

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 Towersey Neighbourhood Development Plan

6 NOVEMBER 2020

SUMMARY

Following consultation with the statutory bodies, South Oxfordshire District Council (the 'Council') determines that Towersey Neighbourhood Development Plan (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 Towersey Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC (the Directive) and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations).
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 and Natural England. The results of the screening process are detailed in this Screening Statement.

THE SCREENING PROCESS

4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Table 1 in Appendix 1 sets out the criteria from the Practical Guide, along with an assessment of the Towersey NDP against each criterion to ascertain whether a SEA is required.

7. Also part of the screening process is the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening, which can be found in Appendix 2. The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening concluded that the Towersey 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 Towersey NDP is not required.
8. Appendix 3 considers whether the plan is likely to have likely significant effects on the environment.
9. These two assessments feed into Table 1 and the SEA screening opinion.
10. The council's screening opinion concluded that the implementation of the Towersey NDP would not result in likely significant effects on the environment and therefore will not require a SEA.

TOWERSEY NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

11. The Towersey NDP will contain the following objectives and policies:

Objectives

- *To preserve and enhance the open countryside*
- *To encourage and support appropriate housing development*
- *Retain open spaces within the village*
- *Protect and enhance the historic environment*
- *Improve facilities for local people*

Draft Policies

TOW1 Village Boundaries and Infill Development – The policy will define a 'village boundary' on the Policies Map where infill works as a matter of principle (although other policies will still need to be adhered to) and where the countryside begins, as per Brightwell, Berrick Salome, Sydenham NPs,

TOW2 Housing Mix – To correct the imbalance of housing stock in the village requiring infill development to provide 1, 2, and 3-bedroom dwellings.

TOW3 Design – Setting out a series of design principles drawn from a Character Appraisal.

TOW4 Local Heritage Assets – Identifying buildings and structures with local heritage value derived from the Character Appraisal.

TOW5 Designation of Green Spaces – Designating a series of Local Green Spaces which meet the NPPF tests for designation

TOW6 Climate Change (New Buildings) – Encouraging and incentivising the use of Passivhaus standard of building design for all new building projects in the area.

TOW7 Climate Change (Carbon Sinking) – Requiring new development to contribute to carbon sequestration in the neighbourhood area.

TOW8 Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity – A policy which establishes a network of green infrastructure comprising footpaths, woodland, biodiversity assets and habitat corridors throughout the Parish.

TOW9 Community Facilities – Identifying facilities in the neighbourhood area and seeking unnecessary loss of valued community facilities.

TOW10 Managing Traffic – Enhancing the character of rural lanes as per Berrick Salome NP.

TOW11 Supporting Water Infrastructure – Requiring proposals to demonstrate sufficient capacity on local sewerage system and avoiding increased flood risk.

12. Policies in the Towersey NDP will aim to support sustainable development in the village that will not adversely impact on the rural nature of the village. The plan places greater emphasis on conserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the area, including the Conservation Area. The plan will contain a design policy to secure high quality design standards in all future development proposals.
13. The plan contains no site-specific development proposals and does not allocate any sites for housing, employment, retail, or community uses. It does propose to define a village boundary.
14. We have considered whether focusing new development within the village boundary (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.
15. Careful consideration of the proposed boundary 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.

16. 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.’

17. The proposed settlement boundary has 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.

18. The proposed boundary does not provide a less restrictive interpretation of the relevant policies in the Core Strategy (CSS1 and CSR1), therefore, the proposal in the plan are not considered to have likely significant environmental effects.

19. 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.

20. It is therefore concluded that the implementation of the Towersey NDP would not result in likely significant effects on the environment.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

21. The Screening Opinion was sent to Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England on 10 September 2020 for a six-week consultation period. The responses in full are presented in Appendix 4.

22. Natural England agree with the Initial Screening Opinion and consider it unlikely to have significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

23. Historic England is satisfied that the Towersey Neighbourhood Plan would not, at present have potential for likely significant environmental effects within areas of interest to Historic England. As such they confirm their agreement that it does not merit completion of an SEA.

24. The Environment Agency think there are unlikely to be potential significant environmental effects that relate to the Neighbourhood Plan area.

CONCLUSION

25. As a result of the screening undertaken by the Council, the following determination has been reached.

26. The Towersey NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Towersey NDP.
27. Based on the assessment presented in Appendices 1 & 3, the Towersey NDP is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment.
28. The Towersey NDP does not require a Strategic Environment Assessment.

