

# **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 Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood Development Plan**

**18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2021**

## **SUMMARY**

Following consultation with the statutory bodies, South Oxfordshire District Council (the 'Council') determines that Tiddington with Albury 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 Tiddington with Albury 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 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.
4. 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 Tiddington with Albury 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.

## TIDDINGTON WITH ALBURY NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

6. The Tiddington with Albury NDP will contain the following objectives and policies:

### Objectives

- 1. To ensure the overall character of the four settlements separated by open countryside with their distinct identities is preserved but are still acting as one Parish.*
- 2. To protect and enhance the quality, character and local distinctiveness of the sensitive, historically and ecologically important natural landscape and environment, through projects such as the Tiddington Wildlife Corridor, and minimise the impact of any development on the surrounding countryside, landscape and ecosystems.*
- 3. To provide good quality, sustainable housing at all levels of affordability to meet local needs using existing styles and materials which maintains or enhances the essential rural character of the Parish.*
- 4. Ensure that any new development is aimed at the first and affordable homes level to encourage and enable younger people to stay in the village and maintain a vibrant and balanced rural community.*
- 5. Encourage healthy lifestyles and reduce reliance on the private car by supporting proposals that enable sustainable travel including improvement and promotion, without spoiling the rural nature of the Parish, of new and existing walking and cycle routes.*

6. Ensure that the Parish's rural character does not suffer from through traffic from larger settlements.

#### List of Policies

**Policy TwA1 Conservation of Biodiversity and Wildlife Corridors**

– A policy which establishes a network of green infrastructure and identifies opportunities for improvement to the existing network and/or new connections to improve its functionality.

**Policy TwA2 Settlement Boundaries & Infill Development** – The policy will define 'village boundaries' 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. The policy will make a distinction to that part of the settlement boundary in the Green Belt to allow for limited infilling as set out in the NPPF and that part outside of it as set out in STRAT6 of the SODCLP.

**Policy TwA3 Local Green Spaces – Designating** Local Green Spaces which meet the tests set out in the NPPF.

**Policy TwA4 Housing Mix** – To correct the imbalance of housing stock in the parish encouraging infill development to provide 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings.

**Policy TwA5 Design** – Setting out a series of design codes drawn from analysis of the settlements.

**Policy TwA6 Protection of Views** – A policy identifying Important Views requiring proposals to preserve or enhance local character of the landscape and through design, height and massing respond positively to Important Views.

**Policy TwA7 Built Environment and Heritage Assets** – Identifying buildings and structures with local heritage value derived from the analysis at TwA4.

**Policy TwA8 Community Facilities** – A policy identifying valued community facilities for the application of the provisions of SODCLP CF1 and CF4 and refining them to allow change of part of the use where surplus to requirements providing it will not undermine the facility concerned.

**Policy TwA9 Traffic Management and Transport** – A policy which requires new developments to be in keeping with the wider environment and contribute towards traffic management measures where appropriate.

**Policy TwA10 Dark Skies** – A policy to encourage good design to minimise light pollution

7. The Tiddington with Albury NDP will contain policies to maintain and enhance the local character and landscape of the village and the immediate area. The NDP seeks to protect locally important views and designate local green spaces which are important to the local community.

8. The NDP does not seek to allocate sites for development however it does seek to introduce settlement boundaries. We have therefore considered whether focusing new development within the village boundaries (through infill), could result in the plan directing new development to sites that could potentially have significant effects on the landscape and historic environment including listed buildings and archaeological remains.
9. 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.
10. 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.

## **CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

11. The screening opinion was sent to Natural England, The Environment Agency and Historic England on 15 October 2021 for a four-week consultation period. The responses in full are presented in Appendix 4.
12. The Environment Agency did not provide comments on this SEA Screening.
13. Historic England confirmed their agreement, that the Tiddington with Albury NDP does not need a SEA.
14. Natural England did not provide comments on this SEA Screening.

## **CONCLUSION**

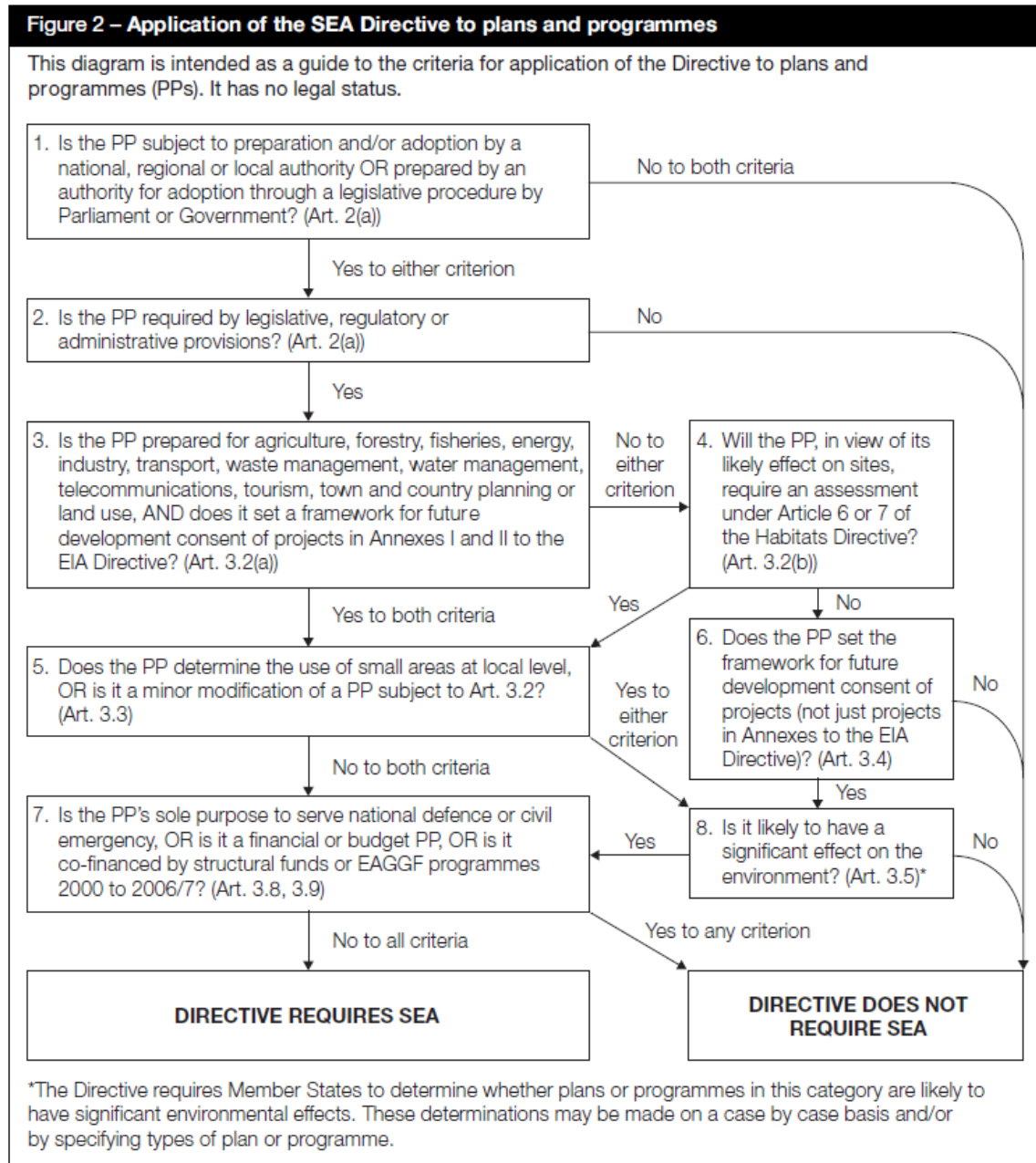
15. As a result of the screening undertaken by the Council, the following determination has been reached.
16. The Tiddington with Albury NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood Development Plan is not required.
17. Based on the assessment presented in Appendices 1 & 3, the Tiddington with Albury NDP is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment.
18. The Tiddington with Albury NDP therefore does not require a Strategic Environment Assessment.

**Authorised by:**     Ricardo Rios      
On behalf of Head of Planning

**Signed:** *R. Rios*

**Date:** 18/11/2021

## 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 Tiddington with Albury NDP Steering Group, a working group who report to the Tiddington with Albury Parish Council (as the “relevant body”) and will be “made” by South Oxfordshire District Council as the local authority. The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is subject to the following regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2016</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2016</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2017</li> </ul>
<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 <a href="#">regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004</a> .
3. Is the Neighbourhood Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II (see Appendix 2) to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	Y	The Tiddington with Albury NDP is prepared for town and country planning and land use a will set out a framework for future development in Tiddington with Albury, including the development of residential uses. These projects are not 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 Tiddington with Albury NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Tiddington with Albury 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 Tiddington with Albury 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 Tiddington with Albury 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 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 Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood Development Plan

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Local Authority is the “competent authority” under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and needs to ensure that Neighbourhood Plans have been assessed through the Habitats Regulations process. This looks at the potential for significant impacts on nature conservation sites that are of European importance<sup>1</sup>, also referred to as Natura 2000.
2. This Screening Assessment relates to a Neighbourhood Development Plan that will be in general conformity with the strategic policies within the development plan<sup>2</sup> (the higher level plan for town and country planning and land use). This Screening Assessment uses the Habitats Regulations Assessment of South Oxfordshire District Council’s Local Plan<sup>3</sup> as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood Development Plan is likely to result in significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites either alone or in combination with other plans and policies and, therefore, whether an ‘Appropriate Assessment’ is required.

## LEGISLATIVE BASIS

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

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

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

*“105.—(1) Where a land use plan—*

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

<sup>2</sup> The South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035

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

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

106.—(1) *A qualifying body which submits a proposal for a neighbourhood development plan must provide such information as the competent authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment under regulation 105 or to enable it to determine whether that assessment is required.*

(2) *In this regulation, “qualifying body” means a parish council, or an organisation or body designated as a neighbourhood forum, authorised for the purposes of a neighbourhood development plan to act in relation to a neighbourhood area as a result of section 61F of the TCPA 1990 (authorisation to act in relation to neighbourhood areas)(159), as*

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

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

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

## **ASSESSMENT**

5. The HRA of the 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 the parish of Tiddington with Albury and have been taken into consideration:
  - Aston Rowant SAC - Approximately 9.6km (within South Oxfordshire District)
7. Aston Rowant is classified as SAC because it supports one of the largest remaining populations of juniper in lowland Britain. It is selected as an example of juniper formations on the chalk in the south east of England. At this site juniper is present as part of a mixed scrub community but also occurs as isolated bushes in chalk grassland. In common with most lowland populations of juniper, successful reproduction and survival of new generations of bushes is extremely rare and conservation is currently dependent upon significant levels of management intervention. The low level of reproductive success is the main threat to the feature at this site. Aston Rowant also supports Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests although this is not a primary reason for classification as SAC.
8. The main pressures and threats to this site include an unsustainable on-site population, changes in species distribution, disease of juniper as well as the impacts of air pollution and the risks of atmospheric nitrogen deposition upon juniper. Additionally, conflicting conservation objectives threaten beech.

- Chiltern Beechwoods SAC – Approximately 10.9km (within South Oxfordshire District)
9. The Chilterns Beechwoods SAC comprises nine separate sites scattered across the Chilterns. There are three features of interest: semi-natural grasslands and scrubland on chalk; *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech woodland (for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK and lies in the centre of the habitat's UK range); and Stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence. The rare coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera* is found in these woods.
  10. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of forestry and woodland management, disease, deer and the invasive species of grey squirrel upon beech. Additionally, the changes in species distribution of stag beetle as well as the impact of public access and disturbance upon stag beetle. Air pollution and the impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition also threaten the dry grasslands, beech and stag beetle.
    - Little Wittenham SAC – Approximately 13.7km (within South Oxfordshire District)
  11. One of the best-studied great crested newt sites in the UK, Little Wittenham comprises two main ponds set in a predominantly woodland context (broadleaved and conifer woodland is present). There are also areas of grassland, with sheep grazing and arable bordering the woodland to the south and west. The River Thames is just to the north of the site, and a hill fort to the south. Large numbers of great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* have been recorded in the two main ponds, and research has revealed that they range several hundred metres into the woodland blocks.
  12. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of public access and disturbance, and invasive fish species upon great crested newt. With regard to the types of development that may be brought forward in the Local Plan, visitor disturbance could impact the site.
    - Oxford Meadow SAC – Approximately 14.6km (within Oxford City)
  13. Oxford Meadow is designated as a SAC for its lowland hay meadows and creeping marshworts.
  14. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of hydrological changes and the invasive species of *Crassula* upon creeping marshworts.
  15. As required under Regulation 106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'), the qualifying body (Tiddington with Albury Parish Council) provided the required

information to enable South Oxfordshire District Council to determine whether the assessment under Regulation 105 is required. Consideration has been given to the potential for the development proposed by the neighbourhood plan to result in significant effects associated with:

Physical loss of/damage to habitat:

16. 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.
17. 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). Two of the European sites included in this assessment have mobile species amongst their qualifying features that could travel outside of the site to make use of other areas of habitat:
  - Long Wittenham SAC; great crested newt.
  - Chiltern Beechwoods SAC: stag beetle.
18. The HRA (March 2019) produced alongside the adopted Local Plan states that great crested newts will travel away from their breeding ponds, during the terrestrial phase of their lifecycle, but not large distance. 500 metres is considered an appropriate buffer distance inside which great crested newts might be found, from their breeding location. The site listing for Little Wittenham SAC states that great crested newts have been found to range several hundred metres into the site's woodland blocks. Research has found that great crested newts at Little Wittenham SAC migrate within woodland and do not over-winter in the arable farmland. All of the woodland within 500 metres of the ponds at Little Wittenham SAC is within the SAC boundary. Therefore, potential loss of or damage to off-site habitats associated with Little Wittenham SAC can be screened out of further assessment.
19. The HRA (March 2019) states that where stag beetle is a qualifying feature of a site, the individuals may travel outside of the SAC boundary, although it is unlikely that they will travel far – it is generally only the male stag beetle that flies during the summer months, and the female beetle rarely flies. The preferred habitat for stag beetles is old, established woodland, and the larvae feed on rotting tree matter. As the beetle larvae take years to develop, they can be vulnerable to tree clearance and the 'tidying up' of wood in parks and especially gardens. Research suggests that 2 km 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. Chilterns Beechwoods SAC is a composite of nine SSSIs.

20. Bisham Woods SSSI, which is the part of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC that supports the qualifying stag beetle population, is greater than 2 km from the District boundary. Therefore, potential loss of or damage to off-site habitats associated with Chilterns Beechwoods SAC can be screened out of further assessment.

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

21. 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.'*

22. 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:

23. 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.
24. 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.
25. The European sites within 17km of Tiddington with Albury that are within 200m of strategic roads are Aston Rowant SAC (M40), Chilterns Beechwoods SAC (A404, A4010) and Oxford Meadow SAC (A34, M40). As highlighted above, Tiddington with Albury is approximately 14.6km from the Oxford Meadow SAC, 9.6km from the Aston Rowant SAC and 10.9km from the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC.
26. 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 Tiddington with Albury, the potential impact associated with Oxford Meadow SAC can be screened out of further assessment.

27. No traffic data were available for the roads adjacent to Burnham Beeches SAC, Chilterns Beechwoods SAC and Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC, as they are located too far outside of the Atkins model network to be reasonably or reliably predicted. Although these locations lie within the initial screening radius of 17 km, the actual distance which would need to be travelled to reach these locations by car from the plan area exceeds this distance for most routes (e.g. Henley on Thames to Burnham Beeches is 17 km as the crow flies, however the quickest route by car is 32km). It can therefore reasonably be expected that the contribution of growth within the Local Plan area to traffic flows at these locations would be de minimis, and as such they are screened out from any further assessment.

28. In relation to the Aston Rowant SAC the HRA (March 2019) states:

*'In light of the above analysis, it is concluded that the ecological effects of the predicted increase in NO<sub>x</sub> concentrations and nutrient nitrogen deposition would either be negligible, or that any small effects would be highly unlikely to result in a deterioration in the condition of the qualifying features, and as such it is concluded that the in-combination effects of planned growth would not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the Aston Rowant SAC.'*

29. Therefore, given that no allocations are being made within the proposed Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood Plan and distance of the SACs from the neighbourhood plan area, effects in relation to air quality can be screened out and do not need to be considered further.

Increased recreation pressure; and

30. 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.'*

31. The HRA of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan sets out that the potential for effects depends upon the scale of development proposed and the



features for which the site is designated. However, as a conservative estimate, it is assumed that any development within 7 km of a sensitive site could have impacts due to recreation. Where site specific information indicates that development beyond 7 km could produce recreation impacts, this will be taken into account; for example at Little Wittenham SAC, where development in the eastern fringes of the Vale of White Horse District could be relevant.

32. Tiddington with Albury is approximately 13.7km from Little Wittenham SAC, which is part of a larger site managed by the Earth Trust as a nature reserve. The areas which are most important to the population of great crested newts (GCN) have restricted access which is designed to prevent conflicts between the visiting public, the newts and their habitat.
33. The increased visitor levels which are likely to occur as a result of the modest increase in population in Tiddington with Albury may result in increased pressure on the habitats on the reserve as a whole. However, due to restricted access to the areas where newts are primarily found, the increased visitor numbers will be concentrated onto other habitats on the reserve. These habitats are not related to the primary reasons for the selection of the SAC.
34. Great crested newts are not believed to be particularly sensitive to human disturbance provided their breeding ponds are not affected and their primary terrestrial habitat and hibernacula are not adversely affected. Provided controls on access to the most sensitive areas are maintained (i.e. ponds and hibernacula are not disturbed) there is no reason to believe that there would be any significant effect on the integrity of the site or the primary reason for the selection of the site.
35. The HRA of the Local Plan identifies that at the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC, public access / disturbance is only identified in relation to the stag beetle population. The portion of the SAC that supports the stag beetle population (Bisham Woods SSSI) is greater than 7km from the District boundary, and therefore is considered unlikely to result in likely significant effects from development within South Oxfordshire, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.
36. 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

37. 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 Tiddington with Albury are:

- Cothill Fen SAC: has calcium rich springwater-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.
  - Little Wittenham SAC: its ponds support great crested newts, but changes to water quality or quantity have not been identified as an issue at this site – the site has therefore been screened out.
38. 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.
39. The Tiddington with Albury 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.
40. 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 Tiddington with Albury 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 39 of this assessment has considered how the development proposed in the Tiddington with Albury 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 Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to give rise to significant in combination effects alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

## **CONCLUSION**

41. The Tiddington with Albury 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 Tiddington with Albury NDP is not required

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

<b>1. Characteristics of the Plan, having regard to:</b>	
<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 Tiddington 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 and the strategic policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035.</p> <p>The Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood Development Plan is seeking to contain policies which seek to maintain and enhance the local character and landscape of the village and immediate area. The NDP seeks to include a policy that supports the creation of village boundaries that would define the built up areas of Tiddington and Milton Common. The proposed policy recognises that part of the boundaries is washed over by green belt and part of them are not.</p> <p>The NDP is looking to include policies on protecting locally important views and designate local green spaces. The plan is also proposing policies on Design and Housing Mix as well as protecting local community facilities.</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 Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to influence other Plans or Programmes within the Statutory Development 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 Tiddington with Albury NDP. A basic condition of the Tiddington with Albury NDP is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Within this wider context, the</p>

	Tiddington with Albury NDP itself is unlikely to have a significant positive or negative effect.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and	<p>The Tiddington with Albury NDP contains the following designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ancient Woodland</li> <li>- Archaeological Constraints</li> <li>- BAP Priority habitats</li> <li>- Flood Zone</li> <li>- Great Crest Newt Distribution</li> <li>- Green Belt</li> <li>- Listed Buildings</li> <li>- Local Heritage asset</li> <li>- Protected species buffer</li> <li>- Tree Preservation Orders</li> </ul> <p>There are SACs within 17km of the parish of Tiddington with Albury:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aston Rowant SAC – approximately 9.6km</li> <li>• Chiltern Beechwoods SAC – approximately 10.9km</li> <li>• Little Wittenham SAC – approximately 13.7km</li> <li>• Oxford Meadow SAC – approximately 14.6km</li> </ul> <p>Please see detailed assessment in appendix 2 which assesses the likely significant effects on these SAC's.</p> <p>There are also the following designations within 5km of the NDP area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spartum Fen SSSI – approximately 1.7km</li> <li>• Holton Wood SSSI – approximately 4.7km</li> </ul> <p>The Tiddington with Albury NDP does not allocated land for development as such is not likely to have significant effects on the environment.</p>
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to	The proposed development in the Tiddington with Albury NDP has been judged not to have an impact on Community legislation.

waste management or water protection).	
<b>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b>	
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	The Tiddington with Albury 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 nature and limited in scale since the neighbourhood plan is not promoting additional development
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	<p>The NDP proposes to designate local green spaces that are of value to the local community and protect locally important views. These will likely have a positive cumulative benefit for the area. However, it is not yet known the quantity or scale of the local green spaces and locally important views. Therefore, it is not known if they are likely to have significant effects.</p> <p>The NDP is also seeking to have a policy on the conservation of Biodiversity and Wildlife Corridors which will seek to establish a network of green infrastructure and identify opportunities for improvements to existing and/or new connections.</p> <p>The plan is also likely to have positive social effects through the protection of community facilities. This is however considered to be local in nature and not significant.</p>
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects;	The effects of the Plan are unlikely to have transboundary <sup>3</sup> 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 Tiddington with Albury NDP related to the parish of Tiddington with Albury. 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 likely to be small and localised.

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

<p>(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;</p> <p>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or</p> <p>(iii) intensive land-use; and</p>	<p>The Tiddington with Albury NDP contains the following special natural characteristics and cultural heritage elements;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ancient Woodland</li> <li>- Archaeological Constraints</li> <li>- BAP Priority habitats</li> <li>- Flood Zone</li> <li>- Great Crest Newt Distribution</li> <li>- Green Belt</li> <li>- Listed Buildings</li> <li>- Local Heritage asset</li> <li>- Protected species buffer</li> <li>- Tree Preservation Orders</li> </ul> <p>The NDP is proposing to have a policy which identify buildings and structures with local heritage value. Given the localised nature of the Neighbourhood Plan policies, the proposed policy is unlikely to have significant effect.</p>
<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 – Statutory Consultee Responses

### THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

**From:** [Planning\\_THM](#)  
**To:** [Whiteley, Rosalynn](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood Plan – SEA and HRA Screening Opinion – Please reply by 12 November  
**Date:** 25 October 2021 11:56:43  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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**\*\*EXTERNAL\*\***

Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on your SEA and HRA screening opinion Tiddington and Albury 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](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](mailto:Planning_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk)

External: 02077140593



## HISTORIC ENGLAND

**From:** Lloyd Sweet, Robert <Robert.LloydSweet@HistoricEngland.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 05 November 2021 16:25  
**To:** Whiteley, Rosalynn  
**Subject:** Fw: Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood Plan – SEA and HRA Screening Opinion  
– Please reply by 12 November

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**\*\*EXTERNAL\*\***

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Dear Rosalynn

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the draft screening statement for SEA of the Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood plan.

Based on the information provided I'm happy to confirm Historic England's agreement that SEA would not be merited on grounds within our areas of interest. We do, as ever, reserve the right to request a review of this decision should the scope of the plan change to include site allocations or policies that limit areas for development to locations likely to generate effects for heritage assets, or policies promoting change of use that create a significant pressure for change that would prejudice the conservation of the significance of heritage assets. Nevertheless we are pleased to see that careful consideration has been given to the present approach to and operation of the settlement boundary policies with the neighbourhood plan and the potential effects for the historic environment.

I would be happy to answer any queries with regard to these comments

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  
Mobile: 07825 907288

## NATURAL ENGLAND

Date: 9th November 2021  
Our ref: 371247  
Your ref: Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood Plan  
SEA & HRA Screening



Ms Rosalynn Whiteley  
Enquiries/Assistant Planning Officer (Neighbourhood)  
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

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

**BY EMAIL ONLY - [rosalynn.whiteley@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:rosalynn.whiteley@southandvale.gov.uk)**

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Whiteley

### **Tiddington with Albury Neighbourhood Plan – SEA & HRA Screening**

Thank you for your consultation request on the above dated and received by Natural England on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

At this time, Natural England is not able to fully assess the potential impacts of this plan on statutory nature conservation sites or protected landscapes or, provide detailed advice in relation to this consultation. If you consider there are significant risks to statutory nature conservation sites or protected landscapes, please set out the specific areas on which you require advice.

The lack of detailed advice from Natural England does not imply that there are no impacts on the natural environment. It is for the deciding authority to determine whether or not the plan is consistent with national and local environmental policies. Other bodies and individuals may provide information and advice on the impacts of the plan on the natural environment to assist the decision making process.

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.

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.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Jenkins  
Operations Delivery  
Consultations Team  
Natural England