

Appendix G

Development Schemes

There are two areas where major development is currently planned in the Avon catchment; Amesbury and Allenby/Connaught.

Amesbury

Over the next five years, considerable development is planned in or near Amesbury, currently a small market town on the edge of Salisbury Plain. The number and scale of the proposals, coupled with the dynamic nature of river systems, are resulting in a demanding and complex appropriate assessment of the plans alone and in combination with each other. The proposals include:

- Housing and business park development allocated under the current Salisbury District Local Plan
- Amesbury Business Park
- Housing developments
- Improvements to the A303 (the Stonehenge and Winterbourne Stoke bypasses)
- A new Stonehenge Visitor Centre.

A proposal for military and commercial development at nearby Boscombe Down was submitted last year, but ultimately withdrawn. However, it is possible that further plans for this site may be made in future.

Allenby/Connaught

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is intending to develop housing and facilities for military personnel at Allenby and Connaught in order to accommodate an increase in troop numbers on Salisbury Plain. It is proposed to implement efficiency measures to ensure there is no resultant demand for water resources.

Issues

The major proposed developments have considerable potential to impact on the designated sites, in particular the River Avon cSAC. The main concerns are:

- Runoff, spillage, leakage, etc., during construction
- Runoff during operation/use of the developments
- Increased demand on water resources in the area from the increased resident, working and visitor populations
- Increased sewage disposal, possible requiring construction works at the two nearby sewage treatment works.

These could result in:

- Reduced water quality (contaminated water, elevated levels of suspended solids, chronic inputs of road traffic products)
- Loss of habitat and reduced habitat quality (sedimentation of the riverbed)

- Altered hydrology, leading to reduced flow in the river system
- Disturbance to wildlife and habitat.

All developments will require authorisation from the Environment Agency, principally discharge consents. Wessex Water also has a formal role in respect of water supply and sewage treatment and disposal.

Road Schemes

A number of proposed road schemes in Wiltshire have had government funding either approved or earmarked through the recent Local Transport Plan settlement. The county council will need to ensure that each scheme receives the requisite environmental assessment, taking into account sites with nature conservation designations, protected species and recognised biodiversity interests, using the most up-to-date methodology. Schemes of relevance to the cSAC are described briefly below.

Brunel Link/Harnham Relief Road, Salisbury

English Nature considers that the Brunel Link element is likely to have a significant impact on the River Avon cSAC, and therefore an Appropriate Assessment is required in addition to the wider Environmental Assessment. The Harnham relief road is thought to carry much less risk than the Brunel Link. However, a full Environmental Assessment must be carried out, which may identify ecological issues not yet known.

The main issues of concern are:

- Direct loss of habitat
- Pollution of the river system during construction and operation of the road (sediment ingress is of particular concern)
- Indirect pressures on the river system if floodplain dynamics are altered.

English Nature considers that the Salisbury Local Transport Strategy has not fully assessed the potential impacts of the Brunel Link on the cSAC or SSSI, nor demonstrated that alternatives have been considered. Alternatives (including 'no road' options) need to be fully explored, and must be assessed in relation to River Avon cSAC under the Habitats Regulations. There are also likely to be impacts on the wider interests of the River Avon System SSSI, and on protected species.

A350 Westbury Bypass

This scheme has progressed well and funding is confirmed. Two routes are currently under consideration, an eastern route and a variation on the original far-western route. Both start at the same point at Yarnbrook, close to Picket and Clanger Woods SSSI. English Nature has been consulted at various stages, and objects to the option that would damage Picket and Clanger Woods SSSI.

There are issues of concern regarding the eastern route in relation to the River Avon cSAC. Impacts on water resources will need to be assessed, especially if alternative source(s) of water are required that could may result in an increased demand on the River Wylye.

A36 Wylye Valley Relief Road

Two route options are being worked up in detail. Both would cross the floodplain of the River Wylye (other options could cross the River Till as well). The river crossings are likely to have a significant impact on the River Avon cSAC, and an Appropriate Assessment must be carried out in addition to the wider Environmental Assessment. The issues are largely the same as for the Brunel Link.

Wiltshire County Council is hoping to consult on the Preferred Route in mid-2002, with the planning application being submitted in late 2002/early 2003.

English Nature considers that the Salisbury Local Transport Strategy has not fully assessed the potential impacts of the A36 Wylye relief road on the cSAC or SSSI, nor demonstrated that alternatives have been

considered. Alternatives (including 'no road' options) need to be fully explored, and must be assessed in relation to River Avon cSAC under the Habitats Regulations. There are also likely to be impacts on the wider interests of the River Avon System SSSI, and on protected species

Codford to Heytesbury

The proposed bypassing of Codford and Heytesbury is an old scheme resurrected due to earmarked funding (subject to design), but now reduced to single carriageway. The route would run along Wyllye Valley, but to the north outside of the floodplain. As Codford and Heytesbury are already bypassed, the need for this road would have to be demonstrated. The Environment Agency has expressed concerns about potential impacts on water resources in relation to public water supply.

Blashford Lakes

There are several recreation proposals, mineral extraction and water supply issues at Blashford Lakes in Hampshire. The potential effects are likely to be related to the Avon Valley SPA/Ramsar, rather than the River Avon cSAC. However, the complex hydrological issues will require assessment, including impacts on the Dockens Water and River Avon. The Blashford Lakes Management Plan and Strategy is currently being reviewed. The Review of Consents is a key part of this process, and in particular those consents under review by Hampshire County Council. Consideration should also be given to the alien plant and bird species present, including Canada geese, goosander, Himalayan balsam and Australian swamp stonecrop.

Avon Common

There is a proposal for large-scale gravel extraction and landfill at Avon Common, which is adjacent to the Avon Valley SPA and Dorset Heaths cSAC. The work would include laying a pipeline across the Avon Valley to permanently drain down the site directly into the River Avon. Any such proposal would be subject to an Appropriate Assessment to determine the likely effect on all the relevant Natura 2000 sites. Concern has been expressed regarding water quality impacts, including changes in pH levels.