Authorised by: Ricardo Rios
On behalf of Head of Planning

Signed: 

Date: 06/11/2020

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

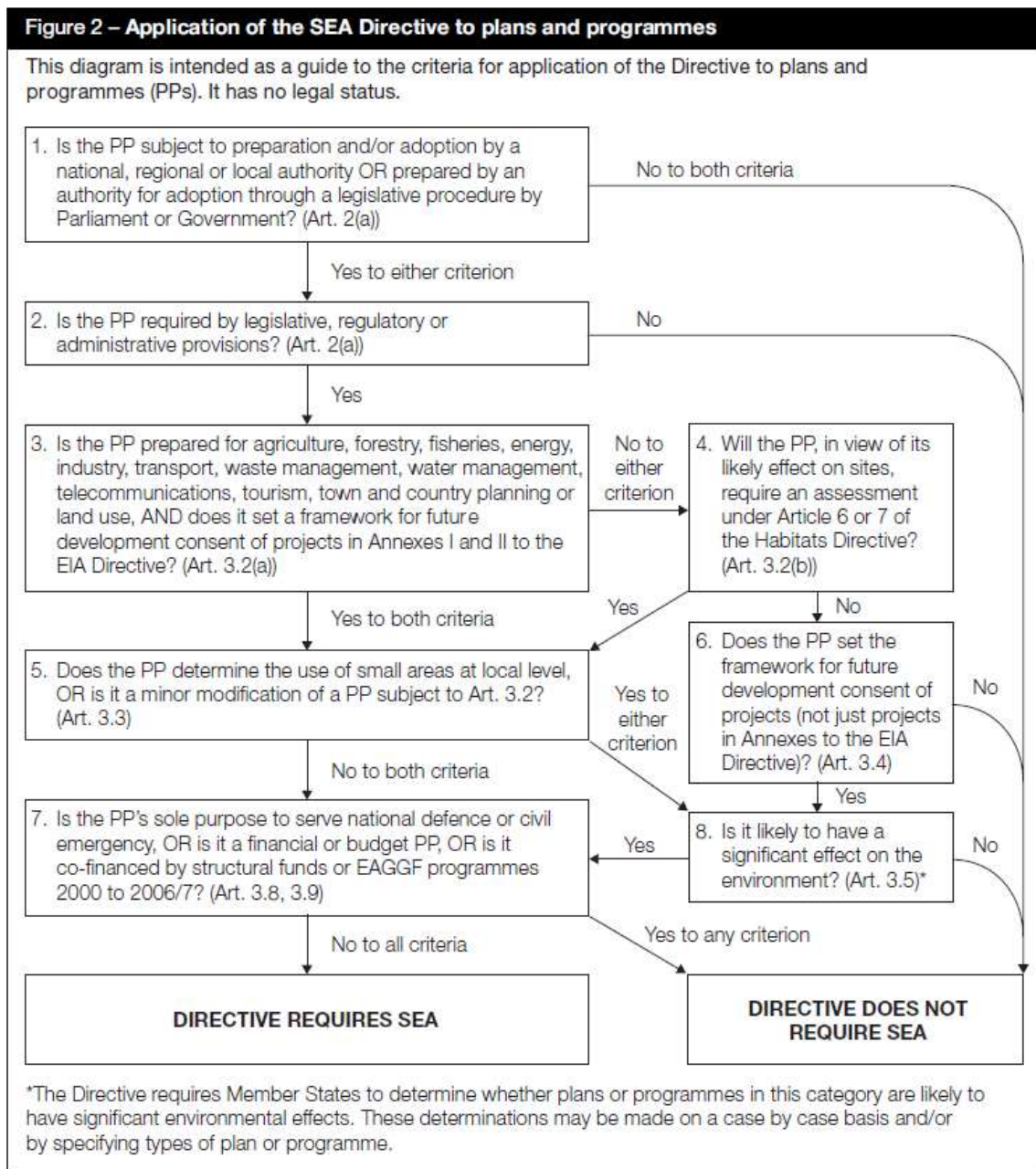


Table 1: Application of SEA Directive as shown in Appendix 1

[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]

Stage	Y/N	Explanation
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 Towersey NDP Steering Group, a working group who report to the Towersey 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"> • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 • The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 • The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2017
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>

		National Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 051 Reference ID: 41-051-20150209) sets out that draft neighbourhood plan proposals should 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 regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 .
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 Towersey 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 Towersey NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Towersey 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 Towersey 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 Towersey 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 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)	N	N/A
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 Opinion for the Towersey 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 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 Plan³ as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Towersey 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—

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).

