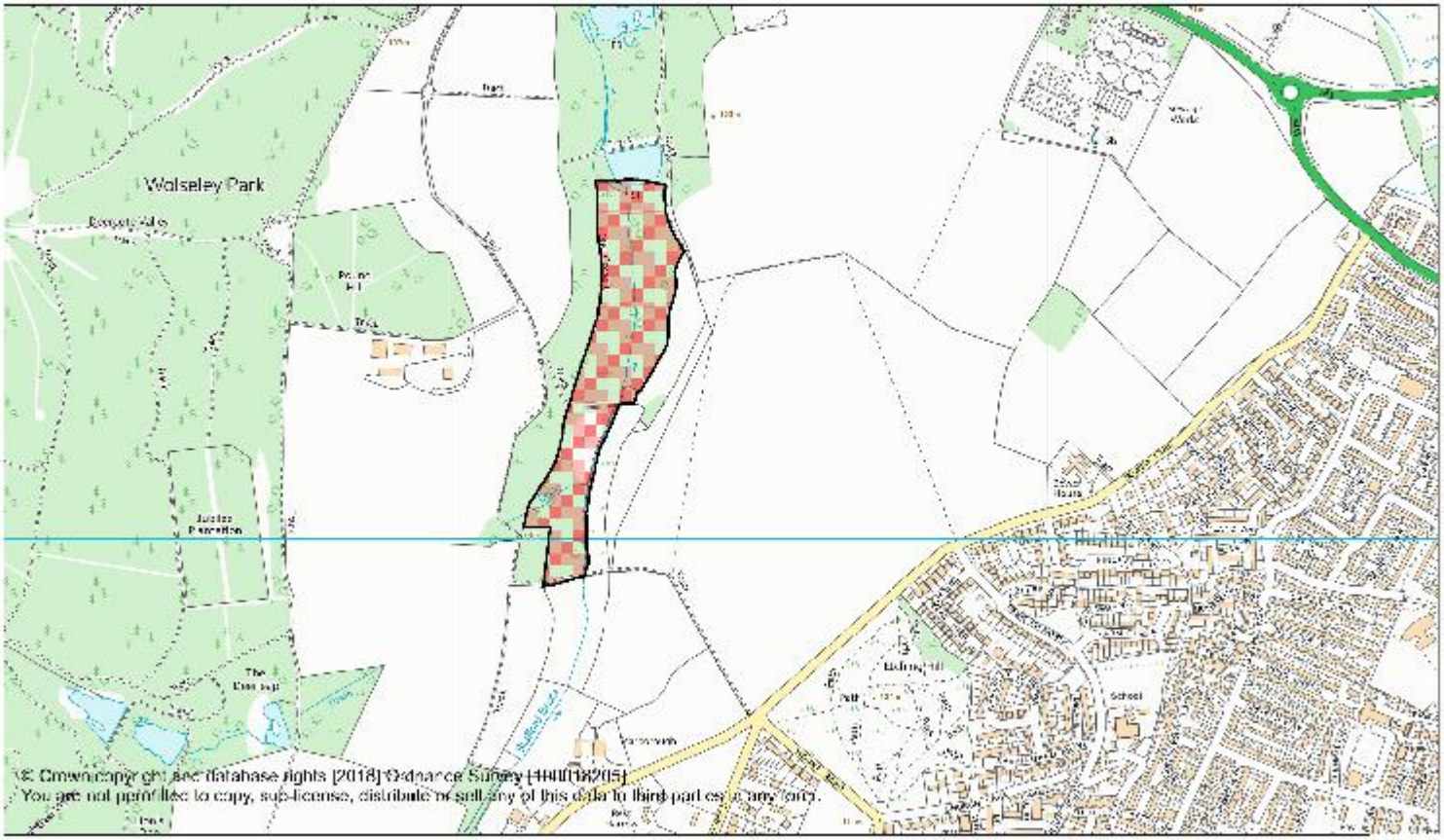
Pasturefields Saltmash SSSI, SAC



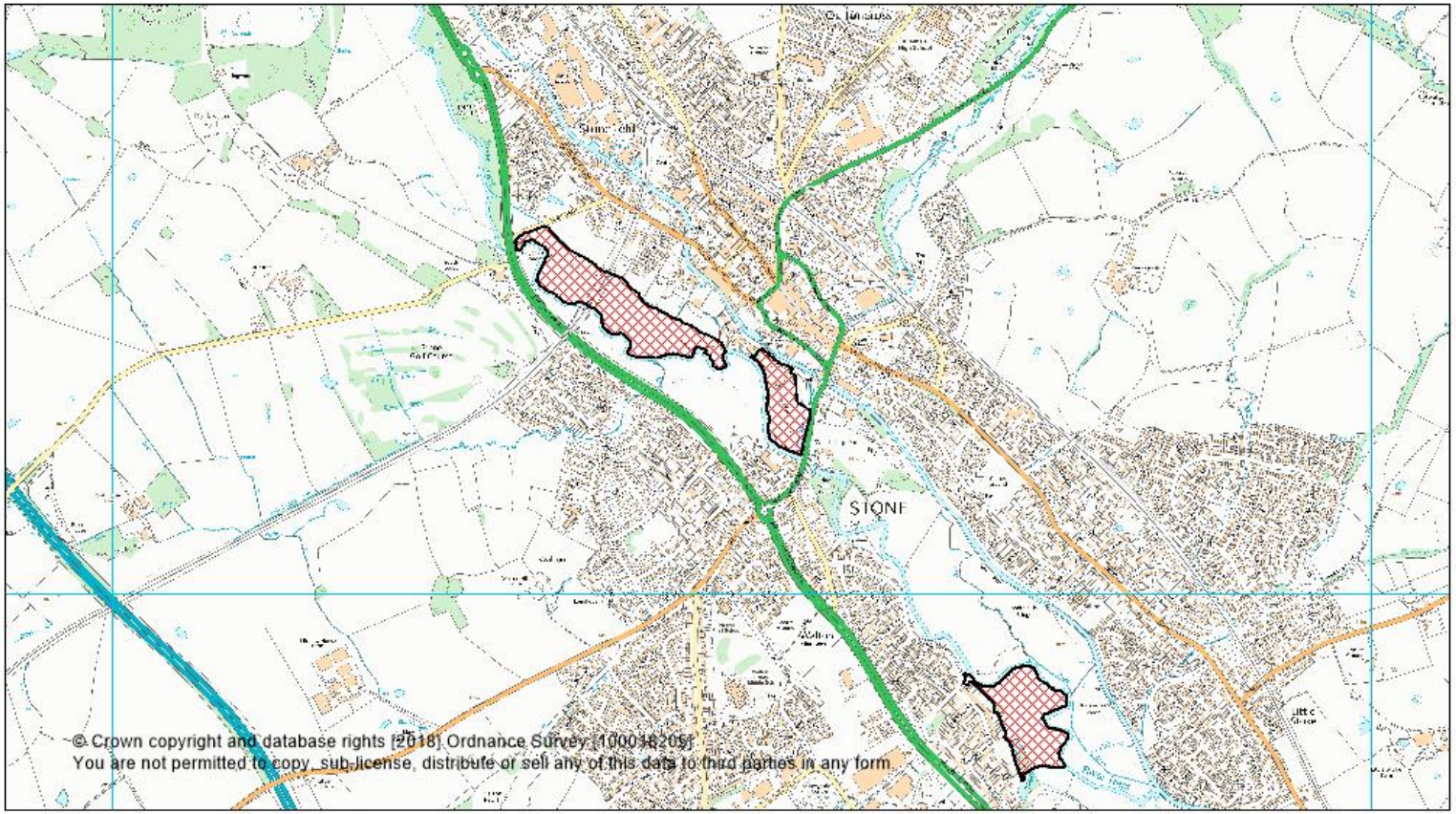
Rawbones Meado SSSI



Stafford Brook SSSI



Stone Meadows and Crown Meadows



Appendix 6: Sites of Biological Interest

Rugeley Fen
Myott's Wood Pool
Radford Meadows (south)
A518 Verge (west of Carry Lane)
Shirleywich Farm (west of)
Lount Farm
Booden Grange
Leightons Drumble
Dunn's Wood
Derrington Millennium Green
Doley Brook
Aston Hall Farm
Little Gorse (north-east of)
Stafford Castle

