

# **Screening Statement on the determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and European Directive 2001/42/EC for the Lewknor Neighbourhood Development Plan**

**06 APRIL 2020**

## **SUMMARY**

Following consultation with statutory bodies, South Oxfordshire District Council (the ‘Council’) determines that Lewknor Neighbourhood Development Plan (Lewknor NDP) does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. An initial screening opinion was used to determine whether or not the contents of the emerging Lewknor Neighbourhood Development Plan (Lewknor NDP) required a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2011/42/EC (the Directive) and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations). A Habitats Regulation Screening Assessment is included in Appendix 2.
2. Any land use plan or programme ‘which sets the framework for future development consent of projects’ must be screened according to a set of criteria from Annex II of the Directive and Schedule 1 of the Regulations. These criteria include exceptions for plans ‘which determine the use of a small area at local level’ or which only propose ‘minor modifications to a plan’, if it is determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.
3. The initial screening opinion was subject to consultation with Historic England, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Oxfordshire County Council. The results of the screening process are detailed in this Screening Statement.

## **THE SCREENING PROCESS**

1. Using the criteria set out in Annex II of the Directive and Schedule 1 of the Regulations, a Screening Opinion determines whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects.
2. The extract from ‘A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’ in Appendix 1 provides a flow diagram to demonstrate the SEA screening process.

3. Table 1 in Appendix 1 sets out the criteria from the Practical Guide, along with an assessment of the Lewknor NDP against each criterion to ascertain whether a SEA is required.
4. Part of the screening process also includes the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening, which can be found in Appendix 2. The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening concluded that the Lewknor 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 Lewknor NDP is not required.
5. Appendix 3 considers whether the plan is likely to have likely significant effects on the environment.
6. These two assessments feed into Table 1 and the SEA screening opinion.
7. The council's screening opinion concluded that the implementation of the Lewknor NDP would not result in likely significant effects on the environment and therefore would not require an SEA.

## **LEWKNOR NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

8. The Lewknor NDP will contain the following vision, objectives and policies:

### Vision

*"In 2040 it is hoped that Lewknor Parish will continue to have the identity of a small rural parish, while new housing will, where local need requires, have been added in a manner sympathetic to the current layout of the villages of Lewknor, South Weston and Postcombe. Such new housing will utilise styles and materials in keeping with the current vernacular architecture, whilst delivering high levels of sustainability and green credentials. In keeping with the current identity, the mix of housing and countryside will be maintained along with existing green spaces within the villages. The natural and historic environment will be conserved and current views from the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the National Nature Reserve will have been protected with Lewknor continuing to be largely hidden from view. Lewknor school will continue to thrive alongside the Church, which will offer multifunctional space, and the popular village pubs in Lewknor and Postcombe will continue to serve the community. The current sense of community will continue to be an attractive feature of the Parish and will make it a place where all people at all stages of their lives enjoy living and want to come to."*

### Aims and Objectives

<b>Aims</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
1. To maintain the atmosphere and sense of community of the villages	1. Retain the overall character of the villages and conserve the historic areas of the villages

and conserve their historic and rural character.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Set design, materials and housing density criteria which maintain or enhance the character of the villages</li> <li>3. Ensure that any development is of high-quality design, is built to high sustainability standards and complements local distinctiveness</li> <li>4. Conserve open spaces and designate sites for protection where appropriate</li> </ul>
2. To conserve the local landscape and environment and to minimise the impact of development on the surrounding countryside, landscape and ecosystems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Any development to be within the settlement boundaries</li> <li>2. Conserve the local environment and its flora and fauna</li> <li>3. Prevent negative impact on the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</li> <li>4. Protect important views both into and out from the villages and also historic views within the villages</li> <li>5. Maintain the current distinctive dark skies across the Parish</li> </ul>
3. To ensure that any future development is within the capacity of the local Infrastructure and facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure adequate capacity for handling surface and foul water.</li> <li>2. Support the Parish's churches, village hall, pre-school, school, pubs and shops.</li> </ul>
4. To promote sustainable development and to respond positively to any need from within the Parish for more houses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support sustainable development within the settlement boundaries which is in keeping with and enhances the character of both the surrounding built environment and the adjacent open rural landscape and which best meets the local housing need</li> <li>2. Address any arising need for affordable housing for people with a connection to the Parish</li> </ul>