³ 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 2035 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.
6. There are two Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within 17km of the Towersey Neighbourhood Development Plan. These are as follows:
 - Chiltern Beechwoods SAC – approximately 5km from the NDP boundary; and
 - Aston Rowant SAC – approximately 6km from the NDP boundary

Chiltern Beechwood SAC

7. The Chiltern Beechwood 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.
8. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impact of forestry and woodland management, disease, deer and the invasive species of grey squirrel upon beech. Additionally, the changes in species distribution of stag beetles as well as the impact of public access and disturbance upon stag beetle. Air pollution and the impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition also threaten and dry grasslands, beech and stag beetle. With regard to the types of development that may be brought forward in the Local Plan, air pollution and visitor disturbance could impact the site.

9. Individual stag beetles may travel outside of the SAC boundary, although it is unlikely that they will travel far – it is generally only the male stag beetles that flies during the summer months, and the females beetles rarely flies. Research suggests that 2km may be an appropriate buffer inside which sites could be functionally connected, as this is the distance that males travel to females during the breeding season.

Aston Rowant SAC

10. 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.
11. 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. With regard to the types of development that may be brought forward in the Local Plan, air pollution could impact the site.
12. As required under Regulation 106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the ‘Habitats Regulations’), the qualifying body (Towersey 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:
 13.
 - 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. Both of the above SAC designations are outside of the Towersey designated neighbourhood area. The built-up area of the village is even further from the designated SAC designations, adding approximately 1km to the distance.

15. The Plan does not allocate any sites for development or promote additional development beyond what is supported in the adopted Development Plan. The proposed village boundary is sufficiently distanced from the SAC designations that it is unlikely to have significant effects.
16. 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 Towersey Neighbourhood Plan. As the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 covers the period from 2011 to 2035, 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 Towersey NDP is not proposing any additional development beyond that already considered in the Core Strategy and Local Plan 2011, we consider that the Towersey NDP is not likely to give rise to significant in combination effects.
17. Appendix 2 of this assessment has considered how the development proposed in the Towersey 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 Towersey Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to give rise to significant in combination effects.

CONCLUSION

18. The Towersey 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 Towersey NDP is not required.

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

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 Towersey 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 2035.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	A Neighbourhood Development Plan must be in conformity with the Local Plan for the District. It does not influence other plans. It should also take account of the emerging planning policy. The Towersey 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 Towersey NDP. A basic condition of the Towersey NDP is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Within this wider context the Towersey NDP itself is unlikely to have significant positive or negative effects. It is noted that the Towersey NDP objectives do relate to the three pillars of sustainable development, these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To preserve and enhance the open countryside • To encourage and support appropriate housing development • Retain open spaces within the village • Protect and enhance the historic environment • Improve facilities for local people
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and	The environmental impact of the proposals within the Towersey 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 Towersey 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 area, including the conservation area, is particularly important.

The Towersey NDP will contain policies to help maintain the character of the village and specify design principles drawn from a character appraisal. The NDP will propose a series of Local Green Space designations, as well as establishing a network of green infrastructure. A number of climate change policies are also proposed. Local heritage assets will be identified through the character appraisal and community facilities will also be identified and protected through an NDP policy. The NDP also proposes to include a policy aimed at managing traffic and also supporting water infrastructure. The plan does not allocate any sites for housing but does propose to implement a village boundary.

The Towersey NDP designated area contains the following environmental designations:

BAP priority habitats
Conservation area
Listed buildings
Local heritage asset
Flood Zones
Archaeological constraints
Protected species buffer
Tree Preservation Orders

The following designations are within 5km the NDP area (the distances are approximately measured from NDP boundary):

Chinnor Hill SSSI – 3.5km
Chinnor Chalk Pit SSSI – 4km
Aston Rowant SSSI – 5km

	<p>There are two SACs within 17km of the Towersey NDP boundary. These are as follows:</p> <p>Chiltern Beechwoods SAC – approximately 5km; and Aston Rowant SAC – approximately 6km.</p> <p>Given the NDP is not allocating sites; the small amount of potential infill sites within the proposed village boundary, the relationship to the designations within the NDP area; and finally the conformity of the drawn village boundary 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. Therefore, there would not be likely significant effects to the environment.</p>
<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 Towersey NDP has been judged not to have an impact on Community legislation.</p>
<p>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</p>	
<p>(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;</p>	<p>The Towersey NDP is generally likely to influence development for a period of 15 years from its adoption, which is in line with national guidance. The Towersey 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 boundary.</p> <p>The plan proposes to protect local green spaces, green infrastructure and existing facilities. This will have positive cumulative benefits for the area. However given the</p>

	<p>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, identification of community facilities and the protection of local green spaces.</p>
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	It is intended that the positive social effects of infill residential development will have positive cumulative benefits for the area.
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects;	The effects of the Plan are unlikely to have transboundary ³ impacts.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	The policies in the plan are unlikely to present risks to human health or the environment.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	The Towersey NDP relates to the parish of Towersey, which includes the village of Towersey. The NDP is not allocating any sites for development and therefore as it will not 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.
(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 Towersey NDP area contains the following special natural characteristics and cultural heritage elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listed buildings - Conservation Area - Local heritage assets - Archaeological constraints - TPOs <p>The following designations are within 5km the NDP area (the distances are approximately measured from NDP boundary):</p> <p>Chinnor Hill SSSI – 3.5km Chinnor Chalk Pit SSSI – 4km Aston Rowant SSSI – 5km</p> <p>There are two SACs within 17km of the Towersey NDP boundary. These are as follows:</p>

³ Transboundary effects are understood to be in other Member States.