Shugborough Hall and Haywood Cliffs
Outwoods Bank
Polesworth and Lindore Woods
Walton Wood
Broadhill Common
Chamberlain's Covert
Bagnallditch
Reulemill Covert
Shredicote Wood
Brocton Hall Golf Course
Knighton Reservoir
Aqualate Drains
Deansbridge Covert
Tunstall Lanes

Hatchwell's Covert
Brook Covert
Jackson's Coppice and Marsh
Canal Spoil Banks
Pollymoor Wood
Badgers Covert
Oulton Coppice
Moat Covert
Mill Haft
Shelmore Wood
Little Campions
Ball's Rough and Gorsey Covert
Walk Mill Pool
Walk Mill Meadow

Hell Hole
Wood Brook Bank
Pershall Pool
Coton (north of)
Rough Pits
Hollies Common
Lake Covert
Dairy House Farm (verge)
Hough Meadows
Large Covert
Walton's Rough
Wootton (north-east of)
Fieldhouse Dingle
Brick Hollow
Butterbank Brook
Yelds Rough

North Walls Marsh
Stafford Common
Astonfields
Hough Drain
Maggie's Fields
Flute Meadows
Church Lane
Stafford Lodges (north of)
Tixall Broad Water
Shirleywich Fields and canal towpath
Colwich Brickworks
Keeper's Cottage to River Blithe
Bishop's Wood
Little Bishop's Wood
Jugbank
Blorepipe Meadows

Rudge Cottages
Bishops Offley Mill
Croxton Lanes
Greatwood Lodge
Pennyquart
Bromley Pool
Greenlane Coppice
Podmore Pool
Middle Coppice
Akesworth Coppice
Redgreat (near)
Blackwaters
Mount Pleasant Farm (wet meadow)
The Alders
Copmere (north-west of)
Chatcull Wood

Brockton Farm (north-west of)
Osier Beds
Hatton Common
Millmeece (south of) (hedges and nearby marl pits)
Swynnerton Old Park
Pilstones Wood
Meece Brook
Yarnfield (south-west of)
Pool House Pool and Green Drive Pools, Tittensor
The Drumble, Stone
Darlaston Wood
Lakeside Golf Course
Barlaston (north of)
Common Plot
Meaford Sludge Beds

Radford Wood and Coppice Wood
Pirehill (north of)
Cotwalton Drumble
Mill Cottage (south of) and Mill Lane
Knenhall Farms (west of)
Holly Wood
Moddershall Oaks
Peakshill Wood (north of)
Stallington Heath
Oulton House (north of)
Garshall House (north-west of)
Garshall Green (road verges north of)
Mount Pleasant (west of)
Milwich (east of)
Brick Kiln Pits
Rookery Drumble

Spon Drumble
Hollybank Ditches
Milwich to Garshall Green (road banks)
Drumble Wood
Wheatlow Brooks
Rough Moor
Drumble and Platt Meadows
Adbaston Pools
Furlong Pits
Shelmore Trough
Kingston Pool Covert (south)
Hopton Pools (north of)
Monument Plantation and adjacent land
Sandon Wood
Chartley Castle
Moss Farm (north-west of)

Hatton Mill
Clifford's Wood
Closepit Plantation
Beechcliff Wood, Swynnerton
Lodge Covert, Swynnerton
Wing House (north-west of)
Highlow Meadows, Swynnerton
Poolhouse Wood
A34 Woodlands, Tittensor Common

Micklow Wood
Stone (west of)
Trent Wood
The Orange Hayes
Jodpool Marshes
The Leasows (west of)
Kendrick's Wood
Doctor's Plantation (and associated sites)
Seven Sisters Ridge (and surrounds)

Downs Banks
Barlaston Common (AKA Rough Close Common)
Yarnfield Meadows
Meece Brook/Swynnerton/MOD/Railway
Aqualate Deer Park
Tittensor Chase
Fradswell Park

