

# Midland Metro

## G2.4 Scientific and General Wildlife Interest Sites

Sites are assessed according to very well established criteria developed by the Nature Conservancy Council, initially for the selection of a national series of nature reserves (Ratcliffe, 1977) and subsequently modified for Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) selection (Nature Conservancy Council, 1989). These include habitat and population size, diversity, naturalness, rarity, fragility and typicalness as primary criteria, and position in an ecological/geographical unit, potential value, and intrinsic appeal as secondary criteria. Further details of these and related criteria are given in Usher (1986) and Nature Conservancy Council (1989) and more specifically for birds in Fuller (1980, 1982).

In addition the following considerations are specifically taken into account in assessing the scientific value of sites in the EA process:

- The presence of species assemblages, communities and habitat types requiring conservation in their own right, including those listed in *Annex I of the EC Habitats and Species Directive (92/43/EEC)*, examples of rare National Vegetation Classification (NVC) communities and fine examples of other NVC communities having importance for reasons parallel to those discussed in connection with individual species.
- The extent to which habitats represented in the site may have declined (in extent or quality) in the countryside at large and the extent to which they continue to be threatened with such decline.

Very high importance is attached to sites that are the subject of statutory protection and high importance to non-statutory designation for their nature conservation importance. Protection categories and designations relevant to this ES include the following:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs or Natura 2000 sites) recommended to the European Commission by the British Government, and other possible candidate SACs identified to the Government by EN through JNCC;
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs), designated under the *EC Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)*;
- Ramsar Sites, designated under the *Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, 1971*;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* and amendments;
- National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) designated under *The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949*;
- non-statutory nature reserves run by the Wildlife Trust and RSPB;
- sites designated for their nature conservation importance by local authorities and mentioned in Structure and Local Plans on that basis.