

Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening of the Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Development Plan

29 October 2018

INTRODUCTION

1. The Local Authority is the “competent authority” under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and needs to ensure that Neighbourhood Plans have been assessed through the Habitats Regulations process. This looks at the potential for significant impacts on nature conservation sites that are of European importance¹, also referred to as Natura 2000.
2. This Screening Assessment relates to a Neighbourhood Development Plan that will be in general conformity with the strategic policies within the development plan² (the higher level plan for town and country planning and land use). This Screening Assessment uses the Habitats Regulations Assessment of South Oxfordshire District Council’s emerging Local Plan as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Development Plan is likely to result in significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites either alone or in combination with other plans and policies and, therefore, whether an ‘Appropriate Assessment’ is required.

LEGISLATIVE BASIS

3. Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive provides that:

“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [European] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.”

ASSESSMENT

¹ Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for other species, and for habitats.

² The South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (December 2012) and the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (January 2006).

1. There is one Special Area of Conservation (SACs) within 2km of the Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Area; Little Wittenham SAC. Little Wittenham SAC is internationally important for its great crested newt population.
2. The conclusions of the recent HRA of the emerging Local Plan (January 2018) are relevant to the consideration of the potential effects of proposals in the Long Wittenham NDP particularly in combination effects with other plans or projects. The HRA for the emerging Local Plan (direct link available [here](#)) assessed the collective delivery of 500 dwellings in Smaller Villages, such as Long Wittenham (see Table 2-2 Development quantum assessed in this HRA). The HRA of the emerging Local Plan concluded that the proposals within the emerging Local Plan would not have any adverse effects on the Natura 2000 network of sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects (see paragraph 6.5 on page 51).
3. The Long Wittenham NDP supports the provision of a Community Hub comprising a primary school, village hall playing fields and car parking associated with these uses. The plan supports the provision of 40 to 45 dwellings (including 40% affordable housing) as enabling development to help fund the delivery of the Community Hub. The existing school and village hall sites are proposed to be safeguarded as part of the Community Hub proposal. The redevelopment of these sites, yielding approximately 7 dwellings, will be supported subject to the criteria set out the in plan. This screening assessment focuses on these proposals as they are considered to be additional to the development assessed in the HRA for the emerging Local Plan. It is noted that the Long Wittenham NDP also allocates a site known as Fieldside for up to 36 dwelling units. However, this site already has planning permission.
4. The Long Wittenham NDP and its evidence base identifies that whilst the additional development supported by the NDP may fall within the 1-2km Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) of the Little Wittenham SAC where residential development of 100 units or more may present likely risks for the designated site, the scale of development necessary to enable the delivery of the identified community facilities would not exceed 100 dwellings. Therefore, it is considered unlikely that the proposals in the NDP would have any significant effect on the interest features of the Little Wittenham SAC.
5. As there are no likely significant effects on the features of the SAC, the NDP can be screened out from any further assessment.

CONCLUSION

6. The Long Wittenham NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Long Wittenham NDP is not required.

7. There is one Special Area of Conservation (SACs) within 2km of the Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Area; Little Wittenham SAC. Little Wittenham SAC is internationally important for its great crested newt population.
8. The scale of development of development necessary to enable the delivery of the identified community facilities would not exceed 100 dwellings. Therefore it is considered unlikely that the proposals in the NDP would have any significant effect on the interest features of the Little Wittenham SAC.
9. The Long Wittenham NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects; therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Long Wittenham NDP is not required.