## Policies

- a. *Policy – Settlement Boundaries*
- b. *Policy – Development Locations*
- c. *Policy – High Grade Agricultural Land*
- d. *Policy – Character of Development*
- e. *Policy – Design Principles*
- f. *Policy – Sustainable Design*
- g. *Policy – Landscape Character*

- h. Policy – Wildlife and Biodiversity
    - i. Policy – Green Spaces
    - j. Policy – The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
    - k. Policy – Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve
    - l. Policy – Protection of Views
    - m. Policy – Community Facilities
    - n. Policy – Parking
    - o. Policy – Sustainable Development
    - p. Policy – Green Energy
    - q. Policy – Utilities
    - r. Policy – Housing Mix
    - s. Policy – Vehicle Traffic
    - t. Policy – Employment, Economic and Commercial Development
  - 9. The Lewknor NDP will contain policies to maintain a sensible balance in the Parish between housing, employment, health and well-being, community facilities, open spaces, agriculture, wildlife habitats and water courses. It also sets policies which define the overall spatial strategy and pattern of development including definition of Settlement Boundaries for the villages, development locations and high-grade agricultural land.
  - 10. Policies in the Lewknor NDP will seek to conserve the local landscape and environment and to minimise the impact of development on the surrounding countryside, landscape and ecosystems by establishing policies on wildlife and biodiversity, Local Green Spaces, landscape character, the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve and protection of views.
  - 11. We have considered whether focusing new development within the village boundaries (through infill), which has also been a historic focus of settlement activity, could result in the plan directing new development to sites that could potentially have significant effects on the historic environment including conservation areas, listed buildings and archaeological remains.
  - 12. Careful consideration of the proposed boundaries in relation to how the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2012 guides the location and scale of development (mainly through policies CSS1 and CSR1) indicates that the proposed boundaries merely add detail and aid the interpretation of existing policies.
  - 13. Paragraph 13.10 of the Core Strategy 2012 defines infill development as:

‘Infill development is defined as the filling of a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage or on other sites within settlements where the site is closely surrounded by buildings.’

14. The proposed settlement boundaries have not excluded any sites that could be considered to be a potential infill site in light of the guidance provided by the Core Strategy definition. As the boundaries, in practical terms, do not provide a more restrictive interpretation of the relevant policies in the Core Strategy (CSS1 and CSR1), the council has concluded that the proposals in the plan will not have significant effects on the historic environment.
15. The proposed boundaries do not provide a less restrictive interpretation of the relevant policies in the Core Strategy (CSS1 and CSR1), therefore, the proposals in the plan are not considered to have likely significant environmental effects.
16. Overall, we note that the plan does not allocate any sites for development and places great emphasis on conserving the character and appearance of the area.
17. It is therefore concluded that the implementation of the Lewknor NDP would not result in likely significant effects on the environment.

## **CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

18. The Screening Opinion was sent to Natural England, the Environment Agency, Historic England and Oxfordshire County Council on 27th February 2020 for a four week consultation period. The responses in full are in Appendix 4.
19. Historic England agree with the council's view that the Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan would not lead to significant effects on the historic environment and therefore the Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.
20. Natural England agree with the Initial Screening Opinion and consider that the plan does not require an SEA or Appropriate Assessment. However, should the Neighbourhood Plan decide to allocate sites for a significant number of new developments, the Screening Opinion would need to be reviewed.
21. The Environment Agency confirmed that there are no areas of fluvial flood risk or watercourses affected by the neighbourhood plan area. The Environment Agency do not consider there to be potential significant environmental effects relating to these environmental constraints.
22. Oxfordshire County Council did not have any comments.

## **CONCLUSION**

23. As a result of the screening undertaken by the Council and the responses from the statutory consultees, the following determination has been reached.

24. The Lewknor NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Lewknor Neighbourhood Development Plan is not required.
25. Based on the assessment presented in Appendices 1 & 3, the Lewknor NDP is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment.
26. The Lewknor NDP does not require a Strategic Environment Assessment.

