Borough of Darlington
Local Development Framework

Core Strategy
Preferred Options

Appropriate Assessment

October 2008

DARLINGTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1 Darlington Borough Council (DBC) is in the process of developing their Local Development Framework. As part of this, Darlington is in the process of developing the Core Strategy, currently at the Preferred Options stage. In accordance with the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 and European Communities (1992) Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, Darlington is required to undertake Screening for Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy Preferred Options.

Appropriate Assessment Process

1.2 Under the Habitats Regulations, Appropriate Assessment is an assessment of the potential effects of a proposed project or plan – either a development plan document (DPD) or a supplementary planning document (SPD) – on one of more sites of international nature conservation importance. Projects and plans can only be permitted where the 'competent authority' (in this case Darlington Borough Council) is satisfied that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the relevant nature sites.

1.3 The approach is based on the EU document 'Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC' (Oxford Brookes University, for European Commission Environment DG. European Commission Environment DG, 2001), in particular the Annex 2 assessment forms.

1.4 Stage 1 of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process is the screening of proposed plans or projects for significant effects. Assessment of the significance of effects is undertaken in relation to the designated interest features and conservation objectives of the European site. Any effect that would compromise the functioning and viability of a site and prevent it from sustaining those features in a favourable condition is judged to create a significant effect. Where no significant effects are identified then no further steps need to be taken. Where significant effects seem likely, a more detailed Appropriate Assessment of the proposed plan or project is necessary. If insufficient information is available to make a clear judgment the precautionary principle should be adopted. This process will often establish mitigation measures or alternatives, which can offset all significant adverse effects and enable the plan or project to go forward. Where this is not the case, other more stringent measures need to be considered.

Natura 2000 Sites

1.5 Natura 2000 sites are of exceptional importance in respect of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species within the European Community. Natura 2000 sites include Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU 'Wild Birds' Directive, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the EU 'Habitats Directive' and Offshore Marine Site (OMS).

1.6 Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9) 'Biodiversity and Geological Conservation' states that Ramsar sites should be taken to be part of the Natura 2000 network and treated accordingly (para 6, PPS9, ODPM, 2005). Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance, designated under the International Wetlands Convention, which took place at Ramsar in Iran.

1.7 In this report the term 'Natura 2000 sites' refers to Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN

Introduction

2.1 In this section of the report the Core Strategy Preferred Options is reviewed to identify any aspects of the strategy that might influence the key environmental conditions that need to be maintained or improved in order to preserve the integrity of European sites. Indirect as well as direct impacts have been considered.

Core Strategy Preferred Options

2.2 The document, once adopted in its final form, will be the principal document of the Darlington Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF is a set of documents which will eventually replace the adopted Darlington Local Plan. It considers how the Borough will develop over the next fifteen years or so, providing the spatial planning framework for the many plans and strategies prepared by the Council and its partners. In particular, it will help to deliver spatially the priorities that are set out in the sustainable community strategy 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed', prepared by Darlington Partnership and agreed earlier this year.

2.3 The Core Strategy Preferred Options establishes a series of themes and the policies include:

1) Achieving a more sustainable community
   CS1 Darlington's sub regional role and locational strategy
   CS2 Promoting good quality, sustainable design
   CS3 Paying for development infrastructure
   CS4 Renewable energy

2) Prosperous Darlington
   CS5 Supporting the local economy
   CS6 Expanding tourism, leisure and cultural provision

3) A vibrant town centre and accessible local shops and services
   CS7 The town centre
   CS8 Further retail provision
   CS9 District and local centres and freestanding local facilities

4) Quality housing for all
   CS10 New housing provision
   CS11 New housing for all
   CS12 The existing housing stock
   CS13 Accommodation travelling groups

5) A distinctive, greener, cleaner environment
   CS14 Local character and distinctiveness
   CS15 Biodiversity and geodiversity
   CS16 Environment protection

6) A healthy and safe Darlington
   CS17 Green infrastructure

7) Efficient and effective transport infrastructure
   CS18 Sustainable transport networks
   CS19 Improving transport infrastructure

Potential Types of Impact

2.4 Following consideration of the Core Strategy Preferred Options themes, a number of potential impacts have been identified that could affect Natura 2000 sites. These potential impacts include:

- Air quality: a change in the composition of air that disperses in the vicinity of a Natura 2000 site can damage vegetation and harm species living in these habitats.
- Water quality: a change in the composition of water that flows to Natura 2000 sites can damage vegetation and harm species living in these habitats.
- Hydrology: Changes in hydrology can result in drought or flooding of Natura sites that can damage vegetation and species living in these habitats.
- Habitat / species disturbance: Disturbance both to habitats and to species travelling to Natura 2000 sites can damage vegetation and species living in these habitats.
- Climate change: Climate change will require species ? to be mobile so they can adapt to climate change; restrictions to movement will restrict ability to adapt to climate change.

2.5 Table 1 identifies the elements of each theme and the likely identifiable impacts if any. This table will be used as part of the methodology to determine which Natura 2000 site should be included in the screening process. It will also be used to screen the Core Strategy Preferred Options for full Appropriate Assessment.

Table 1: Core Strategy Preferred Options themes and Impacts

No	Objective	Type of Impact	Rationale
1	Achieving a more sustainable community	Air Quality	Biomass energy plantemissions will affect air quality. Poor air quality could adversely affect Natura 2000 sites.
		Water Quality	Limiting water polluting development will protect watercourses and groundwater from pollution and any downstream Natura 2000 sites.
		Hydrology	No specific impact.
		Habitat or Species Disturbance	Turning blades on wind turbines can strike bats and birds travelling to and from Natura 2000 sites.
		Climate Change	Promoting good quality and sustainable design should reduce the speed of climate change.
No	**Objective**	**Type of Impact**	**Rationale**
2	Prosperous Darlington	Air Quality	Increased population, visitors and commuters can lead to increased vehicle pollution that can adversely affect Natura 2000 sites.
		Water Quality	Land use change can influence quality of surface run off. This could affect the water quality of watercourses and affect Natura 2000 sites down stream.
		Hydrology	Land use change can influence quantity of surface run off to watercourses and groundwater. This could influence hydrology of Natura 2000 sites downstream.
		Habitat or Species Disturbance	Development projects could cause direct disturbance to Natura 2000 sites.
		Climate Change	No specific impact.
No	**Objective**	**Type of Impact**	**Rationale**
3	A vibrant town centre and accessible local shops and services	Air Quality	No specific impact.
		Water Quality	No specific impact.
		Hydrology	No specific impact.
		Habitat or Species Disturbance	No specific impact.
		Climate Change	No specific impact.
No	**Objective**	**Type of Impact**	**Rationale**
4	Quality housing for all	Air Quality	No specific impact.
		Water Quality	Land use change can influence quality of surface run off. This could affect the water quality of watercourses and affect Natura 2000 sites down stream.
		Hydrology	Land use change can influence quantity of surface run off to watercourses and groundwater. This could influence hydrology of Natura 2000 sites downstream.
		Habitat or Species Disturbance	No specific impact.
		Climate Change	New housing developments could restrict the ability of Natura 2000 sites to migrate and cope with climate change.

