North Northamptonshire
Joint Planning Unit

Head of the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (JPU) Response to the Recommendations contained within the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) report prepared by Consultants URS Infrastructure and Environment UK Ltd., which considered the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) 2011-2031 Pre Submission version of the Plan

The Joint Planning Unit (JPU) notes that the URS report is broadly supportive of the JCS, although the JPU does recognise that important recommendations are made concerning certain policies and content of the JCS. The HRA contained within the URS report screens out 22 of the 37 policies of the JCS, on the basis that such policies are unlikely to lead to significant effects on the European sites. The HRA identifies other policies that do present potential impact pathways that could cause likely significant effects on the integrity of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area/Ramsar site, and of the Nene Washes Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation/Ramsar site. At page 35 of the report, there is given a summary of recommendations concerning various policies contained within the JCS. The Schedule set out below entitled JPU Response to Habitat Regulations Assessment, indicates how these recommendations have been addressed, in the course of preparing the finalised text to the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy document.

SCHEDULE

JPU Response to the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) report

HRA Recommendation in relation to Policy No. 4

JPU Response: Amend wording to emphasize the protection of European designated sites. Add wording to criterion ii by inserting phrase ‘, and disturbance of ‘ before penultimate word sensitive. Any potential impacts would be considered as part of the development management process, which will be informed by the new Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) on the Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area in particular, and on Biodiversity in general.

HRA Recommendation in relation to Policy No. 19

JPU Response: Amend wording to Policy No. 4 to emphasize the protection of European designated sites. The suggested need for project level Habitat Regulations Assessment work is best considered in the work that will be undertaken in the development of the finalised Supplementary Planning Documents referred to in the above response to Policy No. 4

HRA Recommendation in relation to Policy No. 20

JPU Response: Amend wording to Policy No. 20 to strengthen protection for the integrity of European designated sites, including the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area. Amend wording in criterion c) to delete ‘particularly within the SPA ‘and replace with ‘ in

order to take pressure off more sensitive sites '. This revision to criterion c) will thereby reflect the text at paragraph 7.16, to thereby reduce potential impacts/pressures at the sensitive sites

HRA Recommendation in relation to Policy No. 22

JPU Response: Noted. No change to Policy but JPU Response as for that given to the HRA Recommendation in relation to Policy No. 4 (see first section of this Schedule)

HRA Recommendation in relation to Policy No. 25

JPU Response: As for the Response to Policy No. 22 above

HRA Recommendation in relation to Policy No. 26

JPU Response: As for the Response to Policy No. 22 above

In terms of the detailed recommendations stated on pages 35 and 36 of the HRA report, it is considered that these would be best considered as part of the overall consultation exercise and ongoing work, shortly to be undertaken on the emerging Supplementary Planning Documents on the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection area, and Biodiversity topics. The recommendations that have been made (including those made in relation to developer contributions and project level Habitat Regulations Assessments), are very specific and development and construction management orientated. It is considered that the recommendations, and related aspects, will be more appropriately considered in the course of finalising the content of the new Supplementary Planning Documents.