Authorised by: Ricardo Rios  
On behalf of Head of Planning



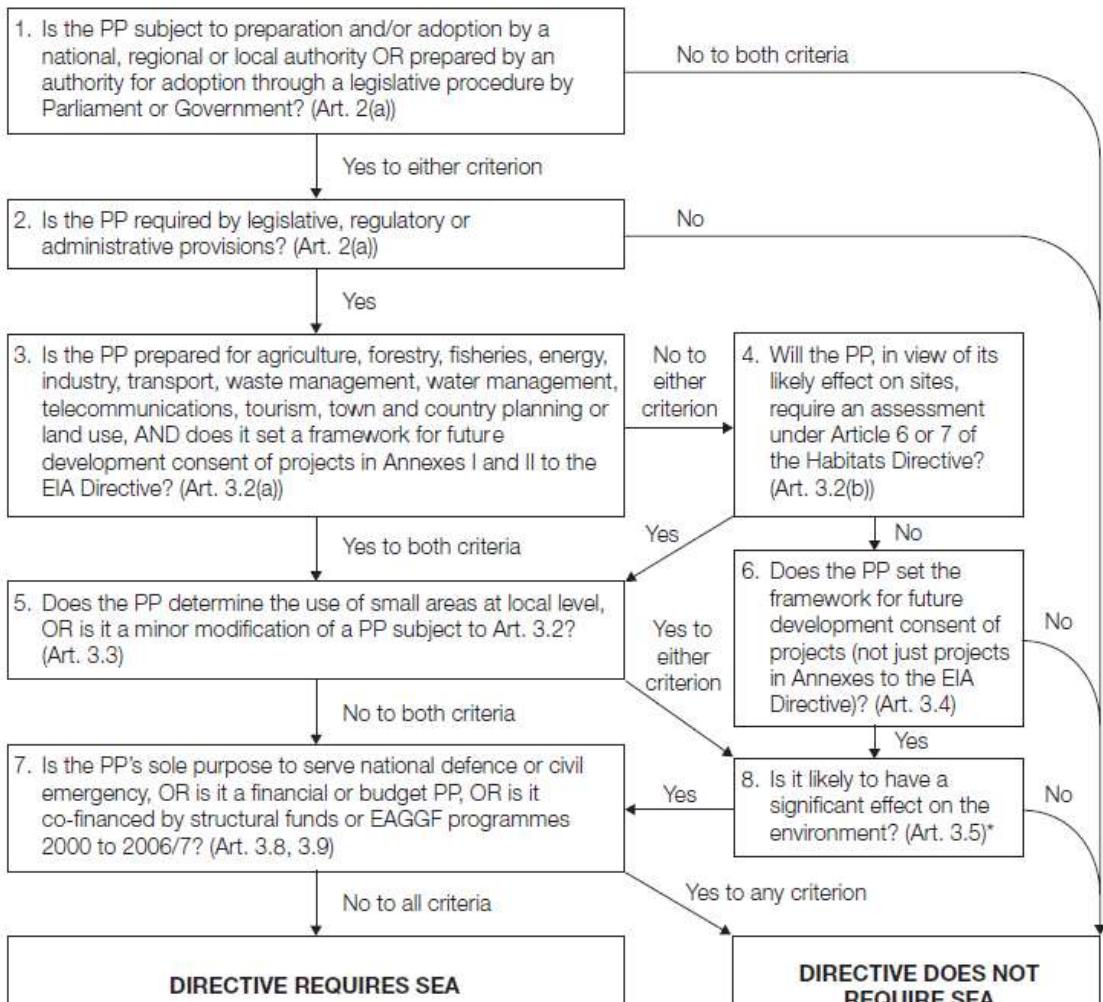
Signed:

Date: 07/04/2020

## Appendix 1 – Extract from ‘A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’ (DCLG) (2005)

**Figure 2 – Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes**

This diagram is intended as a guide to the criteria for application of the Directive to plans and programmes (PPs). It has no legal status.



\*The Directive requires Member States to determine whether plans or programmes in this category are likely to have significant environmental effects. These determinations may be made on a case by case basis and/or by specifying types of plan or programme.

**Table 1: Application of SEA Directive as shown in Appendix 1**

*[Note to author – most of these boxes contain standard text – greyed out. Those where specific details need to be included are Qs 3,4,5 & 8]*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Y	<p>The preparation of and adoption of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is allowed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by the Lewknor NDP Steering Group, a working group who report to the Lewknor Parish Council (as the “relevant body”) and will be “made” by South Oxfordshire District Council as the local authority. The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is subject to the following regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2016</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2016</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2017</li> </ul>
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Y	<p>Whilst the Neighbourhood Development Plan is not a requirement and is optional under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, it will, if “made”, form part of the Development Plan for the District. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive.</p> <p>National Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 027 Reference ID: 11-027-20150209) sets out that draft neighbourhood plan proposals should</p>

		be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This assessment should be undertaken in accordance with the requirements set out in <a href="#">regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004</a> .
3. Is the Neighbourhood Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II (see Appendix 2) to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	N	The Lewknor NDP is prepared for town and country planning and land use and will not set out a framework for future development of projects that would require an EIA.
4. Will the Neighbourhood Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	N	The Lewknor NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Lewknor NDP in Appendix 2.
5. Does the Neighbourhood Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Y	The Lewknor NDP will determine the use of sites/small areas at a local level.
6. Does the Neighbourhood Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Y	When made, the Lewknor NDP will include a series of policies to guide development within the village. This will inform the determination of planning applications providing a framework for future development consent of projects.
7. Is the Neighbourhood Plan's sole purpose to serve the national defence or	N	N/A

civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)		
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	The plan is not likely to have significant effects on the environment. See assessment of the likely significance of effects on the environment in Appendix 3.

# **Appendix 2 - Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Statement for the Lewknor Neighbourhood Development Plan**

## **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 importance<sup>1</sup>, 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 plan<sup>2</sup> (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<sup>3</sup> as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Lewknor 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.”*

4. Regulations 105-106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 state:

*“105.—(1) Where a land use plan—*

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

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

<sup>3</sup> South Oxfordshire Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment Report (March 2019)

- (a) *is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and*
- (b) *is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site, the plan-making authority for that plan must, before the plan is given effect, make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that site's conservation objectives.*
- (2) *The plan-making authority must for the purposes of the assessment consult the appropriate nature conservation body and have regard to any representations made by that body within such reasonable time as the authority specifies.*
- (3) *The plan-making authority must also, if it considers it appropriate, take the opinion of the general public, and if it does so, it must take such steps for that purpose as it considers appropriate.*
- (4) *In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, and subject to regulation 107, the plan-making authority must give effect to the land use plan only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site or the European offshore marine site (as the case may be).*
- (5) *A plan-making authority must provide such information as the appropriate authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the discharge by the appropriate authority of its obligations under this Chapter.*
- (6) *This regulation does not apply in relation to a site which is—*
- (a) *a European site by reason of regulation 8(1)(c), or*
- (b) *a European offshore marine site by reason of regulation 18(c) of the Offshore Marine Conservation Regulations (site protected in accordance with Article 5(4) of the Habitats Directive).*
- 106.—(1) *A qualifying body which submits a proposal for a neighbourhood development plan must provide such information as the competent authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment under regulation 105 or to enable it to determine whether that assessment is required.*
- (2) *In this regulation, “qualifying body” means a parish council, or an organisation or body designated as a neighbourhood forum, authorised for the purposes of a neighbourhood development plan to act in relation to a neighbourhood area as a result of section 61F of the TCPA 1990 (authorisation to act in relation to neighbourhood areas)(159), as*

*applied by section 38C of the 2004 Planning Act (supplementary provisions)(160).*

*(3) Where the competent authority decides to revoke or modify a neighbourhood development plan after it has been made, it must for that purpose make an appropriate assessment of the implications for any European site likely to be significantly affected in view of that site's conservation objectives; and regulation 105 and paragraph (1) apply with the appropriate modifications in relation to such a revocation or modification.*