Table 1 Continued: Core Strategy Preferred Options themes and Impacts

No	Objective	Type of Impact	Rationale
5	A distinctive, greener, cleaner environment	Air Quality	No specific impact.
		Water Quality	No specific impact.
		Hydrology	No specific impact.
		Habitat or Species Disturbance	No specific impact.
		Climate Change	No specific impact.
No	**Objective**	**Type of Impact**	**Rationale**
6	A healthy and safe Darlington	Air Quality	No specific impact.
		Water Quality	No specific impact.
		Hydrology	No specific impact.
		Habitat or Species Disturbance	No specific impact.
		Climate Change	No specific impact.
No	**Objective**	**Type of Impact**	**Rationale**
7	Efficient and effective transport infrastructure	Air Quality	Increase road capacity could increase level of vehicle usage and associated emissions.
		Water Quality	No specific impact.
		Hydrology	No specific impact.
		Habitat or Species Disturbance	No specific impact.
		Climate Change	No specific impact.

3.0 IDENTIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF NATURA 2000 SITES

Introduction

3.1 When assessing the impact of a plan on Natura 2000 sites it is important to consider the impact on Natura 2000 sites not only within the area the plan is to be implemented, but also Natura 2000 sites outside of the plan boundary that still could be affected by the plan. There is no defined distance within which Natura 2000 sites could be affected by a plan, and potentially a plan could impact upon a site a significant distance away from the plan area. Consequently the catchment area within which Natura 2000 sites could be affected by the plan should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Methodology

3.2 A methodology has been developed to determine which Natura 2000 sites should be included for screening for Appropriate Assessment. It will assess the criteria listed below:

- Identify the likelihood for impacts to arise from the Core Strategy Preferred Options that could have an impact on a Natura 2000 site by analysing the contents of the plan. This is given in table 1 in the previous section of this report.
- Identify the likelihood for impacts of the plan to travel by air, including dust, emissions and noise, from impact sources to a Natura 2000 site.
- Identify the likelihood for impacts of the plan to travel from impact source by pathways such as roads and waterways to a Natura 2000 site.
- The likelihood for species to be impacted as members of the species travel across Darlington Borough to Natura sites as part of their migration or foraging patterns.

3.3 All of the above will be considered to determine if development and activity in the Borough related to the Core Strategy Preferred Options could potentially affect Natura 2000 sites. Sites identified through this process will be considered in the screening assessment to determine if the Core Strategy Preferred Options requires full Appropriate Assessment.

Impact Type

3.4 Type of impacts, previously discussed, that could emerge from the Core Strategy Preferred Options are as follows:

- Air quality
- Water quality
- Hydrology
- Species / habitat disturbance
- Climate change

Further details are given in table 1 earlier in this report.

Distance

3.5 Figure 1 shows the location of Natura sites within Darlington Borough and within 25km (at 5km intervals) of the Borough boundary. It shows there are no sites within the Borough, no sites within 5km and only one site within 10km of the Borough. Consequently it is very unlikely that noise and dust pollution originating in the Borough as a consequence of the Core Strategy Preferred Options would impact a Natura 2000 site. Despite the long distance between the Borough and the Natura 2000 sites, there is some potential for impacts by transportation of gas emissions by the south-westerly wind. Consequently Natura 2000 sites to the north west of the Borough will be included in screening process. This includes Thrislington SAC, Castle Eden Dene SAC, Durham Coast SAC and Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/Ramsar in Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland boroughs.

Rivers

3.6 Figure 2 shows the rivers that flow from Darlington Borough. It shows that a number of rivers flow through Natura 2000 sites or to another river that flows through Natura 2000 sites. Natura 2000 sites that are linked to the Borough by river include Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Tees Bay from Darlington Borough including Billingham Beck, Lustrum Beck and River Tees. Activities proposed by the Core Strategy Preferred Options within or on the banks of these rivers could impact upon this site in terms of waterborne pollution and hydrology.

The River Tees flows through part of the Pennine Moors but as it is 20km or more upstream of Darlington, activities suggested in the Core Strategy Preferred Options will not have an impact on this site. There are no other Natura 2000 sites that have rivers that flow through them from Darlington Borough.

Roads

3.7 Figure 3 shows the roads linking Darlington Borough to other areas of population. Research has shown that emissions from road traffic from motorways and major roads reach background levels beyond 200m; therefore emissions from motorways can be higher than background levels within 200m of a major road. English Nature's (now Natural England's) advice to Runnymede Borough Council on traffic-related air pollution, based on interim guidance from the Department for Transport (2005), was that NO2 emissions only needed to be considered if there is a road carrying a significant proportion of new traffic related to the plan within 200m of a European site. Therefore, Natura 2000 sites within 200m of a major road could be damaged as a consequence of higher than normal levels of pollutants from vehicle emissions.

3.8 As there are no Natura 2000 sites within Darlington Borough, if Natura 2000 sites are to be affected by increased traffic generation it will occur as a result of traffic travelling to and from the Borough from locations outside the Borough. Figure 3.3 identifies the main centres of population outside of Darlington Borough and the main roads linking these centres to Darlington. The main centres of population are within the Tees Valley City Region including Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. Other potential centres are those to the north in Tyne and Wear and centres in North Yorkshire, both accessed by the A1. The map shows the main routes between these centres and Darlington do not pass within 200m of a Natura 2000 Site. Consequently it is unlikely increased traffic generation as a consequence of the Core Strategy Preferred Options will impact a Natura 2000 site.

Species Movement

3.9 Figure 4 shows, the distance between the Borough and Natura 2000 sites. The distance between the Borough and Natura 2000 sites means it is unlikely that species movement to and from Natura 2000 sites will be affected by the Core Strategy Preferred Options with the exception of birds. Bird species crossing the Borough when migrating or feeding could be impacted upon by the Core Strategy Preferred Option (draft Policy CS4) that promotes wind energy generation as the blades of turbines can strike passing birds. While we can determine which Natura 2000 sites surrounding Darlington provide habitat for birds and we can determine general distances these birds are likely to travel when foraging and during migration, the location and direction of bird movement across Darlington Borough cannot be determined due to a lack of information and research on bird movements.