Appendix 7: Local Plan Policies

Policy N4: The Natural Environment & Green Infrastructure

The Borough's natural environment will be protected, enhanced and improved by:

a. Implementation of the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan, the Stafford Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy and guidance including 'Biodiversity by Design' or any other successor documents to increase and enhance biodiversity, in terms of habitats and species as well as geological conservation or geodiversity through appropriate management for a network of:

i. Designated Sites (international, national, regional and local);

ii. Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species populations;

iii. Wildlife Corridors and Ecological Networks;

b. Conservation and enhancement of water courses and their settings for their landscape character, biodiversity and recreational value, particularly for the Borough's extensive rivers and extensive canal system;

c. Protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment and irreplaceable semi-natural habitats, such as ancient woodlands, and ancient or veteran trees;

d. Increasing the ability of landscapes and ecosystems to adapt to different weather patterns and climate change, by increasing the range and extent of Habitats, informed by Biodiversity Opportunity mapping;

e. Ensuring that no new development takes place in areas where environmental risks, particularly flooding, cannot be properly managed;

f. Any new development where damage to the natural environment is unavoidable must include measures to mitigate and / or compensate such impacts, through the establishment of replacement habitats or features, including appropriate site management regimes.

The Borough’s green infrastructure network, as defined on the Policies Map, will be protected, enhanced and expanded:

g. Networks of open spaces for formal and informal recreation, natural corridors, access routes and watercourses will be enhanced and created, where those networks:

i. protect the setting of landscape, heritage and natural (biodiversity and

geodiversity) assets;

ii. reverse habitat fragmentation due to having suffered past loss and degradation;

iii. provide recreational opportunities for new and existing communities;

iv. provide open breaks between neighbouring residential areas and business

developments.

h. The network of existing access routes will be improved and expanded to allow sustainable commuting, including:

i. shared surfaces to reduce vehicle speeds;

ii. providing safe, attractive and well-signed walking and cycling routes between residentialareas, employment centres, green spaces and the wider countryside.

i. Local landscape and heritage features should:

(i) Be conserved and enhanced and inform the master planning and design of new neighbourhoods;

(ii) be positively managed to conserve and enhance their significance and contribution to the character of the landscape;

(iii) be accessible to local communities, as appropriate, for leisure and recreation.

j. Development will support implementation of the Severn and Humber River Basin Management Plans and not pose a barrier to the meeting of their objectives for any watercourse. To alleviate the effects of climate change and meet the objectives of the Water Framework Directive, new development should:

i. Include measures such as Sustainable Drainage Systems and street trees;

ii. Provide a variety of Green spaces and habitat networks as a flood storage / management function (where appropriate);

iii. Provide adequate development easement from watercourses (culverted or otherwise);

iv. Incorporate proposals for deculverting and renaturalisation of watercourses;

v. Where issues have been identified within the Water Cycle Study, developers should submit a Water Statement that includes evidence to demonstrate that there is already adequate sewerage infrastructure in place,

or that it will be in place prior to occupation;

vi. Support fish migration through the removal of barriers in river channels such as weirs, or where this is not possible, construction of fish passes.

k. All new developments will:

i. Be set within a well designed and maintained attractive green setting, demonstrated through a detailed management plan where appropriate;

ii. Provide a variety of spaces to meet the needs of people and nature;

iii. Provide safe opportunities for sustainable transport;

iv. Refer to the Staffordshire Ecological Record to ensure natural habitats and species in the locality are protected.

Policy N5 Sites of European, National & Local Nature Conservation Importance

The highest level of protection will be given to European Sites, with new development only permitted where:

a. There will be no adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, or

b. If adverse effects are identified, it can be demonstrated that the proposed mitigation measures

show that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of any European site; or

c. if it cannot be ascertained that no adverse effect on integrity will result, the proposed development will only be able to proceed where there is no alternative solution and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

In relation to air quality issues identified, planning permission will only be granted where:

1. It can be demonstrated that development will not significantly contribute to adverse effects caused by local and / or diffuse air pollution at European sites, alone or in combination with other plans and projects; or

2. Where development would result in an increase in local and / or diffuse air pollution at European Sites, it would be expected to include measures in line with the Staffordshire Local Transport Plan towards securing an equivalent improvement in air quality, or reduction in emissions from other sources; and

3. Require a pollution-neutral strategy for major development near to European sites.

In relation to water quality, supply and run-off issues, planning permission will only be granted where:

i. There will be no demonstrable impact on the integrity of the European site;

ii. The development takes account of the Water Cycle Study and Surface Water Management Plan and any other successor documents.

Developments likely to affect Sites of Special Scientific Interest will not be permitted unless the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site itself and the national policy to safeguard the national network of such sites. Cumulative effects will also be considered.

Development likely to have an adverse effect (either directly or indirectly) on:

- A Local Nature Reserve

- A Site of Biological Importance or a Biodiversity Alert Site

- A Local Geological Site

- A natural watercourse, lakes, reservoirs, rivers, canals and groundwater areas, including Water Framework Directive protected areas as listed in the Humber and Severn River Basin ManagementPlans. will not be permitted unless:

(a) It can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal that outweigh

the need to safeguard the special ecological / geological interest of the site

(b) It has been demonstrated, where development would result in significant harm, that

it can not be reasonably located on an alternative site that would result in less or no harm

(c) harm can be prevented, minimised, adequately mitigated or compensated for.

Where development is permitted, the authority will impose conditions or planning obligations to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site's nature conservation and / or geological interest.

Where the Council considers that any designated site, protected species or any species or habitat of principal importance for conservation may be affected by a development proposal, an ecological assessment will be required to be submitted with the planning application.

Where development is permitted the Council will require developers to:

a. minimise disturbance;

b. protect and enhance the site's ecological value;

c. ensure appropriate management;

d. ensure appropriate mitigation measures are designed into the proposal and work on the site does not commence until these measures are in place;

e. work to approved methods; and

f. create new or replacement habitats equal to or above the current ecological value of the site if damage or loss is unavoidable.

Where possible, the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats and the recovering of priority species populations will be encouraged in line with the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

New developments will be required to include appropriate tree planting, to retain and integrate healthy, mature trees and hedgerows, and replace any trees that need to be removed. Development will not be permitted that would directly or indirectly damage existing mature or ancient woodland, veteran trees or ancient or species-rich hedgerows.

Policy N6 Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Development will not be permitted where it would lead directly or indirectly to an adverse impact on the Cannock Chase SAC and the effects cannot be mitigated.

To ensure the Cannock Chase SAC is not harmed, all development that leads to a net increase in dwellings within 15km of the site, as shown on the Policies Map, must take all necessary steps to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects upon the SAC's integrity. This may include contributions to habitat management; access management and visitor infrastructure; publicity, education and awareness raising; provision of additional recreation space within development sites where they can be accommodated and, where they cannot, by contributions to off site alternative recreation space; and measures to encourage sustainable travel.

The effective avoidance and / or mitigation of any identified adverse effects must be demonstrated to the Council as the Competent Authority, and secured by means of a suitable mechanism (e.g. Legal agreement) prior to approval of the development.

Policy N7 Cannock Chase AONB

The conservation and enhancement of the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is of primary importance. The principles to be followed in the area are to:

a. Conserve and enhance the special landscape character, heritage and distinctiveness of the locality;

b. Conserve and enhance important viewpoints, protect the context and safeguard views out of and into the AONB;

c. Require appropriate new developments to be suitably located and have regard for existing landscape features and tree screening;

d. Support suitably located small, well designed sustainable developments, where it is required to meet the needs of the local community;

e. Have regard to the principles set out in the Cannock Chase AONB management plan for managing recreational activities;

f. Promote access to the AONB through sustainable forms of transportation, particularly by means other than the car;

g. Therefore, any proposals for new development (including changes of use) within, or likely to adversely affect the landscape and scenic beauty of Cannock Chase AONB or its setting, will only be allowed where the proposal will enhance the visual, nature conservation and/or historic assets of the landscape.