*(4) This regulation applies in relation to England only."*

## **ASSESSMENT**

5. The HRA of the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034 used a screening distance of 17km to identify European sites which could be affected by development from the plan. This distance has been subject to consultation with Natural England and reflects the average travel to work distance in the district. As such, the same distance has been applied in this HRA Screening.
6. The following European sites lie wholly or partly within 17km of the built-up area of Lewknor and have been taken into consideration:
  1. Aston Rowant SAC – Within NDP area
  7. Aston Rowant is classified as SAC because it supports one of the largest remaining populations of juniper in lowland Britain. It is selected as an example of juniper formations on the chalk in the south east of England. At this site juniper is present as part of a mixed scrub community but also occurs as isolated bushes in chalk grassland. In common with most lowland populations of juniper, successful reproduction and survival of new generations of bushes is extremely rare and conservation is currently dependent upon significant levels of management intervention. The low level of reproductive success is the main threat to the feature at this site. Aston Rowant also supports Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests although this is not a primary reason for classification as SAC.
  8. The main pressures and threats to this site include an unsustainable on-site population, changes in species distribution, disease of juniper as well as the impacts of air pollution and the risks of atmospheric nitrogen deposition upon juniper. Additionally, conflicting conservation objectives threaten beech.
  2. Chilterns Beechwood SAC – Under 1km from Lewknor built-up area

9. The Chilterns Beechwoods SAC comprises nine separate sites scattered across the Chilterns. There are three features of interest: semi-natural grasslands and scrubland on chalk; Asperulo-Fagetum beech woodland (for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK and lies in the centre of the habitat's UK range); and Stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence. The rare coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera* is found in these woods.

10. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of forestry and woodland management, disease, deer and the invasive species of grey squirrel upon beech. Additionally, the changes in species distribution of stag beetle as well as the impact of public access and disturbance upon stag beetle. Air pollution and the impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition also threaten the dry grasslands, beech and stag beetle.

3. Little Wittenham SAC – Approximately 14km from Lewknor built-up area

11. One of the best-studied great crested newt sites in the UK, Little Wittenham comprises two main ponds set in a predominantly woodland context (broadleaved and conifer woodland is present). There are also areas of grassland, with sheep grazing and arable bordering the woodland to the south and west. The River Thames is just to the north of the site, and a hill fort to the south. Large numbers of great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* have been recorded in the two main ponds, and research has revealed that they range several hundred metres into the woodland blocks.

12. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of public access and disturbance, and invasive fish species upon great crested newt. With regard to the types of development that may be brought forward in the Local Plan, visitor disturbance could impact the site.

13. As required under Regulation 106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'), the qualifying body (Berrick Salome Parish Council) provided the required information to enable South Oxfordshire District Council to determine whether the assessment under Regulation 105 is required. Consideration has been given to the potential for the development proposed by the neighbourhood plan to result in significant effects associated with:

- Physical loss of/damage to habitat;
- Non-physical disturbance e.g. noise/vibration or light pollution;
- Air pollution;
- Increased recreation pressure; and
- Changes to hydrological regimes.

14. The Lewknor NDP does not allocate any sites for development or promote additional development beyond what is supported in the adopted Development Plan.
15. The Council has considered the HRA of the emerging Local Plan (March 2019) in respect of the potential in combination effects of the proposals in the Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan. As the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034 covers the period from 2011 to 2034, the quantum of development proposed in the Local Plan includes some completed and committed development (Committed development includes sites under construction, with planning permission, made neighbourhood plan allocations and allocations carried forward from the Local Plan 2011 and Core Strategy). The policies that enabled those developments to be permitted have already been subject to HRA as part of the Core Strategy, Local Plan 2011 or as part of the HRA for the relevant NDPs. As the Lewknor NDP is not proposing any additional development beyond that already considered in the Core Strategy and Local Plan 2011, we consider that the Lewknor NDP is not likely to give rise to significant in combination effects.
16. Appendix 2 of this assessment has considered how the development proposed in the Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. Given the plan does not propose any allocations and having regard to the conclusions of Appendix 2, it is considered that the development proposed in the Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to give rise to significant in combination effects.

## **CONCLUSION**

17. The Lewknor 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 Lewknor NDP is not required

## Appendix 3 - Assessment of the likely significance of effects on the environment

*[Note to author – most of these boxes contain standard text (greyed out). Those where specific details need to be included are Qs 1a,c,d, 2a,b,e,f and g]*

1. Characteristics of the Plan, having regard to:	
(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	The Lewknor NDP would, if adopted, form part of the Statutory Development Plan and as such does contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects. However, the Plan will sit within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework, the strategic policies of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (2012) and Local Plan 2011 (2006); and the emerging Local Plan 2034.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	A Neighbourhood Development Plan must have regard to national policy and be in conformity with the Local Plan for the District. It does not influence other plans. It should also take account of emerging planning policy. The Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to influence other Plans or Programmes within the Statutory Development Plan.
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	<p>National policy requires a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread through plan-making, including the Lewknor NDP. A basic condition of the Lewknor NDP is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Within this wider context the Lewknor NDP itself is unlikely to have significant positive or negative effects. It is noted that a number of the NDP objectives do relate to the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view of promoting sustainable development. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.3 Ensure that any development is of high quality design, is built to high sustainability standards and complements local distinctiveness.</li> <li>2.2 Conserves the local environment and its flora.</li> <li>3.1 Ensure adequate capacity for handling surface and foul water.</li> </ul>

	<p>4.1 Support sustainable development within the settlement boundaries which is in keeping with and enhances the character of both the surrounding built environment and the adjacent open rural landscape and which best meets the local housing need.</p> <p>In order to meet the basic conditions, the plan will have to integrate environmental considerations in particular with a view to promote sustainable development</p>
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and	<p>The environmental impact of the proposals within the Lewknor NDP is likely to be minimal as the plan does not allocate any sites for development or support additional development beyond what is supported in the Development Plan. Policies in the Lewknor NDP will aim to support sustainable development in the village that will not adversely impact on the rural nature of the village. Retaining the character and appearance of the village is particularly important.</p> <p>The Lewknor NDP will contain policies to maintain the character of the village and to specify design criteria for new houses.</p> <p>Policies in the Lewknor NDP will aim to support sustainable development in the villages that will not adversely impact on the rural nature of the villages. Retaining the character and appearance of the villages is particularly important. The plan does not allocate any sites for housing but does propose to use settlement boundaries which define Lewknor and Postcombe.</p> <p>The Lewknor NDP area contains the following environmental designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Flood Zones</i></li> <li>- <i>BAP priority habitats</i></li> <li>- <i>Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve</i></li> <li>- <i>Protected Species buffer</i></li> <li>- <i>TPOs</i></li> <li>- <i>Aston Rowant SAC</i></li> <li>- <i>Aston Rowant SSSI</i></li> </ul>

- *Aston Rowant Cutting SSSI*
- *Wormsley Chalk Banks SSSI*

In addition to the Aston Rowant Special Area of Conservation (SAC) within the neighbourhood area, there are two SACs within 17km of the Lewknor Neighbourhood Development Plan. These are as follows:

- Chilterns Beechwood SAC – under 1km
- Little Wittenham SAC – approx. 14km

There are also the following SSSI's located within the following distances of the built-up area of Lewknor:

Shirburn Hill SSSI – adjoining parish  
Aston Rowant Woods SSSI – adjoining parish  
Chinnor Chalk Pit SSSI – approx.4km  
Chinnor Hill SSSI – approx. 5km  
Watlington and Pyrton Hills SSSI – approx. 3km  
Knightsbridge Lane SSSI – approx. 3km  
Spartum Fen SSSI – approx. 6.5km  
Swyncombe Downs SSSI – approx. 7km  
Pishill Woods SSSI – approx. 7km

Given the NDP is not allocating sites; the small amount of potential infill sites within the proposed village boundaries, their relationship to the designations within the NDP area; and finally the conformity of the drawn village boundaries with the Development Plan we are of the opinion the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose any development that is likely to harm these designations as the plan seeks to conserve the village, its character and setting. The policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will require these designations to be protected and therefore there would not be likely significant effects to the environment.

<p>(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).</p>	<p>The proposed development in the Lewknor NDP has been judged not to have an impact on Community legislation.</p>
<p><b>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b></p>	
<p>(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is generally likely to influence development for a period of 15 years from its adoption, which is in line with national guidance. The Lewknor NDP is likely to have modest but enduring positive environmental effects. The effects are not likely to be reversible as they relate to development. However, they will be of a local scale through limited infill sites within the village boundaries.</p> <p>The plan proposes to protect local green spaces, important views and existing facilities. This will have positive cumulative benefits for the area. However given the scale of what is proposed the positive effect is not likely to be significant.</p> <p>The plan is also likely to have positive social effects through the provision of residential development through infill and the protection of local green space.</p>
<p>(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;</p>	<p>It is intended that the positive social effects of infill residential development will have positive cumulative benefits for the area.</p>
<p>(c) the transboundary nature of the effects;</p>	<p>The effects of the Plan are unlikely to have transboundary<sup>3</sup> impacts.</p>
<p>(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);</p>	<p>The policies in the plan are unlikely to present risks to human health or the environment.</p>
<p>(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);</p>	<p>The Lewknor NDP relates to the parish of Lewknor, which includes the villages and communities of Lewknor, Postcombe and South Weston.</p> <p>The NDP is not allocating any sites for development and therefore as it will not</p>

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<sup>3</sup> Transboundary effects are understood to be in other Member States.

	<p>promote any development that is above and beyond what is already supported in the Development Plan, the potential for environmental effects is also likely to be small and localised.</p>
(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use; and	<p>The Lewknor NDP area contains the following special natural characteristics and cultural heritage elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listed buildings</li> <li>- Conservation Area</li> <li>- Local heritage assets</li> <li>- Archaeological constraints</li> <li>- <i>Chilterns AONB</i></li> <li>- Ancient woodland</li> <li>- TPOs</li> </ul> <p>In addition to the Aston Rowant Special Area of Conservation (SAC) within the neighbourhood area, there are two SACs within 17km of the Lewknor Neighbourhood Development Plan. These are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chilterns Beechwood SAC – under 1km</li> <li>- Little Wittenham SAC – approx. 14km</li> </ul> <p>There are also the following SSSI's located within the following distances of the built-up area of Lewknor:</p> <p>Shirburn Hill SSSI – adjoining parish            Aston Rowant Woods SSSI – adjoining parish            Chinnor Chalk Pit SSSI – approx.4km            Chinnor Hill SSSI – approx. 5km            Watlington and Pyrton Hills SSSI – approx. 3km            Knightsbridge Lane SSSI – approx. 3km            Spartum Fen SSSI – approx. 6.5km            Swyncombe Downs SSSI – approx. 7km            Pishill Woods SSSI – approx. 7km</p> <p>The Lewknor NDP offers an opportunity to enhance the natural environment and the cultural heritage of the area through the proposals being considered. The main</p>

aspects of the plan that are most likely to affect the special natural characteristics and cultural heritage is the impact of householder and small scale developments within the village boundaries on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, listed buildings, local heritage assets, archaeological sites and the AONB. However, given the limited amount of potential infill and their relationship to the designated areas and that the plan aims to ensure development conserves and enhances the Conservation Area through detailed design policies it is considered there would not be likely significant effects to the environment.

Whilst there are a number of SACs and SSSIs within and nearby to the neighbourhood area, the Lewknor NDP is not proposing any allocations and the NDP has strong objectives to support the conservation and protection of the local landscape and environment, aim 2 of the NDP is:

*To conserve the local landscape and environment and to minimise the impact of development on the surrounding countryside, landscape and ecosystems.*

Therefore is not considered to cause likely significant effects.

The HRA Screening Assessment in appendix 2 concluded that: The Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects therefore, an Appropriate Assessment of the Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan is not required.

There are sensitivities regarding cultural heritage within the Lewknor NDP area, with a number of listed buildings and local heritage assets spread around the parish. There is currently no collective detailed information on the risks and vulnerability of the listed buildings and their setting readily available.

	<p>However, the Lewknor NDP is not seeking to make any allocations.</p> <p>Whilst the objectives imply that policies of the plan will seek to protect the rural character of the parish, the surrounding countryside, landscape, designated open spaces, farming and ecosystems. The neighbourhood plan is considered to have a neutral effect on cultural heritage because there is no indication given in the objectives that the plan would go beyond national and local policy and therefore it is considered that the effects of the proposals in the plan are not likely to be significant.</p> <p>Given the nature and scope of the NDP, environmental quality standards or limit values are not considered likely to be significantly effected.</p> <p>The Lewknor NDP is not proposing any allocations, therefore the plan is not likely to cause significant effects in relation to intensive land use.</p>
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	The area covered by the Lewknor NDP includes part of the Chilterns AONB, recognised to contain some of the finest landscapes in England. As the Lewknor NDP is not prosing to allocate any development and given the objectives of the plan, the effects of the Lewknor NDP on the landscape are not likely to be significant.

## APPENDIX 4 – STATUTORY CONSULTEE RESPONSES

### HISTORIC ENGLAND:

**From:** Lloyd Sweet, Robert <Robert.LloydSweet@HistoricEngland.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 27 March 2020 20:07  
**To:** Faludi, Dorottya  
**Subject:** 20120-03-26 Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening Opinion

Dear Dorothy

That you fo consulting Historic England on the draft screening opinion for SEA of the Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan. Having reviewed the opinion I am pleased to confirm on behalf of Historic England that we agree that the pan is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects that have not been assessed through SEA of a higher level plan document (including the strategic policies of the South Oxfordshire Neighbourhood Plan).

In coming to this option we have taken the following factors into consideration:

The plan area contains a number of sensitive heritage assets;  
It is not intended that the plan should identify or allocate sites for housing or other development;  
A settlement boundary has already been identified through the local plan;  
This approach has been assessed through SEA/SA of the local plan.

I hope these comments are of assistance to the Council but will be pleased to answer any queries that many arise from them.

Yours sincerely

Robert Lloyd-Sweet

Robert Lloyd-Sweet | Historic Places Adviser | South East England | Historic England  
Cannon Bridge House | 25 Dowgate Hill | London | EC4R 2YA

## NATURAL ENGLAND:

Date: 17 March 2020

Our ref: 310458

Your ref: Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Opinion



Dorottya.Faludi@southandvale.gov.uk

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Hornbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
Bectra Way  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Dorottya,

### **Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Opinion**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 27 February 2020 which was received by Natural England on the same day.

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.

#### **Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment**

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils) are concerned, that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

#### **Neighbourhood Plan**

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in light of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), is contained within the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#). The guidance highlights three triggers that may require the production of an SEA, for instance where:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

Based on the information provided, whilst there are a number of sensitive natural assets within or near the NDP area, including Aston Rowant SAC, and a number of SSSIs and the Chilterns AONB we note that the NPD doesn't allocate any sites for development and therefore are satisfied with the screening conclusion that SEA is not required.

We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies / proposals within the plan. It remains the case, however, that the responsible authority should provide information supporting this screening decision, sufficient to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected.

Notwithstanding this advice, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all potential environmental assets. As a result the responsible authority should raise environmental issues that we have not identified on local or national biodiversity action plan species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites or local landscape character, with its own ecological and/or landscape advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local landscape and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by this plan, before determining whether an SA/SEA is necessary.

Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA/SA screening stage, should the responsible authority seek our views on the scoping or environmental report stages. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Rebecca Micklem on 020822 57686. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Micklem  
Lead Adviser Sustainable Development  
Thames Solent Team

## ENVIRONMENT AGENCY:

**From:** Planning THM <Planning\_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 05 March 2020 14:53  
**To:** Faludi, Dorottya  
**Subject:** RE: Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening Opinion - reply by 26 March 2020

Dear Ms Faludi,

Thank you for consulting us on the draft SEA and HRA Screening Opinion for the Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan.

Based on a review of environmental constraints for which we are a statutory consultee, there are no areas of fluvial flood risk or watercourses affected by the neighbourhood plan area. Therefore we do not consider there to be potential significant environmental effects relating to these environmental constraints.

A Surface Water Management Plan will indicate if there are any critical drainage areas from local sources of flood risk (e.g. surface water, groundwater and sewerage) which coincide with the neighbourhood plan area.

For your information we have published joint advice with Natural England, English Heritage and the Forestry Commission on neighbourhood planning which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans. This is available at:

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140328084622/http://cdn.environment-agency.gov.uk/LIT\\_6524\\_7da381.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140328084622/http://cdn.environment-agency.gov.uk/LIT_6524_7da381.pdf)

Kind regards,  
Sam

Samuel Pocock  
Planning Advisor, Thames Sustainable Places Team  
**Environment Agency** | Red Kite House, Wallingford, OX10 8BD

Normal working hours:  
Thur – 8am – 4pm  
Frid – 8am – 4pm

[Planning\\_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Planning_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk)  
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