3.10 The current preferred option in the Core Strategy (draft Policy CS4) on renewable energy does not allocate any land for wind turbine sites, but sets out criteria for the consideration of applications for new wind turbines on a site-by-site basis. Where possible it is proposed that Appropriate Assessment should be undertaken on relevant applications that include site surveys to determine if birds travelling to and from Natura 2000 sites pass the development site in question.

4.0 NATURA 2000 SITES TO BE ASSESSED

4.1 Based on the assessment in the previous section of the report, the Natura 2000 sites listed below are to be included in the screening assessment. These sites include:

- Castle Eden Dene SAC, Easington
- Thrislington SAC, Sedgefield
- Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool
- Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool and Redcar & Cleveland
- Durham Coast SAC, Easington

4.2 To understand the potential impacts of the Core Strategy Preferred Options on the Natura 2000 sites it is important to understand the following key factors about each site:

- Description of each site in terms of species and habitats it contains.
- Conservation objectives of each site
- Aspects of the site that is vulnerable and could be particularly sensitive to change in the environment.

4.3 Tables 2 to 6 provide this information for each of the identified Natura 2000 sites. A number of data sources were used to compile this data. The data sources used are listed below:

- English Nature, Appropriate Assessment development plans – North East England, provision of site information.
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee www.jncc.gov.uk
- Government Office for the North East, Draft Appropriate Assessment of the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- Natural England GIS Digital Boundary Datasets http://www.english-nature.org.uk/pubs/gis/gis_register.asp

Figure 1

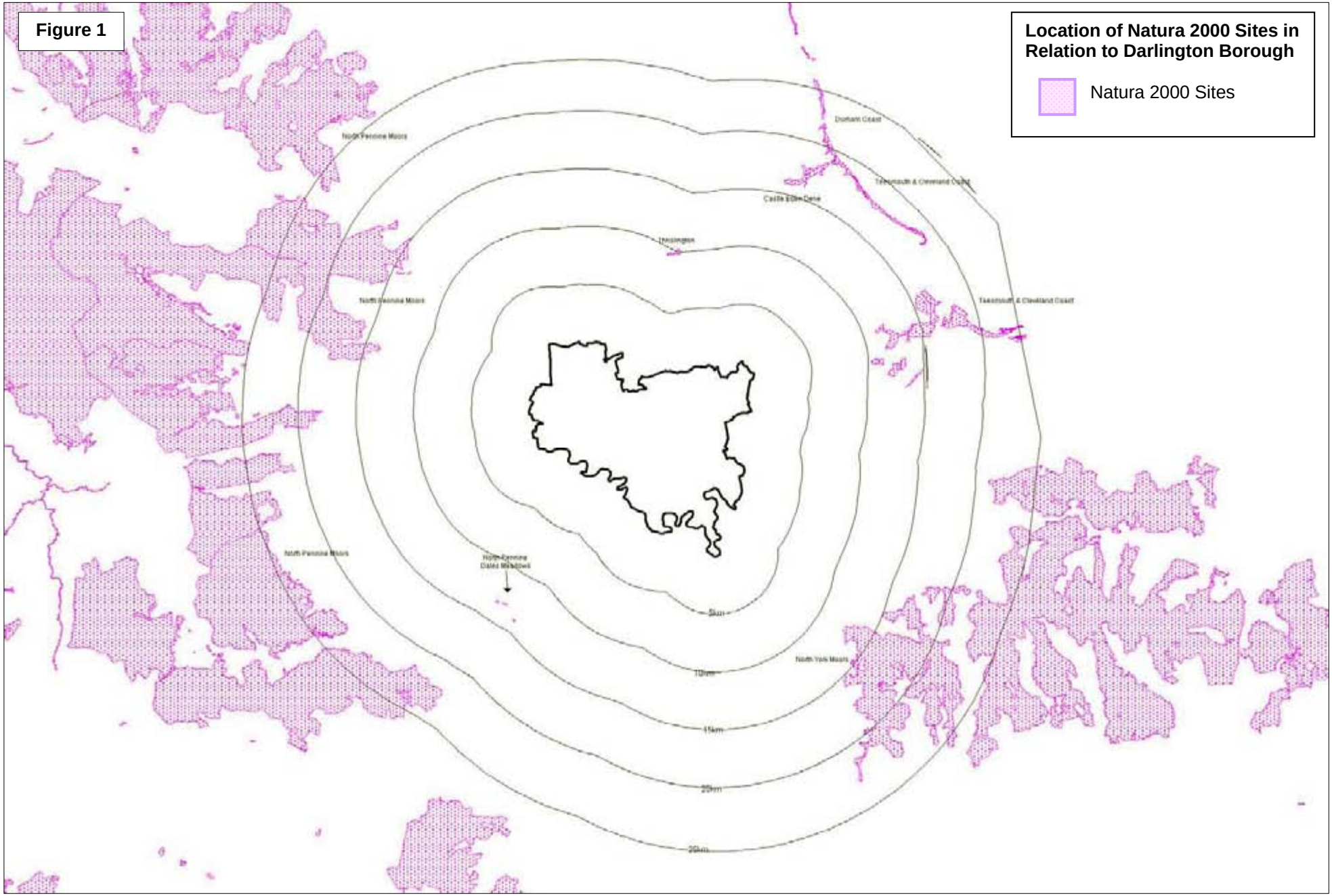
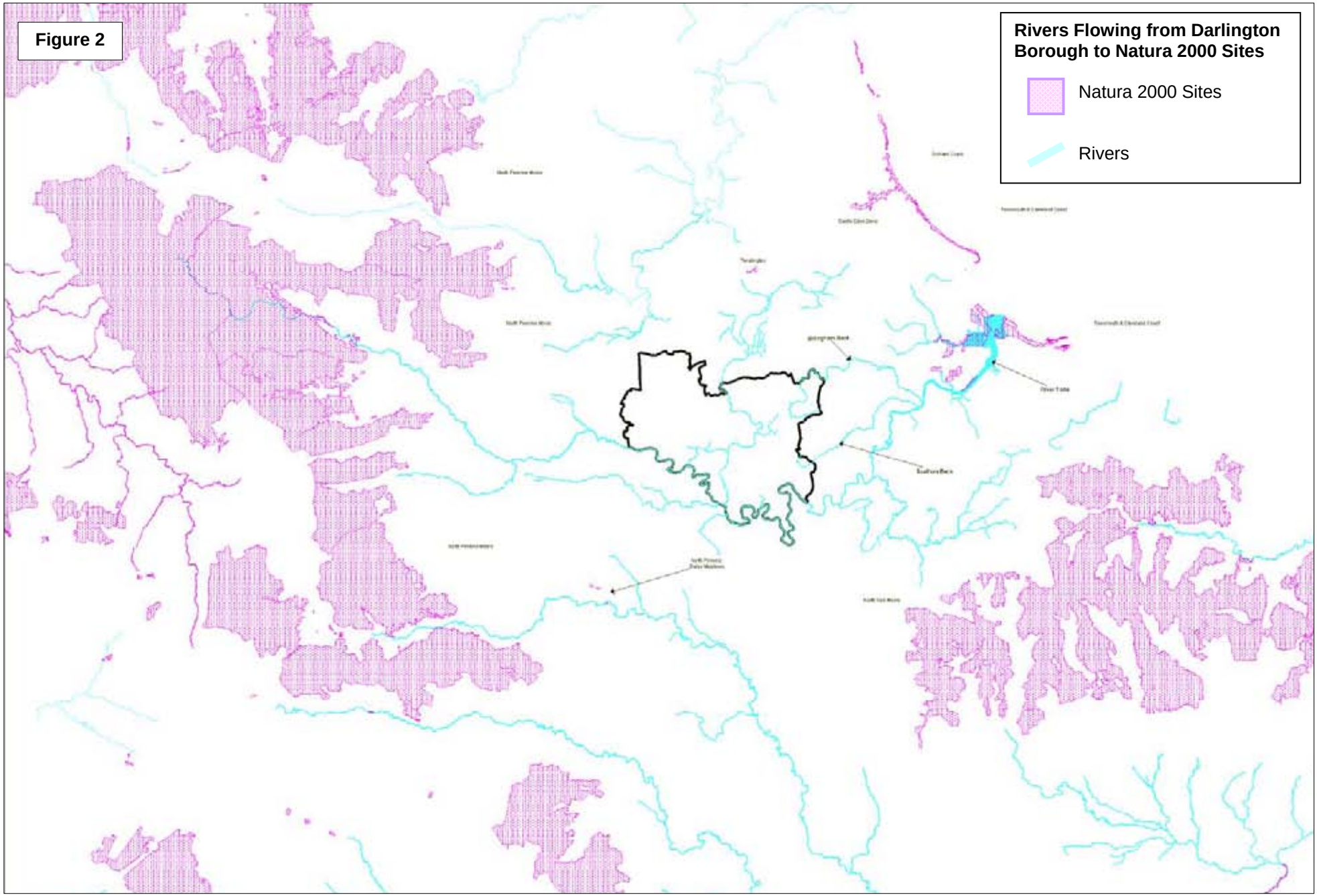

Location of Natura 2000 Sites in Relation to Darlington Borough
Natura 2000 Sites
North Pennine Moors
Durham Coast
Teesmouth & Cleveland Coast
Castle Eden Dene
Teesmouth & Cleveland Coast
North Pennine Moors
North Pennine Moors
North Pennine Dales Meadows
North York Moors
5km
10km
15km
20km
25km

Figure 2


Rivers Flowing from Darlington Borough to Natura 2000 Sites
Natura 2000 Sites
Rivers

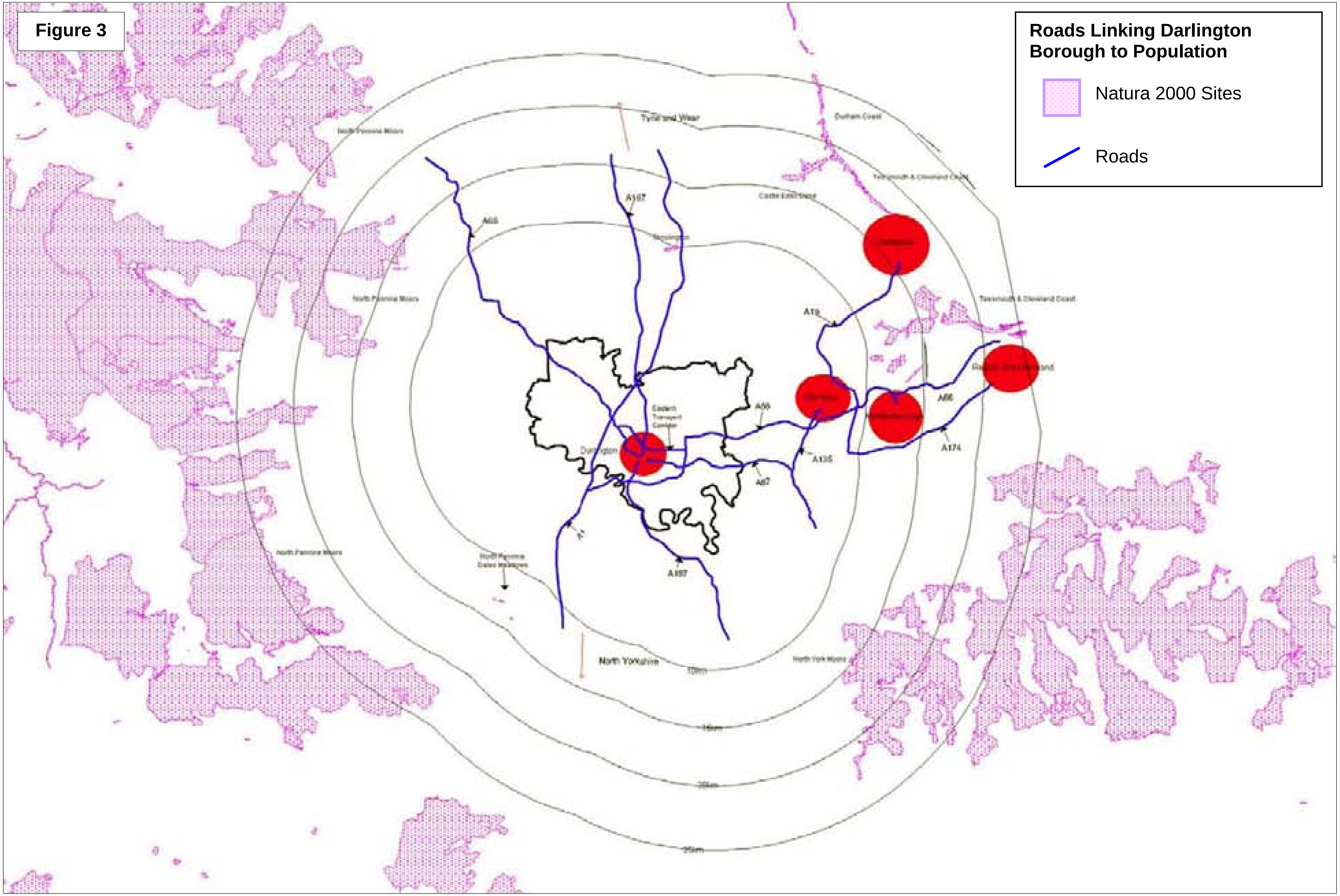


Figure 3
Roads Linking Darlington Borough to Population
Natura 2000 Sites
Roads
Tyne and Wear
Durham Coast
North Yorkshire
A19
A66
A174
A167
A68
A67
A135

Figure 4

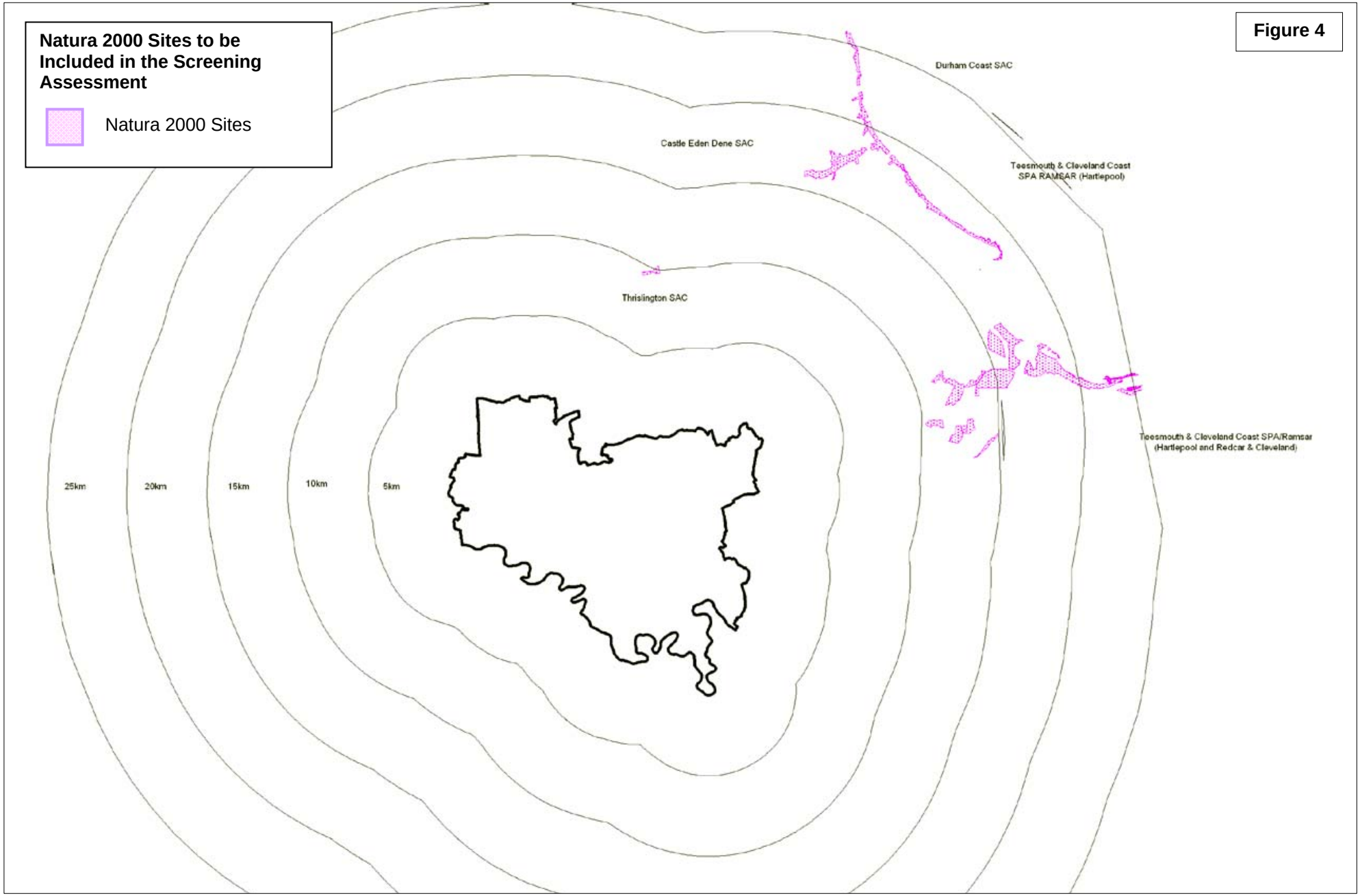

Natura 2000 Sites to be Included in the Screening Assessment
Natura 2000 Sites
Durham Coast SAC
Castle Eden Dene SAC
Teesmouth & Cleveland Coast SPA RAMSAR (Hartlepool)
Thrislington SAC
Teesmouth & Cleveland Coast SPA/Ramsar (Hartlepool and Redcar & Cleveland)
25km
20km
15km
10km
5km

Table 2: Thrislington SAC Information

Thrislington SAC		
Unitary Authority - Sedgefield	**Area -** 22.58 hectares	
Brief Description	**Conservation Objectives**	**Vulnerability**
The whole of Thrislington SAC is located within 20km of the Borough of Darlington. This site is designated under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it supports populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive: ▪ **Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates** *(Festuco-Brometalia)* Thrislington is a relatively small site but contains the largest of the few surviving stands of CG8 Sesleria albicans - Scabiosa columbaria grassland (Source: JNCC, Natura 2000 Data form for Thrislington SAC as submitted to Europe, via JNCC website)	To maintain, in favourable condition, ▪ the unimproved calcareous grassland, with particular reference to semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (CG8 grasslands) (Source: English Nature's, SAC: Thrislington Component SSSI: Thrislington Plantation Draft Conservation objectives for the European interest on the SSSI, 2006).	The conditions of these grasslands are dependent upon continuous management by seasonally-adjusted grazing and no fertiliser input. The site is now a National Nature Reserve and management on these traditional lines has been reintroduced at the site. The site is fairly stable and therefore there are little vulnerabilities. Strategies increasing the population, the amount of traffic and development are likely to exacerbate air quality impacts. The vegetation composition and structure is also at risk of being affected by increased nutrient inputs.

Table 3: Durham Coast SAC Information

Durham Coast SAC		
Unitary Authority - Durham	**Area -** 393.63 hectares	
Brief Description	**Conservation Objectives**	**Vulnerability**
This site is located partially within 20km of the Borough of Darlington. This site is designated under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it supports populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive: ▪ **Vegetated sea cliffs** of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts. The only example of vegetated sea cliffs on Magnesian limestone exposures in the UK. These cliffs extend along the North Sea coast for over 20km from South Shields southwards to Blackhall Rocks. Within these habitats rare species of contrasting phytogeographic distributions often grow together forming unusual and species-rich communities of high conservation interest. The communities present on the sea cliffs are largely maintained by natural processes including exposure to sea spray, erosion and slippage of the soft Magnesian limestone bedrock and overlying glacial drifts, as well as localised flushing by calcareous water. Parts of the site are managed as a National Nature Reserve, and plans provide for the non-interventionist management of the vegetated cliffs. The majority of the site is in public ownership and an agreed management plan is being developed to protect nature conservation interests. (Source, JNCC Natural 2000 data form Durham Coast SAC, via JNCC website)	Subject to natural change, to maintain, in favourable condition, the: ▪ vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic Coasts (Source, English Nature, SPA: Northumbria Coast, SPA: Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast, pSAC: Durham Coast Component SSSI: Durham Coast Draft Conservation objectives for the European interest on the SSSI, 2006) This can be done by; ▪ maintaining the overall length and/or area of habitat with no increase in linear extent ▪ maintaining a range of physical conditions on the site, continued range of maritime grasslands and community transitions ▪ no further increase in species not normally associated with this community in the UK.	Vegetated sea cliffs range from vertical cliffs in the north with scattered vegetated ledges, to the Magnesian Limestone grassland slopes of the south. The site is currently affected by, or at risk from increasing physical constraints which would reduce the mobility of the cliffs and reduce the range of communities. Any changes in the composition of cliff vegetation communities will damage site integrity.

Table 4: Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA Information

Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA		
Unitary Authority - Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool	**Area –** 1247.31 hectares	
Brief Description	**Conservation Objectives**	**Vulnerability**
This site is located partially within 20km of the Borough of Darlington. Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast includes a range of coastal habitats – sand- and mud-flats, rocky shore, saltmarsh, freshwater marsh and sand dunes – on and around an estuary which has been considerably modified by human activities. This site is designated under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it supports populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive: ▪ **Little Tern** *Sterna albifrons,* during breeding season, 37 pairs representing at least 1.5% of the breeding population in Great Britain (4 year mean 1993-1996). ▪ **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis*, on passage, 2,190 individuals representing at least 5.2% of the population in Great Britain (5 year mean 1991-1995) Supporting criterion for; ▪ **Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*, on passage, 634 individuals representing at least 1.3% of the Europe/Northern Africa - wintering population (5 yr mean spring 91-95) (On Passage) ▪ **Knot** *Calidris canutus*, Over winter, 4,190 individuals representing at least 1.2% of the wintering Northeastern Canada/Greenland/Iceland/Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)	The Conservation Objectives are to maintain, in favourable condition; ▪ the habitats for populations of Annex 1 [Wild Birds Directive] (Little Tern) species of European importance, with particular reference to : - Intertidal sand and mudflats - sand dunes - coastal waters ▪ the habitats for the populations of migratory bird species (Redshank and Knot) of European importance, with particular reference to: - Rocky shores - intertidal sand and mudflats - saltmarsh - freshwater marsh ▪ the habitats for the populations of waterfowl that contribute to the wintering waterfowl assemblage of European importance, with particular reference to: - Rocky shores - intertidal sand and mudflats - saltmarsh - freshwater marsh - standing water (Source, English Nature, SPA: Teesmouth and	Disturbance caused by offshore/marine activity is a key issue for designated species – this may take the form of recreational use of surrounding waters. This site is influenced by chemical discharges from industrial use along the Tees and from nutrient enrichment from agricultural use of the Tees Valley. Increased nitrogen deposition is likely to have a negative affect on the site. It is likely to alter the vegetation structure and composition, and reduce the area of un-vegetated beach suitable for nesting Little Tern. Increased recreational use of waters surrounding the site is likely to affect Tern breeding success. Reduced water quality may affect the invertebrate populations supporting wintering and breeding birds.

▪ **Redshank** *Tringa totanus*, over winter, 1,648 individuals representing at least 1.1% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic - wintering population (5 year peak mean 87-91) Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance. The area qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl Over winter, the area regularly supports 21,406 individual **waterfowl** (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Knot *Calidris canutus*. (Source, JNCC Natural 2000 data form for Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA, via JNCC website)	Cleveland Coast (Extended Area) Component SSSI: Tees and Hartlepool Foreshore and Wetlands Draft Conservation objectives for the European interest on the SSSI, 2006) This can be done by; ▪ maintaining food availability ▪ suitable areas for breeding terns ▪ lack of disturbance ▪ maintenance of hydrology and flow, suitable water depth	

Table 5: Teesmouth and Cleveland Ramsar Information

Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Ramsar		
Unitary Authority - Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool	**Area –** 1247.31 hectares	
Brief Description	**Conservation Objectives**	**Vulnerability**
This site is located partially within 20km of the Borough of Darlington. Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast includes a range of coastal habitats – sand- and mud-flats, rocky shore, saltmarsh, freshwater marsh and sand dunes – on and around an estuary which has been considerably modified by human activities. This site is designated under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it supports populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive: ▪ **Waterfowl**, internationally important numbers of passage /winter water birds at designation: 9258 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99 – 2002/2003). ▪ **Common redshank**, (Tringa totanus totanus): 883 individuals, representing an average of 0.7 % of the UK population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3) ▪ **Red knot** (Calidris canutus islandica). (migrating from West and Southern Africa) (wintering): 2579 individuals, representing an average of 0.9 % of the UK population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3) Supporting criteria for designation: ▪ **Little Tern** *(Sternula albifrons albifrons)* nationally important numbers of breeding (40 pairs, circa 2% of the national population) Passage species of importance (at designation):	Whilst no information is available on the conservation objectives they are likely to be similar to Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA The Conservation Objectives are to maintain, in favourable condition; ▪ the habitats for populations of Annex 1 [Wild Birds Directive] (Little Tern) species of European importance, with particular reference to : - Intertidal sand and mudflats - Sand dunes - Coastal waters ▪ the habitats for the populations of migratory bird species (Redshank) of European importance, with particular reference to: - Rocky shores - intertidal sand and mudflats - saltmarsh - freshwater marsh	The site is currently affected by nitrogen enrichment from sewage discharges, encroachment of scrub into dune habitats, disturbance from recreational use of the site and incursion of coarse marine sediment into estuary – however, the latter is a natural process. Disturbance caused by offshore/marine activity is a key issue for designated species. This may take the form of recreational use of surrounding waters which is likely to affect Tern breeding success. Reduced water quality may affect the invertebrate populations supporting wintering and breeding birds.

▪ **Northern shoveler** *(Anas clypeata)* (migrating between NW and C Europe): 7 individuals representing an average of 0% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3); ▪ **Common greenshank** *(Tringa nebularia),* (migrating between Europe and West Africa): 7 individuals representing an average of 1.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3). Nationally important invertebrates (British Red Data Book species): ▪ Pherbellia grisecens ▪ Thereva valida ▪ Longitarsus nigerrimus ▪ Dryops nitidulus ▪ Macroplea mutica ▪ Philonthus dimidiatipennis ▪ Trichohydnobius suturalis Nationally scarce higher plants: ▪ Festuca arenaria ▪ Puccinellia rupestris ▪ Ranunculus baudotii (Source: JNCC, Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS) via JNCC website)		

Table 6: Castle Eden Dene SAC Information

Castle Eden Dene SAC		
Unitary Authority - Durham	**Area –** 194.4 hectares	
Brief Description	**Conservation Objectives**	**Vulnerability**
This site is located within 20km of the Borough of Darlington. This site is designated under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it supports populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive: ▪ **Taxus baccata woodland** Castle Eden Dene in north-east England represents the most extensive northerly native occurrence of yew *Taxus baccata* woods in the UK. Extensive yew groves are found in association with ash-elm *Fraxinus-Ulmus* woodland and it is the only site selected for yew woodland on Magnesian limestone in north-east England. (Source, JNCC Natural 2000 data form for Castle Eden Dene SAC, via JNCC website)	To maintain, in favourable condition, the: ▪ the Taxus baccata woodland. (Source, English Nature, cSAC: Castle Eden Dene Component SSSI: Castle Eden Dene Conservation objectives for the European interests on the SSSI, 2006) This can be done by; ▪ Ensuring no loss of ancient semi natural stands ▪ Site management ▪ Limiting air pollution ▪ Limiting grazing by ungulates where it leads to undesirable shifts in the composition/structure of the land.	Yew woodlands are distributed throughout the site in a matrix of other woodland types. The site is managed as a National Nature Reserve and the Management Plan provides for regeneration of this special woodland type. Site management is essential to maintain the current level and structural diversity. It is currently affected and at risk from pollution, including eutrophication from adjacent farmland; whilst excessive browsing/grazing may lead to undesirable changes in composition and structure. Increased air pollution is likely to damage site integrity through disease of trees and an associated increase in the rate of Taxus baccata-mortality in the long term.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE

Introduction

5.1 As part of the screening process described in the EU Guidance for Appropriate Assessment (Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC) it is a requirement to complete the assessment forms in Annex 2 of the guidance. The assessment forms to be completed include:

- Screening Matrix
- Finding of no significant effects report matrix

5.2 This section of the report addresses the questions set out in the assessment forms. The evidence that informs the answers given to the assessment form responses is contained in previous sections of this report, plus supporting information in tables 2 to 6 and table 7.

Assessment Table

5.3 In tables 8 to 12, the potential impacts of the Core Strategy Preferred Options, as identified in previously in this report, are assessed in terms of how these could affect the Natura 2000 sites identified. Tables 8 to 12 set out any potential impacts the content of the Core Strategy Preferred Options could have upon the Natura 2000 sites.

Assessment with Other Plans

5.4 Even where a plan on its own may not have a significant impact on a European site, it may have a significant 'in combination' impact with other trends, plans and projects. However it is important to note that if the Core Strategy Preferred Options does not generate any impacts it is not necessary to consider in combination impacts.

5.6 On pp. 24 of Appropriate Assessment of Plans (2006) by Levett-Therivel Sustainability Consultants et al. it is advised that: If the plan plus existing trends alone are unlikely to significantly affect a site, then the effects of other plans and projects do not need to be considered.

Table 8: Potential Impacts on Air Quality of the CSPO

Possible Impacts	Sites Potentially Affected	Impact Source	Significance	In combination with neighbouring plans/policies?	Mitigation	Conclusion
Air Quality	Thrislington SAC	Biomass power generation emissions. Increased visitors and commuters increasing vehicle pollution.	Uncertain	No	If potentially polluting development is identified such as biomass plants or industrial development to support economic and employment growth, the impact of these in terms of emissions (and potentially dust) carried by air should be carefully considered in the context of prevailing winds carrying pollutants towards Natura 2000 Sites to the north west of the Borough.	At present it is not certain that potentially polluting developments will emerge from the Core Strategy Preferred Options and there are no sites proposed for such development. Therefore this element can be screened out at this stage.
	Durham Coast SAC					
	Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Tees Bay					
	Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Hartlepool					
	Castle Eden Dene SAC					

Table 9: Potential Impacts on Water Quality of the CSPO

Possible Impacts	Sites Potentially Affected	Impact Source	Significance	In combination with neighbouring plans/policies?	Mitigation	Conclusion
Water Quality	Thrislington SAC	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	At present it is not known if potentially polluting land uses will emerge from the Core Strategy or where they will be located so the impact cannot be determined. The Core Strategy includes an option(draft Policy CS16) to limit pollution generating development that will mitigate this impact. Therefore at this stage this impact can be screened out.
	Durham Coast SAC	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	
	Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Tees Bay	Water borne pollution from River Tees due to new development.	Uncertain	No	Development should minimise pollution in line with theme 5, especially through policy CS16 Environment protection.	
	Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Hartlepool	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	
	Castle Eden Dene SAC	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	

Table 10: Potential Impacts of Direct Disturbance of the CSPO

Possible Impacts	Sites Potentially Affected	Impact Source	Significance	In combination with neighbouring plans/policies?	Mitigation	Conclusion
Habitat or Species Disturbance	Thrislington SAC	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	
	Durham Coast SAC	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	
	Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Tees Bay	Wildlife displacement and disturbance, collisions and destruction of habitats, particularly with, Terns, Little Terns and Sandwich Terns which may range 60+km to feed.	Would be entirely dependent upon location of wind turbines.	No	If wind turbines are used to generate renewable energy, turbine arrays should be sited and designed in such a way as to provide minimum disturbance to birds, given their patterns of movement. This will be considered further when individual wind farms are proposed.	At present no land has been allocated for wind turbines in the Core Strategy and there are no sites proposed. Therefore this element can be screened out. Note. Further sites could have an impact on birds travelling to other Natura 2000 sites but this is very difficult to determine given the lack of data regarding bird movement across the Borough.
	Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Hartlepool	Wildlife displacement and disturbance, collisions and destruction of habitats, particularly with Terns, Little Terns and Sandwich Terns which may range 60+km to feed.	Would be entirely dependent upon location of wind turbines.	No		
	Castle Eden Dene SAC	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	

Table 11: Potential Impacts on Hydrology of the CSPO

Possible Impacts	Sites Potentially Affected	Impact Source	Significance	In combination with neighbouring plans/policies?	Mitigation	Conclusion
Hydrology	Thrislington SAC	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	At present it is not known where land use change will take place as a consequence of the Core Strategy or what this land use change will comprise, so the impact cannot be determined. The Core Strategy includes policies (e.g. draft Policy CS16) to limit pollution generating development that will mitigate this impact. Therefore at this stage this impact can be screened out.
	Durham Coast SAC	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	
	Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Tees Bay	Water borne pollution from River Tees due to new development.	Up stream development emerging from the Core Strategy can influence water flow potentially altering hydrology of the site.	No	Development should minimise pollution in line with theme1 and theme 5, especially through policies CS2 Promoting good quality, sustainable design and CS16 Environment protection.	
	Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Hartlepool	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	
	Castle Eden Dene SAC	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	

Table 12: Potential Impacts on Climate Change of the CSPO

Possible Impacts	Sites Potentially Affected	Impact Source	Significance	In combination with neighbouring plans/policies?	Mitigation	Conclusion
Climate Change	Thrislington SAC	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	The sites are too far away to be significantly affected by direct disturbance. This element can be screened out at this stage.
	Durham Coast SAC	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	
	Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Tees Bay	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	
	Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA / RAMSAR Hartlepool	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	
	Castle Eden Dene SAC	There is no specific impact identified.	None	No	None	

6.0 SCREENING MATRIX

6.1 Tables 13 and 14 describe the possible impacts resulting from any policies or proposals in the Core Strategy Preferred Options on the Natura 2000 sites. The assessment in Table 13 has been used to complete the Screening Matrix.

Table 13: Screening Matrix

Brief Description of the Project or Plan
The document, once adopted in its final form, will be the principal document of the Darlington Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF is a set of documents which will eventually replace the adopted Darlington Local Plan. It considers how the Borough will develop over the next fifteen years or so, providing the spatial planning framework for the many plans and strategies prepared by the Council and its partners. In particular, it will help to deliver spatially the priorities that are set out in the sustainable community strategy 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed', prepared by Darlington Partnership and agreed earlier this year.
Brief Description of Natura Sites
The following sites have been included in the Screening Matrix for the Core Strategy Preferred Options: • Castle Eden Dene SAC, Easington • Thrislington SAC, Sedgefield • Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool • Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool and Redcar & Cleveland • Durham Coast SAC, Easington
Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on a Natura 2000 site
The Core Strategy Preferred Options is not likely to give rise to impacts on any Natura 2000 sites.
Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 sites
The Core Strategy Preferred Options is not likely to give rise to impacts on any Natura 2000 sites.
Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of: • **reduction of habitat area:** • **disturbance to key species;** • **habitat or species fragmentation;** • **reduction in species density;** • **changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.);** • **climate change**
The Core Strategy Preferred Options is not likely to give rise to impacts on any Natura 2000 sites.
Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of: • **interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;** • **interference with key relationships that define the function of the site.**
The Core Strategy Preferred Options is not likely to give rise to impacts on any Natura 2000 sites.
Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms: • **loss;** • **fragmentation;** • **disruption;** • **disturbance;** • **change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.).**
The Core Strategy Preferred Options is not likely to give rise to impacts on any Natura 2000 sites.

Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known
The Core Strategy Preferred Options is not likely to give rise to impacts on any Natura 2000 sites.

7.0 FINDING OF NO SIGINIFANCT EFFECTS REPORT MATRIX

7.1 For all themes and policies in the Core Strategy Preferred Options no significant effects have been identified. As such, a matrix that reports the finding of no significant effects (table 14) has been completed.

Table 14: No Significant Effects Report Matrix

Criteria	Assessment
Name of project or plan	Darlington Borough Council Core Strategy Preferred Options
Name and location of Natura 2000 sites	Castle Eden Dene SAC, Easington Thrislington SAC, Sedgefield Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/RAMSAR, Hartlepool and Redcar & Cleveland Durham Coast SAC, Easington
Description of the project or plan	The document, once adopted in its final form, will be the principal document of the Darlington Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF is a set of documents which will eventually replace the adopted Darlington Local Plan. It considers how the Borough will develop over the next fifteen years or so, providing the spatial planning framework for the many plans and strategies prepared by the Council and its partners. In particular, it will help to deliver spatially the priorities that are set out in the sustainable community strategy 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed', prepared by Darlington Partnership and agreed earlier this year.
Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)?	No
Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?	No

8.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 This report finds no significant detrimental effects of the Core Strategy Preferred Options. The Core Strategy Preferred Options is not likely to give rise to any negative impacts on any Natura 2000 sites as a result of the adoption of the document in the Borough of Darlington. Appropriate Assessment of this report can therefore be screened out.

8.2 Although there are no significant detrimental effects resulting from the Core Strategy on Natura 2000 sites, potential impacts should be investigated on subsequent individual planning applications with specific regard to the following:

- Impact of economic growth (and consequential development) on air quality, water quality, hydrology on Natura 2000 sites.
- Impact of employment growth (and consequential development) on air quality, water quality and hydrology on Natura 2000 sites.
- Impact of renewable energy generation, particularly biomass and wind turbines on species disturbance for species that use Natura 2000 Sites as their habitat.

8.3 Potential impacts of significant planning applications will be considered through assessing the evidence submitted with each application. Accompanying documents including environmental assessments, reports and statements that are required as part of a planning application will form the basis of the assessment.

8.4 Any potential cumulative effects resulting from smaller developments will be identified through continual monitoring. Annual monitoring of individual smaller planning permissions granted that have a negative impact will provide the trigger for seeking further information from developers on application. These developments will be monitored and illustrated in the Annual Monitoring Report.

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