

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2011  
Our ref: 39937  
Your ref: South Gloucestershire Core Strategy HRA



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Dear Ben

### **South Gloucestershire Core Strategy HRA**

Thank you for consulting Natural England regarding the above assessment, specifically, the validity of the HRA conclusion of no likely significant effect in light of proposed changes to the core strategy.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

An area of Green Belt land, situated to the west of the A4018 and east of the M5, is being considered for inclusion within the Cribbs/Patchway new neighbourhood. This being in addition to the proposed inclusion of land at Filton Airfield within the same new neighbourhood; both would be reflected in a revised Core Strategy.

Natural England previously confirmed that in our view the proposal to include redevelopment of Filton Airfield in the Core Strategy would not be likely to result in a significant effect on European Protected Sites. Key to this decision was the distance and physical barriers between the airfield and any European sites, the relatively modest increase in housing numbers, and the counteracting effects of other relevant core strategy policies.

Given the Green Belt land being put forward for is immediately adjacent to Filton Airfield, it appears reasonable to apply the same rationale for considering likely effects of its development on European Sites, in terms of distance, physical barriers, relative increase in housing numbers and counteracting core strategy policy.

On this basis I can confirm that Natural England does not consider the inclusion of the area of Green Belt, as outlined in the draft revised Core Strategy diagram for the Cribbs/Patchway new neighbourhood, would be likely to result in a likely significant effect on the Natura 2000 network as defined under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. We therefore agree that the Core Strategy Habitat Regulation Assessment conclusion of no likely significant effect would not be affected

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However, as discussed, the Green Belt land in question comprises a valuable mix of habitats and natural features, including Haw Woods semi-natural ancient woodland. It also currently provides recreation and public access opportunities.

We are pleased therefore that the proposed changes to the Green Belt will be fully assessed in a revised Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal, and would expect this to identify potential impacts and appropriate avoidance and/or mitigation measures to protect these important assets for the long term benefit of people and wildlife.

I hope this letter is clear and helpful and look forward to receiving the revised core strategy and supplementary documents in due course.

Yours sincerely

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For any correspondence or queries relating to this consultation only, please contact Amanda Grundy at [Amanda.grundy@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Amanda.grundy@naturalengland.org.uk). For all other correspondence, please contact the address above.