

Appropriate Assessment of Effects on a European Site

This is a record of the appropriate assessment of Wiltshire Council required by Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The project has been assessed as likely to have significant effects upon one or more European protected sites and is not directly connected to or required for the management of such sites. This assessment is made in accordance with the relevant HRA guidance.

PART A: INFORMATION REVIEWED	
Information about the plan or project	Wiltshire Council Planning Application Reference No: PL/2023/10331 Proposed Development: Outline planning application (with all matters except access reserved) for up to 49 dwellings and associated works and provision of a cemetery together with access and associated works. Address: Land south of The Forty and North of Chelworth Road, Cricklade, Wiltshire The development lies within the inner zone of influence (0-4.2km) for the North Meadow National Nature Reserve (NNR)/Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) component of North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC, notified as an exceptional example of lowland meadow with a very high proportion of the surviving UK population of snake's head fritillary. The development is screened into Appropriate Assessment under the Habitat Regulations 2017 (as amended) on account of its potential to cause adverse effects through increased recreational pressure, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. The application is supported by: • Dog Training & Exercise Area Proposals. 04 February 2025. ACD Environmental. Drawing No. PRI24735 11A; • Ecological Assessment. August 2025. Ecology Solutions. 9673.EcoAss.vf2; • Indicative Ecological Parameters Plan. October 2024. Ecology Solutions Limited; • Indicative Landscape Masterplan. 13 August 2025. ACD Environmental. Drawing No. PRI24735 09 • Technical Note: Ecology Response. October 2024. Ecology Solutions Limited. The application site lies approximately 1km south of the North Meadow, Cricklade SSSI and NNR, a component of the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC and falls within the associated SSSI 'Impact Risk Zone'. The site is split into 'parcel A', 2.998 hectares in size, which comprises of semi-improved grassland, bounded and dissected by tree lines and hedgerows, and 'parcel B' 0.769 hectares in size, comprising of semi-improved grassland, bounded by hedgerows The proposed development is for up to 49 dwellings. The North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy 2023-2028 sets out a rationale based upon evidence of visitor access patterns which would allow residential development to come forward with appropriate mitigation.

	The application is of a scale that it raises concerns relating to adverse effects both alone and in-combination with other projects. In particular applications PL/2025/07863, which borders the proposed site, for a further 43 dwellings, PL/2022/04776 for up to 70 units, and PL/2021/10404 for a further 49 dwellings. Taken together, the schemes would result in a total of 211 dwellings within approximately 4.3 km of the SAC. Given the number of dwellings proposed at each location, their proximity to the SAC, and the fact that these schemes approach the 50-dwelling threshold identified in the Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy, there is the potential for likely significant effects on the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC as a result of the following: • Increased recreational pressure arising from the introduction of additional residential dwellings within close proximity to the SAC; • Disturbance to qualifying habitat and species as a result of increased human presence; • In-combination recreational effects arising from other residential developments within the 4.2 km inner zone, resulting in cumulative pressure that could undermine the conservation objectives of the SAC. In the light of the recent ECJ ruling (People Over Wind & Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (Case C 323/17)) which concluded that the avoidance/mitigation, such as set out in the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy, cannot be taken into consideration when considering the Likely Significant Effects of proposals on European/habitats sites (and Ramsar sites as a matter of Government policy), the Council has determined that the application should be subject to an Appropriate Assessment under Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
European site(s)	North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of Conservation (SAC) The SAC is divided into two units • North Meadow near Cricklade • Clattinger Farm near Ashton Keynes and Somerford Keynes. North Meadow is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a National Nature Reserve (NNR), which includes almost 4km of designated pathways around the site to facilitate access, open to the public. Clattinger Farm SSSI is managed by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust as a nature reserve. As Clattinger Farm is under private ownership, it is not considered to be subject to damaging recreational pressure. Recreational impacts on Clattinger Farm are therefore not predicted as part of the proposed development, and therefore Clattinger Farm SSSI is screened out of further Appropriate Assessment.
List of Site interest features	Qualifying Features/Habitats for the SAC are: H6510 Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>)

	The conservation objectives for the SAC are: “Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring; • The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats • The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and • The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely.” European Site Conservation Objectives publication date: 27 November 2018 (version 3).
Information about the site	The current condition of the European Site is favourable but under review. This site also contains a very high proportion (>90%) of the surviving UK population of snake’s-head fritillary <i>Fritillaria meleagris</i>, a species highly characteristic of damp lowland meadows in Europe and now rare throughout its range. The qualifying habitats are lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>). This habitat type comprises species-rich hay meadows on moderately fertile soils of river and tributary floodplains. Most examples are cut annually for hay, with light aftermath grazing. Seasonal flooding maintains an input of nutrients. The SAC’s hay meadow vegetation communities are dependent on moist, but not waterlogged soils on floodplains. Defining and maintaining the appropriate hydrological regime is a key step in moving towards achieving the conservation objectives for this site and sustaining this feature. Soil compaction and eutrophication, especially after flood events can have significant impacts on plant assemblages, altering the species richness of the site. Managing recreational use is vital to achieving the conservation objectives for this site.
Other relevant plans or projects	• North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of Conservation Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy 2023-2038 (May 2023) • Wiltshire Core Strategy adopted January 2015 • PL/2022/02452 - Land at Stones Farm, West Mill Lane, Cricklade, SN6 6JL, approved at appeal • PL/2021/10404 - Land off Common Hill, Cricklade, currently under review • PL/2025/07863 - Land North-West of the B4553, Cricklade, currently under review (immediately adjacent to proposed development) • PL/2022/04776 Ashton Keynes, currently at appeal
PART B: IMPACT PREDICTION	
Likely Significant Impact(s)	Predicted Effect of Impact(s)
Recreational Trampling, Soil Compaction leading to	Increased recreational pressure associated with residential development would be likely to result in higher levels of footfall within the SAC, particularly along established walking routes. Repeated trampling would intensify pressure on the sensitive

localised/altered flood events	floodplain meadow soils, leading to soil compaction, reduced soil porosity and permeability, and changes in vegetation structure and species composition. The SAC currently accommodates approximately 4km of designated walking routes, equating to around 0.8ha (approximately 1.8%) of the overall lowland meadow habitat. Increased use of these paths by a growing local population may accelerate path widening, edge effects and the spread of disturbance-tolerant grass species, resulting in a gradual reduction in the extent and quality of qualifying habitat lowland meadow. Compaction of floodplain soils has the potential to disrupt natural drainage and floodwater infiltration, altering the duration, extent and distribution of seasonal flooding across the meadow. Compacted areas may become increasingly waterlogged, while other areas may dry more rapidly following flood events. In addition, increased areas of hardstanding associated with nearby development may contribute to more rapid surface water runoff, further increasing the risk of localised flooding. Such changes could adversely affect the hydrological conditions required to sustain species-rich lowland hay meadow habitats, which are dependent on moist but not waterlogged soils and a carefully balanced flood regime. Unmitigated recreational pressure would result in a decline in habitat condition through trampling, soil compaction and altered flooding dynamics, adversely affecting the structure and function of the qualifying lowland hay meadow habitat and undermining the conservation objectives of the SAC.
Eutrophication/Nutrient enrichment from increased recreational pressure and dog faeces	Increased dog walking associated with nearby residential development can result in elevated nutrient inputs from dog fouling, leading to eutrophication of the meadow soils. Increased nutrient enrichment from dog faeces can disrupt this balance, favouring competitive grass species, at the expense of characteristic meadow flora, reducing species diversity. In particular, snake's-head fritillary, a key qualifying feature of the SAC, may decline in abundance where nutrient levels increase beyond optimal thresholds. Unmitigated recreational pressure would increase the frequency and intensity of dog walking by local residents at the designated site, leading to elevated nutrient enrichment from dog fouling. This would result in the eutrophication of meadow soils, reduced species diversity and a decline in characteristic flora, including snake's-head fritillary, thereby adversely affecting the structure and function of SAC habitats.
Litter	Increased visitor numbers increase the risk of littering within the SAC, including food waste, packaging and dog-related items. Litter can directly damage vegetation, introduce contaminants, and detract from effective site management operations. Unmitigated recreational pressure/higher visitor numbers would