Chiltern Beechwoods SAC – approximately 5km; and
Aston Rowant SAC – approximately 6km.

The Towersey NDP offers an opportunity to enhance the natural environment and the cultural heritage of the area through the proposals being considered.

The main aspects of the parish that are most likely to be affected is the impact of householder and small scale developments within the village boundary on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, listed buildings and archaeological sites. However, given the limited amount of potential infill sites 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 in particular, it is considered there would not be likely significant effects to the environment.

Whilst there are a number of SACs and SSSIs nearby to the neighbourhood area, none are located within the NDP boundary. The Towersey NDP is not proposing any allocations and the NDP has an objective to preserve and enhance the open countryside, therefore it is not considered to cause likely significant effects.

The HRA Screening Assessment in appendix 2 concluded that: The Towersey 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 Towersey NDP is not required.

There are sensitivities regarding cultural heritage within the Towersey NDP area, with a Conservation Area, a number of listed buildings and local heritage assets spread around the parish. One of the NDP proposals is to identify buildings and structures with local heritage value through the character appraisal. There is currently no collective detailed information on the risks and

	<p>vulnerability of the listed buildings and their setting readily available. However, the Towersey NDP is not seeking to make any allocations.</p> <p>The objectives imply that policies of the plan will seek to protect and enhance the historic environment, and also 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 positive effect on cultural heritage because of the objectives and proposed policies, including the identification of local heritage assets.</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 Towersey 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.	There are no areas or landscapes with recognised national, community or international protection status affected by the neighbourhood plan.

APPENDIX 4 – CONSULTATION RESPONSES

NATURAL ENGLAND

Date: 05 October 2020
Our ref: 327517
Your ref: Towersey Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening Opinion



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BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Dorottya,

Towersey Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening Opinion

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 10 September 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 / HRA

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.

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that in our view the proposals contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

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 02082257686. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Micklem
Lead Adviser Sustainable Development
Thames Solent Team

HISTORIC ENGLAND

From: Lloyd Sweet, Robert <Robert.LloydSweet@HistoricEngland.org.uk>
Sent: 19 October 2020 17:34
To: Faludi, Dorottya
Subject: FW: Towersey Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening Opinion - please reply by 22 October

Dear Dorottya

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the draft screening statement for SEA of the Towersey Neighbourhood Plan. We found the consideration of the potential impact of the settlement boundary and infill development policy to be of particular help in assessing the potential for likely significant environmental effects.

Given that the plan does not allocate land for development and that the settlement boundary and infill development policy provides clarity to the existing Local Plan policy, which has already been subject to SEA, we are satisfied that the Towersey Neighbourhood Plan would not, at present have potential for likely significant environmental effects within areas of interest to Historic England. As such we are happy to confirm our agreement that it does not merit completion of an SEA.

We retain the right to request a review of this opinion should the plan change materially in scope during the planning process.

Yours sincerely

Rob Lloyd-Sweet

Rob Lloyd-Sweet | Historic Places Adviser | South East England | Historic England

THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

creating a better place



South Oxfordshire District Council
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Abingdon
OX14 4SB

Our ref: WA/2006/000324/SE-
23/SC1-L01
Your ref:
Date: 08 October 2020

Dear Ms Faludi

Towersey Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening Opinion

Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on the draft SEA and HRA Screening Opinion for the Towersey Neighbourhood Plan. We are a statutory consultee in the SEA process and aim to reduce flood risk and protect and enhance the water environment.

Based on our review of the draft plan, we think there are unlikely to be potential significant environmental effects that relate to the Neighbourhood Plan area.

We have identified that the neighbourhood plan area will be affected by the following environmental constraints:

Main river

The Towersey Brook, a tributary of the River Thames runs through the plan area. This watercourse is currently classified as having poor status. Developments within or adjacent to these watercourses should not cause further deterioration and should seek to improve the water quality based on the recommendations of the Thames River Basin Management Plan.

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

Yours sincerely

Mrs Cathy Harrison
Planning Advisor

Direct dial 0203 025 9601
Direct e-mail planning_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk