

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 Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Development Plan

19 MAY 2021

SUMMARY

Following consultation with the statutory bodies, South Oxfordshire District Council (the 'Council') determines that Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) does require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

INTRODUCTION

1. An initial screening opinion was used to determine whether or not the contents of the emerging Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) requires 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).
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

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 Beckley and Stowood NDP against each criterion to ascertain whether a SEA is required.

4. Also part of the screening process is the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening, which can be found in Appendix 2, and the assessment of likely significance effects on the environment, which can be found in Appendix 3.
5. These two assessments feed into Table 1 and the SEA screening opinion.

BECKLEY AND STOWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

6. The Beckley and Stowood NDP will contain the following vision, objectives and policies:

Vision

“Our Parish is already an outstanding place to live. Our vision is that its character should be conserved and even improved for the present and future generations of its inhabitants by means of the following positive actions by the community:

- *Preserve, maintain, nurture and enhance our environmental assets and biodiversity, particularly ancient woodland, SSSIs and the important setting of the village and settlements in the surrounding countryside.*
- *Conserve and enhance our heritage and the rural character of the village and settlements*
- *Maintain the important views from Beckley village, Stowood and towards the Parish from Oxford, Otmoor, Brill and beyond and maintain our dark sky.*
- *Enable the sustainable modest growth of housing numbers within the village boundary while ensuring design is compatible and in keeping with surrounding houses.*
- *New developments should be built to the highest energy conservation standards and retrofitting of existing buildings is encouraged, working towards conserving energy being carbon neutral*
- *Encourage a mix of size of housing to enable residents to downsize and encourage young families*
- *Local residents are very much opposed to development at Wick Farm as part of the ‘Land North of Bayswater Brook’ strategic development site in the SODC Local Plan. While nothing could mitigate the destruction of the Green Belt around Oxford and in this Parish or the great threat to the very important SSSI sites at Sydlings Copse and College Pond, policies have been developed to try to reduce harm, as much as possible, both to the environment*

and lives of residents at Wick Farm in the event that development at this site should go ahead.”

Core Objectives

Objective 1. Preservation of the Green Belt

The preservation of the Green Belt in our Parish is vital to maintaining the environment, biodiversity and the setting of the village and dwellings

Objective 2. Conserving and Enhancing our Heritage and Rural Character

It is important to conserve our heritage and the setting in which it is found, along with the countryside and fields that make up the Parish

Objective 3. Maintaining Views and Dark Skies

The Parish is within the Oxford heights area and rises from Bayswater Brook in the south to 140 metre limestone ridge and Stowood and Beckley village. This gives rise to many extraordinary views and vistas for many miles in all directions, which, alongside the dark night skies, must be maintained.

Objective 4. Sustainable Growth and Compatible Design

Provide for sustainable levels of residential development within the Settlement Boundary and avoid houses “that are out of character with the rest of the village”.

Objective 5. Sustainable New Development

To achieve the highest standards of energy efficiency and carbon neutrality with new development wherever possible

Objective 6. Encouraging Housing Mix

A housing mix is desirable to accommodate young families wishing to move into larger houses and older residents wishing to downsize.

Objective 7. Reducing the harm to the Environment and Residents from Development at Land North of Bayswater Brook

To develop policies to help mitigate the harm arising from the strategic development proposed on land North of Bayswater Brook.”

List of Policies

Policy VB1. Settlement Boundary

Policy VB2. Residential Development Outside the Settlement Boundary

Policy E1. Biodiversity

Policy H1. Preservation of heritage

Policy DS1. Important Views

Policy DS2. Parking

Policy DS3. Flood Risk and Development

Policy DS4. Dwelling Size

Policy DG1. Design Guide

Policy DG2. Night Sky/Lighting

Policy CC1. New Construction and Energy Efficiency

Policy CC2. Low Carbon Transport Solutions

Mitigation policies for the strategic development site “Land North of Bayswater Brook”