	result in increased litter that has the potential to undermine habitat quality and interfere with conservation management objectives.
Interference with hay production e.g. dog toys in the grassland; dog faeces in the grassland; flattened grasses.	Increased recreational use resulting from higher local population levels can interfere with hay production through dog fouling, dog toys left within the grassland, trampling of standing vegetation, and flattened grasses. Unmitigated recreational pressure would increase interference affecting both the timing and effectiveness of hay cuts, with implications for nutrient balance, species regeneration and long-term habitat condition.
Interference with grazing e.g. free-roaming dogs	Increased recreational pressure, particularly from free-roaming dogs, has the potential to disrupt grazing livestock, alter grazing patterns and reduce the effectiveness of grazing management. Unmitigated recreational pressure increases the likely disturbance to grazing, indirectly affecting vegetation structure and species composition, with implications for the condition of the SAC habitats.
Picking of Flowers	Increased residential development within close proximity to the SAC is likely to increase visitor numbers to North Meadow SAC during the snake's-head fritillary flowering season. Increased visitor pressure raises the risk of flower picking, intentional or accidental, which can directly reduce reproductive success and population resilience of this highly characteristic species of damp lowland meadows. Unmitigated recreational pressure would result in repeated disturbance of flowering plants, undermining long-term population stability and conflicting with the SAC conservation objective to maintain or restore the structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats.

PART C: CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

Does the project or plan have the potential to:

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring the extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats.	Yes. With the proposed on-site measures in place, including the provision of alternative recreational opportunities, the development will reduce or divert potential recreational pressure away from the North Meadow SAC. Consequently, localised trampling and physical disturbance of the qualifying lowland hay meadow habitat will not increase, and the extent and distribution of the habitat will be maintained.
Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or	Yes. The provision of an on-site Dog Training and Exercise Area is designed to meet residents' day-to-day recreational needs, including dog walking, thereby reducing routine visits to the SAC and associated recreational pressure. This will prevent trampling, soil compaction, eutrophication from dog fouling, and disturbance of traditional hay cutting and grazing regimes associated with the increased population in proximity to the SAC, maintaining the structure and function the qualifying lowland hay meadow habitat.

restoring the structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats.	
Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring the supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely.	Yes. The proposed on-site measures are specifically designed to reduce recreational pressure arising from the development. By providing an enclosed Dog Training and Exercise Area to meet residents' day-to-day recreational needs, routine visits to the SAC will be minimised, helping to avoid interference with the ecological processes that underpin the qualifying habitat.
PART D: MITIGATION	
Mitigation proposed	How will these measures avoid or reduce impacts upon site integrity?
The provided Ecological Assessment (August 2025. Ecology Solutions. 9673.EcoAss.vf2) confirms that the site lies within the inner Zone of Influence (0–4.2km) of the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of Conservation. The report identifies that the site is physically separated from the SAC/SSSI by existing development and infrastructure within Cricklade, such that no direct effects are anticipated. However, the proposal for 49 dwellings is of a scale that it raises concerns relating to adverse effects both alone and in-combination with other projects, resulting in an increase in local residents and therefore has potential to contribute to recreational pressure on the SAC. The provided Ecological Assessment and Dog Training & Exercise Area Proposals (04 February 2025. ACD Environmental. Drawing No. PRI24735 11A) proposes a set of on-site and local access measures, including: • The provision of 0.28ha of on-site open space, of which at least 0.24ha will comprise a dedicated Dog Training and Exercise Area, to include: ○ A fenced / enclosed dog training and exercise area with gated access; ○ Dedicated parking spaces for the dog training area; ○ Dog waste bins and appropriate litter facilities; ○ Signage and information boards; ○ Bench seating provision; ○ Easy and convenient access for both new and existing residents; and ○ Surfaced pathways connecting the dog training area directly to the residential development, ensuring accessible, all-weather use. • Proposed connectivity to the wider Public Rights of Way network, including a new footway connection to Church Walk PRow and the PRow adjacent to Hidcote House, a footpath loop within the site and a connection to the development in the north of the site. Together, these measures are intended to meet day-to-day recreational needs for residents, including dog walking, thereby reducing the likelihood of regular visits to the SAC. It is acknowledged that occasional visits to North Meadow SSSI and Clattinger Farm SSSI may	

still occur; however, these will be mitigated through the agreed measures set out within the Interim Mitigation Strategy.

In addition to the on-site provision, the development will make the required financial contributions towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) of £331.75 per unit to be secured as part of the application, in accordance with the Interim Strategy.

The detailed landscape proposals demonstrate that the Dog Training and Exercise Area accords with the majority of the 'must haves' and 'should haves' within the Site Quality Checklist (Appendix 1) of Natural England's *Guidelines for the Creation of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)* (August 2021). Natural England has also confirmed support for the proposed mitigation approach.

Subject to the mitigation measures, including the on-site open space / Dog Training and Exercise Area and associated financial contributions, being appropriately designed, secured and managed secured through planning conditions and/or a legal agreement; it is concluded that the development, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, will not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of Conservation.

CONDITIONS:

1. The development will be carried out in strict accordance with the following documents:
 - Indicative Ecological Parameters Plan. October 2024. Ecology Solutions Limited;
 - Technical Note: Ecology Response. October 2024. Ecology Solutions Limited;
 - Sections 5, 6 and 7, Plan ECO5 and Appendix 1 of the Ecological Assessment. August 2025. Ecology Solutions. 9673.EcoAss.vf2;
 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment. 13 December 2023. SJ Stephens Associates. Project No. 2134;
 - Tree Constraints Plan. August 2023. SJ Stephens Associates. Drawing No. 2134-02;
 - Dog Training & Exercise Area Proposals. 04 February 2025. ACD Environmental. Drawing No. PRI24735 11A;
 - Indicative Landscape Masterplan. 13 August 2025. ACD Environmental. Drawing No. PRI24735 09.

The installation of the biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures will be supervised by a professional ecologist and will continue to be available for wildlife for the lifetime of the development.

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and for the protection, mitigation and enhancement of biodiversity.

2. Prior to the start of construction, a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The LEMP will adhere to the SANG guidelines and include long term objectives and targets, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for each ecological feature within the development.

The LEMP shall be implemented in full and for the lifetime of the development in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To ensure the long-term management of landscape and ecological features retained and created by the development, for the benefit of visual amenity and biodiversity for the lifetime of the scheme.

3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with an approved Ecological Monitoring Plan (EMP). The EMP shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) prior to the commencement of development (or as otherwise agreed). The EMP shall include: (a) details of the monitoring methods, frequency and duration; (b) performance indicators and measurable targets; (c) reporting procedures; and (d) proposed remedial measures where monitoring identifies that ecological objectives are not being met

Monitoring shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved EMP and LEMP for the duration specified. A Monitoring Report shall be submitted to the LPA at the intervals set out in the EMP, summarising results, compliance with ecological objectives, and any required remedial actions.

REASON: To evidence compliance to Wiltshire Recreational Mitigation Strategy and to accord with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

4. Prior to the commencement of works, including demolition, ground works/excavation, site clearance, vegetation clearance and boundary treatment works, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval in writing. The Plan shall provide details of the avoidance, mitigation and protective measures to be implemented before and during the construction phase, including but not necessarily limited to, the following:
 - a. Identification of ecological protection areas/buffer zones and tree root protection areas and details of physical means of protection, e.g. exclusion fencing.
 - b. Working method statements for protected/priority species, such as nesting birds, badgers, great crested newts, bats and reptiles.
 - c. Mitigation strategies already agreed with the local planning authority prior to determination, such as for great crested newts, bats, badgers and nesting birds; this should comprise the pre-construction/construction related elements of strategies only.
 - d. Work schedules for activities with specific timing requirements in order to avoid/reduce potential harm to ecological receptors; including details of when a licensed ecologist and/or ecological clerk of works (ECoW) shall be present on site.
 - e. Key personnel, responsibilities and contact details (including Site Manager and ecologist/ECoW).

Development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved CEMP.

REASON: To ensure adequate protection and mitigation for ecological receptors prior to and during construction, and that works are undertaken in line with current best practice and industry standards and are supervised by a suitably licensed and competent professional ecological consultant where applicable.

5. At Reserved Matters, the design and layout of the site will be in accordance with the Ecological Parameters Plan [Indicative Ecological Parameters Plan. October

2024. Ecology Solutions Limited] This document sets out the ecologically sensitive areas of the site that will be retained, protected and enhanced. It will not be altered at Reserved Matters without detailed justification based on additional habitat and wildlife species surveys.

REASON: To protect the ecologically sensitive features of the site.

6. No external light fixture or fitting will be installed within the application site unless details of existing and proposed new lighting have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing. The submitted details will demonstrate how the proposed lighting will impact on bat habitat compared to the existing situation.

The plans will be in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Notes on the Avoidance of Obtrusive Light (GN 01/2021) and Guidance note GN08/23 "Bats and artificial lighting at night", issued by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals.

REASON: To avoid illumination of habitat used by bats.

If permission is forthcoming it must secure the following obligations:

- The proposed SANG (Dog Training & Exercise Area) to be delivered in line with the provided Dog Training & Exercise Area Proposals. 04 February 2025. ACD Environmental. Drawing No. PRI24735 11A prior to occupation.
- Payment of the SANG (Dog Training & Exercise Area) monitoring contribution £11,165 prior to commencement of development.
- The development must not be occupied until the LPA has issued a SANG (Dog Training & Exercise Area) Completion Certificate confirming the SANG (Dog Training & Exercise Area) is functional and in accordance with Dog Training & Exercise Area Proposals. 04 February 2025. ACD Environmental. Drawing No. PRI24735 11A.
- Prior to commencement of development a SANG (Dog Training & Exercise Area) management scheme must be submitted to and approved by the LPA. The scheme must specify the timetable for delivery and monitoring of the SANG (Dog Training & Exercise Area). The scheme should align with the provided Dog Training & Exercise Area Proposals (04 February 2025. ACD Environmental. Drawing No. PRI24735 11A) and Ecological Assessment (August 2025. Ecology Solutions. 9673.EcoAss.vf2).
- Payment of SAMM contribution = £16,255.75 (£331.75x49 dwellings) prior to commencement of development.

PART E: CONCLUSION

Is the project likely to affect site integrity?

a) Alone?	No. The proposed on-site measures, together with the associated financial contributions, are designed to address the recreational needs of the development, thereby reducing recreational pressure on the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of Conservation, provided the mitigation is properly implemented and maintained.
b) In combination with other plans or projects?	No. The proposed on-site measures, together with the associated financial contributions, are designed to address the recreational needs of the development, thereby reducing recreational pressure on the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of

	Conservation, provided the mitigation is properly implemented and maintained.
Recommendation:	
The Appropriate Assessment concludes that, provided the mitigation measures are secured by conditions and/or legal agreement and implemented in accordance with the approved details, the development will not adversely affect the integrity of the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Therefore, the application can be positively determined.	
Name of officer(s) making the assessment	Jessica Cracknell Ecologist, Wiltshire Council 25/02/2026
Date:	
Natural England Comments	
Name of Natural England officer	
Date:	