- GB 1. Definition of a new Green Belt Boundary*
- TA 1. Transport Assessment and Travel Plan*
- TA 2. Transport Assessment and Travel Plan – Baseline Assumptions*
- TA 3. Transport Assessment and Travel Plan – Highway and Road Assessments*
- TA 4. Transport Assessment and Travel Plan – Provision of construction Management Plans*
- STA 5. Compliance with nice guidelines on physical activity and the environment and health assessment*
- PC 1. Maintenance of access and separation of footpaths and bridleways*
- PC 2. Siting of pedestrian and cycle bridge over A40 Northern Bypass Road*
- PC 3. Safety and Crime Reduction*
- PC 4. Widening of Public Rights of way for safety*
- PC 5. Safety of underpass*
- C 1. Provision of a cycleway*
- B 1. Provision of Public Transport*
- LR 1. Land North of Bayswater Brook – Link Road*
- LR 2. Land North of Bayswater Brook – Link Road safety*
- LR 3. Avoiding Rat Runs with Local Roads*
- LR 4. Avoiding Rat Runs through the development*
- LR 5. Landscaping of Link Road Corridor*
- LR 6. Compliance with nice guidelines – Improving Air Quality*
- SSSI 1. Report and Assessment Requirements for the SSSI*
- SSSI 2. Provision of land for footpath changes*
- SSSI 3. Implementation of Protection Zone from Roads*
- SSSI 4. Agreement of Landscape and recreational enhancements*
- LV 1. Building Heights*
- LV 2. Specific Landscaping and Mitigation for Loss of Countryside*
- LV 3. Avoiding Hard Urban Edges*
- LV 4. Design in Sympathy with the landscape and Surroundings*
- H 1. Archaeological Site Survey*
- HAP 1. Air Quality Assessment and Mitigation*

7. The Beckley and Stowood NDP will contain policies to maintain the character of the village and policies that seek to mitigate the potential impact of the strategic development at Land North of Bayswater Brook which partially falls within the neighbourhood area.
8. Policies in the Beckley and Stowood NDP will aim to support sustainable development in the village that will not adversely impact on the rural nature of the village. The plan does not allocate any sites for development however it contains proposals seeking to affect the strategic site ‘Land North of Bayswater Brook’ which partially falls within the parish of Beckley and Stowood. Mitigating the strategic development at ‘Land North of

Bayswater Brook' is identified in the neighbourhood plan as being particularly important to the local community.

9. The SEA screening process is concerned with whether a neighbourhood plan is likely to have a significant environmental effect. Within this context, wider considerations of the draft neighbourhood plan's potential conformity with the Basic Conditions are not considered and as a consequence, the council is required to consider the proposals in the plan as they are, not as they may be modified (if necessary) to meet the Basic Conditions.
10. The plan seeks to introduce a settlement boundary surrounding the village of Beckley. Part of the settlement boundary falls within the Conservation Area in the village. The village is also washed over by the Oxford Green Belt. We have therefore considered whether focusing new development within the village boundaries (through infill), which has also been a historic focus of settlement activity and is washed over by the Oxford Green Belt, could result in the plan directing new development to sites that could potentially have significant effects on the landscape and historic environment including conservation areas, listed buildings and archaeological remains.
11. Careful consideration of the proposed boundaries in relation to how the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 guides the location and scale of development (mainly through policies H1, H16 and ENV8) indicates that the proposed boundaries merely add detail and aid the interpretation of existing policies.
12. Local Plan 2035 defines infilling 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.'
13. 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 Local Plan definition. As the boundaries, in practical terms, do not provide a more restrictive interpretation of the relevant policies in the Local Plan (H1, H16 and ENV8), the council has concluded that the proposals in the plan will not have significant effects on the historic environment.
14. The proposed boundaries do not provide a less restrictive interpretation of the relevant policies in the Local Plan 2035 (H1, H16 and ENV8), therefore, the proposals in the plan are not considered to have likely significant environmental effects.
15. As regards the proposed mitigation policies, the strategic framework for the allocated strategic development at Land North of Bayswater Brook is set by Policy STRAT13 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. The proposed mitigation policies in the draft NDP seek to provide further detail and set additional requirements. In particular, the draft NDP includes a

number of policies which seek to mitigate the impact of the strategic development on the local SSSI. The policies include the provision of land for footpath changes which seek to reduce visitor numbers and access from Barton Park and the strategic site allocation to the SSSI. There is also a policy which seeks to distance roads away from the SSSI. Given the scale of the development that is affected by these policies, the effects on the environment whilst could potentially be positive are likely to be significant.

16. The draft NDP also contains a policy on building heights which states that buildings should not extend above three stories. A restriction on the height, which is not a requirement in the strategic policy, could result in the developable area being expanded and without a full SEA, it would not be possible to rule out that this would likely to have a significant environmental effect.
17. There are also a number of policies within the Beckley and Stowood NDP that seek to try and mitigate the transport impact of the strategic site allocation. This includes policies on avoiding rat runs with the local roads and through the new development and policies relating to the design of a potential link road and link road safety. There is also a policy on improving air quality which sets out that a potential link road should be designed taking into account measures set out in the NICE Guidelines. Given the scale of the development this link road would serve, and the fact that the proposals within the draft Neighbourhood Plan go beyond what is required in the strategic policy, it would not be possible to rule out that these draft policies would not have an environmental effect without a full SEA.
18. 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. It does, however, seek to mitigate against potential environmental effects associated with the strategic development Land North of Bayswater Brook, which falls within the boundary of three parishes, two of which are not covered by the Beckley and Stowood NDP. Combined, the mitigation policies are considered likely to give rise to significant environmental effects. These policies seek to affect a development of significant proportions and seek to go further than the requirements set out in the Local Plan 2035.
19. It is therefore concluded that the implementation of the Beckley and Stowood NDP is likely to result significant effects on the environment.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

20. The Screening Opinion was sent to Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England on 9 April 2021 for a four-week consultation period. The responses in full are presented in Appendix 4.
21. Natural England advises that there may be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

22. Historic England confirmed that they have no comments to submit.

23. The Environment Agency did not provide comments on this SEA Screening.

CONCLUSION

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

25. The Beckley and Stowood NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Development Plan is not required.

26. Based on the assessment presented in Appendices 1 & 3, the Beckley and Stowood NDP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

27. The Beckley and Stowood NDP therefore does require a Strategic Environment Assessment.

Authorised by: Ricardo Rios
On behalf of Head of Planning

Signed: 

Date: 19/05/2021

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

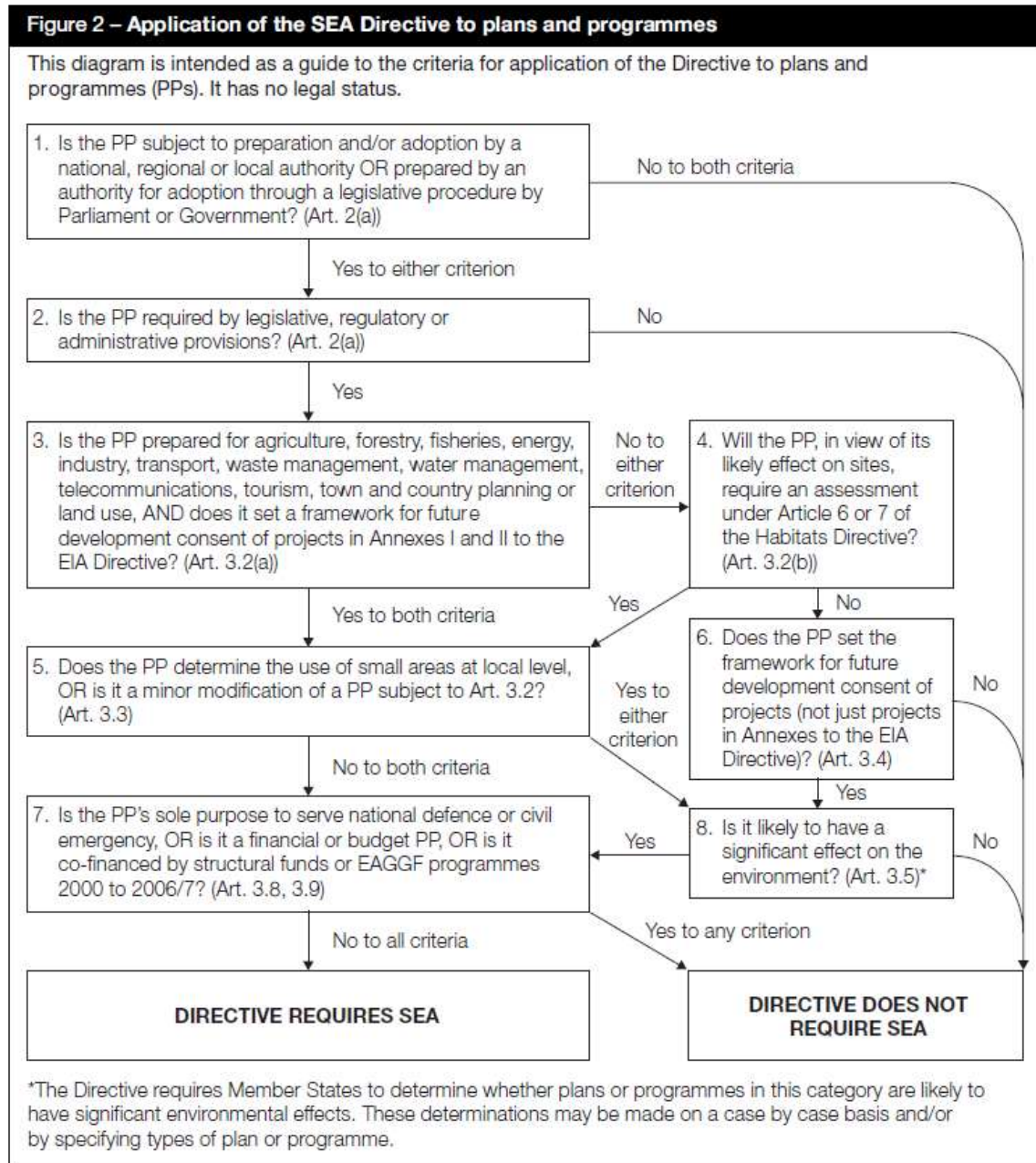


Table 1: Application of SEA Directive as shown in Appendix 1

Stage	Y/N	Explanation
<p>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))</p>	<p>Y</p>	<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 Beckley and Stowood NDP Steering Group, a working group who report to the Beckley and Stowood 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
<p>2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))</p>	<p>Y</p>	<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))	Y	The Beckley and Stowood NDP is prepared for town and country planning and land use and seeks to effect the development of the strategic allocation at Land North of Bayswater Brooks which is development of the scale referred to in Article 4(2) of the EIA Directive – listed at Annex II of the directive.
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 Beckley and Stowood NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Beckley and Stowood 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 Beckley and Stowood 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 Beckley and Stowood NDP will include a series of policies to guide development within the parish boundary. 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)	Y	The plan is 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 Beckley and Stowood 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 Local Plan³ as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Beckley and Stowood 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 Local Plan 2035

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 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. As such, the same distance has been applied in this HRA Screening.
6. The following European sites lie wholly or partly within 17km of Beckley and have been taken into consideration:
 - Oxford Meadow SAC – Approximately 7km (within Oxford City)
7. Oxford Meadow is designated as a SAC for its lowland hay meadows and creeping marshworts.
8. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of hydrological changes and the invasive species of *Crassula* upon creeping marshworts.
 - Cothill Fen SAC – Approximately 14km (within Vale of White Horse)
9. Cothill Fen is designated as a SAC for its calcium-rich, spring fed fens and alder woodlands on floodplains.
10. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impact of water pollution and hydrological changes, as well as air pollution and the impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition upon the calcium-rich water-fed fens.

Physical loss of/damage to habitat;

11. Any development resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan will be located within the neighbourhood area. There are no European sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area, therefore loss of habitat from

within the boundaries of a European site can be ruled out. Loss of habitat in relation to the strategic allocation of Land north of Bayswater Brook which partially falls within the neighbourhood plan area, has been ruled out through the HRA which supports the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

12. Loss of habitat from outside of the boundaries of a European site could still affect the integrity of that site if it occurs in an area used by the qualifying species of the site (e.g. for off-site breeding, foraging or roosting). The two European sites included in this assessment do not have mobile species.

Non-physical disturbance e.g. noise/vibration or light pollution;

13. The most recent HRA of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (March 2019) states:

'Using a precautionary approach, we have assumed that the effect of noise, vibration and light are most likely to be significant if development takes place within 500 metres of a European site with qualifying features sensitive to these disturbances, or known off-site breeding, foraging or roosting areas.'

14. None of the European sites are within 500 metres of the designated area. Therefore, effects in relation to noise, vibration and light pollution can be screened out of further assessment.

Air Pollution;

15. Air pollution is most likely to effect European sites where plant, soil and water habitats are the qualifying feature, but some qualifying animal species may also be affected, either directly or indirectly, by any deterioration in habitat as a result of air pollution. Deposition of pollutants to the ground and vegetation can alter the characteristics of the soil, affecting the pH and nitrogen availability that can then affect plant health, productivity and species composition.
16. Based on the Highways Agency Design for Road and Bridges (DMRB) Manual Volume 11, Section 3, Part 120 (which was produced to provide advice regarding the design, assessment and operation of trunk roads (including motorways)), it is assumed that air pollution from roads is unlikely to be significant beyond 200m from the road itself.
17. The European site within 17km of Beckley that are within 200m of strategic roads is Oxford Meadow SAC (A34, M40). As mentioned above, Beckley is approximately 7km from the Oxford Meadow SAC.
18. The HRA sets out how SODC commissioned Atkins to model the effects of the Local Plan on traffic flows within the District. The modelling resulted in the HRA concluding that the South Oxfordshire Local Plan

will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of Oxford Meadow SAC as a result of air pollution, either alone or in-combination with other plans. In reaching this conclusion the HRA (March 2019) highlights show previous work undertaken demonstrates that a substantial amount of additional traffic could be accommodated on the A40 without adverse impacts to the integrity of the SAC, including growth from other local authorities. Given the modest scale of the proposed development in the NDP, distance between the Oxford Meadow SAC and Beckley, the potential impact associated with Oxford Meadow SAC can be screened out of further assessment.

Increased recreation pressure; and

19. The most recent HRA of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (March 2019) states;

‘Natural England’s Site Improvement Plans record the threats and pressures relevant to each European site. Public access or disturbance are not identified as current threats or pressures at the following sites, despite their lying close to large settlements: Aston Rowant SAC, Hartslock Wood SAC, Cothill Fen SAC, and Oxford Meadow SAC.’

20. Therefore, likely significant effects in relation to visitor pressure and the impact of recreation can be ruled out and do not need to be considered further.

Changes to hydrological regimes

21. European sites at which aquatic or wetland environments support qualifying features have the potential to be affected by changes in water quantity or quality. The European sites close to Beckley are:

- Cothill Fen SAC: has calcium rich spring water-fed fens that have been identified as sensitive to water pollution and hydrological changes.
- Oxford Meadow SAC: lowland hay meadow, identified as sensitive to hydrological changes.

22. The types of development that have the potential to affect water quality / quantity or flow regimes at sensitive European sites are residential or employment development that would involve significant increase in demand for water supply and treatment, and infrastructure development that requires significant excavation in proximity to watercourses or groundwater.

23. The Beckley Neighbourhood Development Plan does not propose any additional site allocations than that within the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. Therefore, likely significant effects in relation to water

quality and quantity can be screened out and does not need to be considered further.

24. The Council has considered the HRA of the Local Plan 2035 (March 2019) in respect of the potential in combination effects of the proposals in the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan. As the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 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 superseded Core Strategy, Local Plan 2011 or as part of the HRA for the relevant NDP. Paragraph 5 to 23 of this assessment has considered how the development proposed in the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. Given no additional development is proposed within the neighbourhood plan and having regard to conclusions of paragraphs 5 to 23, it is considered that the development proposed in the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to give rise to significant in combination effects
25. The Plan does not allocate any sites for development. Draft policies seeking to affect the strategic site 'Land North of Bayswater Brooks do not directly affect the quantum or location of development supported in the adopted Development Plan. As such, the Beckley and Stowood NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

CONCLUSION

26. The Beckley and Stowood 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 Beckley and Stowood NDP is not required

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

1. Characteristics of the Plan, having regard to:	
<p>(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;</p>	<p>The Beckley and Stowood 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.</p> <p>However, the Plan will sit within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework and the strategic policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. There is a site allocated within the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 which lies partly within the neighbourhood plan designated area. The draft NDP contains a number of policies that seek to influence the strategic allocation. There is also a policy that supports the creation of a village boundary that would define the built up area of the village of Beckley.</p> <p>Policies in the Beckley and Stowood NDP will aim to support sustainable development that will not adversely impact on the rural nature of the village. Retaining the character and appearance of the village is particularly important as well as ensuring potential impact from the strategic site allocation at Land North of Bayswater Brooks is kept to a minimum.</p> <p>The Beckley and Stowood NDP contains policies which will apply and relate to the whole of the neighbourhood designated area and not just the allocated site. The plan proposes a settlement boundary to define the built up area of Beckley to allow for infill development. 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.</p> <p>As the boundary, in practical terms, does not provide a more restrictive interpretation of the relevant policies in the Local Plan (Policy H1 and H16) the council has concluded that the proposals in the plan will not have significant effects on the historic environment or have likely significant environmental effects.</p>

	<p>The NDP also has a policy with regards to residential development outside the settlement boundary which states that development will only be permitted if it meets the green belt exceptions as defined by national green belt policy. Beckley is washed by the Oxford Green Belt and therefore any development will need to meet the stringent policies set within the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Plan.</p> <p>Whilst the Beckley and Stowood NDP does not allocate any sites, part of a strategic site allocated within the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 falls within the neighbourhood plan designated area. The NDP contain several policies seeking to mitigate potential environmental effects associated with the strategic development.</p>
<p>(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;</p>	<p>A Neighbourhood Development Plan must be in conformity with the Local Plan for the District. It does not influence other plans.</p> <p>The policies within the Beckley and Stowood NDP seek to mitigate potential impacts from a site allocated in a higher tier plan.</p>
<p>(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;</p>	<p>National policy requires a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread through plan-making, including the Beckley and Stowood NDP. A basic condition of the Beckley and Stowood NDP is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.</p>
<p>(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and</p>	<p>The Beckley and Stowood NDP contains the following designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A conservation area - Ancient Woodland - Archaeological Constraints - BAP Priority habitats - Environmentally Sensitive areas - Flood Zone - Great Crest Newt Distribution - Green Belt - Listed Buildings - Local Wildlife sites

- Protected species buffer
- Registered Parks and Gardens

There are SACs within 17km of Beckley:

- Oxford Meadow SAC – 7km
- Cothill Fen SAC – 14km

Please see detailed assessment in appendix 2 which assesses the likely significant effects on these SAC's.

There are also the following designations within the NDP area:

- Otmoor SSSI – within the NDP area
- Sidling's Copse and College Pond SSSI – within the NDP area

The following are within 5km of the NDP area:

- Woodeaton Wood SSSI
- Holly Wood SSSI
- Woodeaton Quarry SSSI
- Stanton Great Wood SSSI
- Brasenose Wood and Shotover Hill SSS
- Shabington Woods Complex SSSI
- Waterperry wood SSSI
- Holton Wood SSSI

The NDP does not allocated land for development. The plan proposes a settlement boundary to define the built up area of Beckley to allow for infill development. 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.

Careful consideration of the proposed settlement boundary in relation to how South Oxfordshire Local Plan guides the location and scale of development indicates that the proposed boundaries merely aid the interpretation of existing policies.

South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 defines infilling 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.'

The proposed village boundary does not exclude any sites that could be considered to be a potential infill site in light of the guidance provided by the Local Plan definition.

The NDP also has a policy with regards to residential development outside the settlement boundary which states that development will only be permitted if it meets the green belt exceptions as defined by national green belt policy. Beckley is washed by the Oxford Green Belt and therefore any development will need to meet the stringent policies set within the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Plan.

The draft NDP also contains a policy on building heights within the strategic allocation which states that buildings should not extend above three stories. A restriction on the height, which is not a requirement in the strategic policy, could result in the developable area being expanded and without a full SEA, it would not be possible to rule out that this would likely to have a significant environmental effect. This proposal would also likely affect the Sidling's Copse and College Pond SSSI.

The proposed mitigation policies in the draft NDP seek to provide further detail and set additional requirements than those set out in the strategic policy in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan. In particular, the draft NDP includes a number of policies which seek to mitigate potential impact of the strategic development on the Sidling's Copse and College Pond SSSI. The policies include the provision of land for footpath changes which seek to reduce visitor numbers and access from Barton Park and the strategic site allocation to the SSSI. There is also a policy which seeks to distance roads away from the SSSI. Given the scale of the strategic allocation that is affected by these policies, the effects on the environment whilst potentially positive are likely to be significant.

There are also a number of policies within the Beckley and Stowood NDP that seek to try and mitigate the transport impact of the strategic site allocation. This includes policies on avoiding rat runs with the local roads and through the new development and policies relating to the design of a potential link road and link road safety. There is also a policy on improving air quality which sets out that a potential link road should be designed taking into account measures set out in the NICE Guidelines.

	<p>Given the scale of the strategic allocation this link road would serve, and the fact that the proposals within the draft Neighbourhood Plan go beyond what is required in the strategic policy, it would not be possible to rule out that these draft policies would not have an environmental effect without a full SEA.</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 Beckley and Stowood 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 proposed policies within the Beckley and Stowood NDP are likely to have an environmental effect. The potential effects associated with the requirements within the mitigation policies relating to the potential link road, the SSSI and the building height restrictions the strategic site are likely to be significant and not reversible as they relate to development.</p> <p>The plan proposes to mitigate against the potential impact of the strategic development to the south of the NDP area. Some of the impact is likely to be positive, however given the scale of the strategic development, the impact is likely to be significant.</p> <p>The plan also seeks to protect important views and preserve the heritage of the settlement. These will have positive effects for the area; however, these are 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.</p>
<p>(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;</p>	<p>The policies relating to the SSSI, policies relating to the link road and the policy restricting the height of buildings are likely to have cumulative effects.</p>

(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);	<p>The Beckley and Stowood NDP relates to the parish of Beckley and Stowood and may impact adjacent parishes of Elsfield and Stanton St John. This includes the village of Beckley, Wick Farm and the new residents of the strategic allocation within the Local Plan.</p> <p>The NDP is not allocating any sites for development, however it is seeking to mitigate potential effect from a strategic allocation proposed within the Local Plan that falls partly within their parish. Given the scale of the strategic allocation, the proposed mitigation policies within the neighbourhood plan are likely to affect the adjacent parishes to Beckley and Stowood.</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 Beckley and Stowood NDP area contain the following special natural characteristics and cultural heritage elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A conservation area - Ancient Woodland - Archaeological Constraints - BAP Priority habitats - Environmentally Sensitive areas - Flood Zone - Great Crest Newt Distribution - Green Belt - Listed Buildings - Local Wildlife sites - Protected species buffer - Registered Parks and Gardens <p>Given the scale of the strategic allocation effected by the mitigation policies relating to the SSSI, the link road and the height of buildings, it is not possible to rule out likely significant effects on the environment and in particular the special natural and cultural characteristics as listed above.</p>

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

<p>(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.</p>	<p>There are no areas or landscapes with recognised national, community or international protection status affected by the neighbourhood plan.</p>
---	--

APPENDIX 4

NATURAL ENGLAND

Date: 27 April 2011
Our ref: 349500



South Oxfordshire District Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

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

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Dorottya Faludi

Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening Opinion

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 09 April 2021 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

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 and Habitat Regulations 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 may be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

However, we would agree with the opinion that the Neighbourhood plan does not require a HRA, as there are unlikely to be significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites.

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 believe the proposals contained within the plan may have significant effects on sensitive sites (namely Sydlings Copse and College Pond SSSI) 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.

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

Yours sincerely

Isabella Jack
Sustainable Development Adviser
Thames Solent Area Team, Natural England

HISTORIC ENGLAND

From: Lloyd Sweet, Robert <Robert.LloydSweet@HistoricEngland.org.uk>
Sent: 07 May 2021 16:04
To: Faludi, Dorottya
Subject: Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Dorothy

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the draft screening opinion for SEA of the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan. I am happy to confirm that we do not have any comments to submit for this consultation. We have read the draft screening opinion and are happy to see the consideration you have given to the potential (or absence of) significant effects of the proposed settlement boundary in terms of effects for the historic environment. We understand that you have confirmed that potential future mitigation has not been considered.

We reserve the right to request a review of this opinion should the plan change in scope at a later stage of drafting.

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

THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

From: Planning_THM <Planning_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk>
Sent: 12 April 2021 15:37
To: Faludi, Dorottya
Cc: Merritt, Nina
Subject: RE: Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening Opinion - please reply by 7 May

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on your SEA and HRA screening opinion> for the Beckley and Stowood neighbourhood plan.

We regret that at present, the Thames Area Sustainable Places team is unable to review this consultation. This is due to resourcing issues within the team, a high development management workload and an increasing volume of neighbourhood planning consultations. We have had to prioritise our limited resource, and must focus on influencing plans where the environmental risks and opportunities are highest. For the purposes of neighbourhood planning, we have assessed those authorities who have "up to date" local plans (plans adopted since 2012, or which have been confirmed as being compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework) as being of lower risk. At this time, therefore, we are unable to make any detailed input on neighbourhood plans being prepared within this local authority area.

However, together with Natural England, English Heritage and Forestry Commission, we have published joint guidance 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

Kind regards,

Alex Swann
Planning Advisor - Thames Sustainable Places Team
Environment Agency | Red Kite House, Wallingford, OX10 8BD
Planning_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk