

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 East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

12 JULY 2023

SUMMARY

Following consultation with the statutory bodies, South Oxfordshire District Council (the 'Council') determines that East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan Review (East Hagbourne 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 pre-submission East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan Review 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

4. Using the criteria set out in Annex II of the Directive and Schedule 1 of the Regulations, a Screening Opinion determines whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects.
5. The extract from 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' in Appendix 1 provides a flow diagram to demonstrate the SEA screening process.
6. Table 1 in Appendix 1 sets out the criteria from the Practical Guide, along with an assessment of the East Hagbourne NDP against each criterion to ascertain whether a SEA is required.

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

EAST HAGBOURNE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

9. The East Hagbourne NDP Review contains the following vision and objectives:

Vision

‘To safeguard the individual character, vitality and community facilities of our historic village and protect its rural environment for the health and wellbeing of town and village residents alike, whilst supporting sustainable development that meets the needs of residents now and in the future.’

Objectives

Sustainable Development

- SD1 - Support sustainable development that meets the needs of residents now and in the future.

Village Character

- VC1 - Preserve the independent and rural character of our village as Didcot expands. Conserve and enhance key views both into and out from the built areas and within the built areas
- VC2 - Conserve and enhance the heritage of the historic core of the village within and adjoining the Conservation Area together with its Listed Buildings and structures.
- VC3 - Protect the village envelope and surroundings from light pollution

Housing

- H1 - Respond to housing needs of residents and provide a proportionate contribution to meet SODC's housing requirements

Community

- CF1 - Ensure that village infrastructure and facilities support village life now and into the future.

Transport and Access

- TA1 - Maintain and improve road safety for all road users.
- TA2 - Promote mobility and maintain or enhance the quality of pavements without creating an urban appearance.
- TA3 - Ensure that new development does not add to the problem of on-street parking.

Green Space, Environment and Conservation

- E1 - Maintain and enhance green spaces for the health and wellbeing of the community
- E2 - Maintain and enhance biodiversity
- E3 - Protect housing from flooding

Policies

Policy SD1 - Sustainable Development

Policy VC1a - Lower End Field Local Gap

Policy VC1b - Coscote Fields Local Gap

Policy VC1c - The Green Corridor Local Gap

Policy VC2 - Conserving and Enhancing Important Views

Policy VC3 - Retaining Smaller Village Character and Promoting Good Design

Policy VC4 - Assets of Local Distinctiveness

Policy VC5 - Conserving and Enhancing Heritage Assets

Policy VC6 - Lighting

Policy H1 - Housing Provision

Policy H2 - Meeting Housing Needs

Policy H3 - Housing Allocation

Policy CF1 - Infrastructure - Utilities

Policy CF2 - Infrastructure - Community Facilities

Policy TA1 - Road Safety

Policy TA2 - Footpaths and Pavements

Policy TA3 - Parking

Policy E1 - Local Green Spaces

Policy E2 - Protect and Enhance Biodiversity and The Natural Environment

Policy E2a - Wildlife Buffers

Policy E2b - Enhance Wildlife Habitat

Policy E3 - Flooding

10. The East Hagbourne NDP was adopted as part of the district council's development plan on 11 April 2019. The plan was tested against the now superseded Core Strategy and Saved policies from the Local Plan, however it was prepared considering the emerging Local Plan, particularly the emerging policy direction and its reasoning and evidence. A Strategic Environmental Assessment was carried out for the plan.
11. The East Hagbourne NDP Review proposes to introduce two new policies (regarding Wildlife Buffers and enhancing Wildlife Habitat) and two new appendices (Design Guide/Code and a Strategy for People and Nature). It proposes to expand the area of one Local Green Space and add two additional small green spaces as 'Assets of Local Distinctiveness'. The NDP vision and objectives remains the same, with no amendments. Whilst other minor modifications are likely to be

proposed to some of the existing policy wording or supporting text, these are not likely to be substantial.

12. The East Hagbourne NDP Review will continue to plan positively, with a wide range of policies covering, for example: conservation and heritage, sustainable development, housing, Local Green Spaces, biodiversity, and important views.
13. Policies in the East Hagbourne NDP Review will continue to support sustainable appropriate development in the neighbourhood area, which will not adversely impact on the rural nature of the parish.
14. Overall, we note that the plan Review does not allocate any new sites for development, it carries over its existing housing allocation (that also already benefits from full planning permission) with no change, and continues to place great emphasis on conserving the character and appearance of the area.
15. It is therefore concluded that the implementation of the East Hagbourne NDP Review would not result in likely significant effects on the environment.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

16. The screening opinion was sent to Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England on 12 May 2023 for a four-week consultation period. The responses in full are presented in Appendix 4.
17. Historic England confirmed their agreement that the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan Review does not require an SEA.
18. The Environment Agency did not provide comments on this SEA screening.
19. Natural England confirmed their agreement that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan and also agreed that the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan Review does not require further HRA assessment. They did not have any specific comments on the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review.

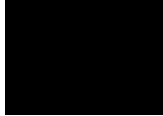
CONCLUSION

20. As a result of the screening undertaken by the Council, the following determination has been reached:
21. The East Hagbourne NDP Review is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the East Hagbourne NDP Review is not required.
22. Based on the assessment presented in Appendices 1 & 3, the East Hagbourne NDP Review is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment.

23. The East Hagbourne NDP Review does not require a Strategic Environment Assessment.

Authorised by: Tim Oruye - Head of Policy and Programmes

Signed

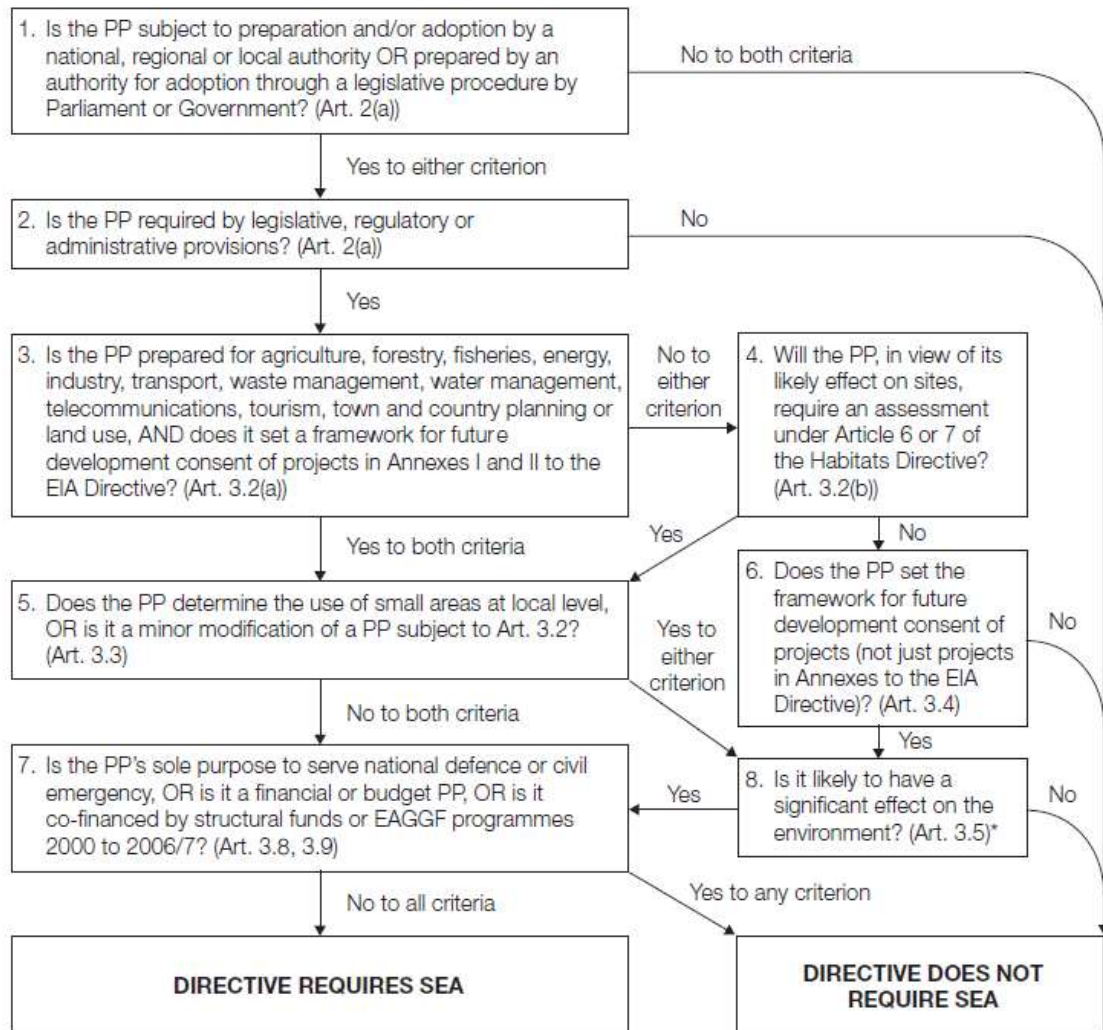


Date: 12 July 2023

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

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

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



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

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

Stage	Y/N	Explanation
1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Y	<p>The preparation of and adoption of a Neighbourhood Development Plan is allowed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Neighbourhood Plan Review is being prepared by the East Hagbourne NDP Steering Group, a working group who report to East Hagbourne Parish Council (as the “relevant body”) and will be “made” by South Oxfordshire District Council as the local authority. The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is subject to the following regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 • The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 • The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2017
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Y	<p>Whilst a 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>

3. Is the Neighbourhood Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II (see Appendix 2) to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	N	The East Hagbourne NDP Review is prepared for town and country planning and land use and will not set out a framework for future development of projects that would require an EIA.
4. Will the Neighbourhood Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	N	The East Hagbourne NDP Review is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the East Hagbourne NDP Review 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 East Hagbourne NDP Review 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 East Hagbourne NDP Review will include a series of policies to guide development within the village. This will inform the determination of planning applications providing a framework for future development consent of projects.
7. Is the Neighbourhood Plan's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	N	N/A

8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	The plan is not likely to have significant effects on the environment. See assessment of the likely significance of effects on the environment in Appendix 3.
---	---	---

Appendix 2 - Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

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 Review 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 East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan Review 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.”

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

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 (December 2020).

³ South Oxfordshire Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment Report (March 2019)

“105 – (1) Where a land use plan –

(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 of 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 revocation or modification.

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

EUROPEAN SITES

4. The HRA of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 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.
5. The following European sites lie wholly or partly within 17km of East Hagbourne's Neighbourhood Area and have been taken into consideration:

Little Wittenham SAC – Approximately 4km (South Oxfordshire District Council)

6. 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.
7. 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.

Cothill Fen SAC – Approximately 12km (Vale of White Horse District Council)

8. Cothill Fen is designated as a SAC for its calcium-rich, spring fed fens and alder woodlands on floodplains. Cothill Fen is an exceptionally important site with an outstanding range of nationally rare habitats which support a large number of rare invertebrates and plants. The habitats consist of calcareous fen, calcareous grassland, woodland and scrub of varying degrees of wetness. The habitat supports over 330 species of vascular plant and over 120 nationally scarce or rare

invertebrates, including the nationally rare Southern Damselfly (*Coenagrion mercuriale*).

9. 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 waterfed fens.
10. With regard to the types of development that may be brought forward in the Local Plan, air pollution, and water quality and quantity could impact the site.

Hartslock Wood SAC – Approximately 11km (South Oxfordshire District Council)

11. This site hosts the priority habitat type "orchid rich sites". The steep slopes of this site on the chalk of the Chilterns comprise a mosaic of chalk grassland, chalk scrub and broadleaved woodland. The chalk grassland mostly consists of a mosaic of shorter-turf NVC type CG2 *Festuca ovina*–*Avenula pratensis* grassland and taller CG3 *Bromus erectus* grassland. The site supports one of only three UK populations of monkey orchid *Orchis simia*, a nationally rare Red Data Book species. The bulk of this site lies on a steep slope above the River Thames. Recent storms and landslips have resulted in a diverse agestructure for the yew population. Open patches show a rich flora including local species such as southern wood-rush *Luzula forsteri*, wood barley *Hordelymus europaeus* and narrow-lipped helleborine *Epipactis leptochila*.
12. The main threat to this site is air pollution and the risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition upon the dry grasslands and yew-dominated woodland. With regard to the types of development that may be brought forward in the Local Plan, air pollution could impact the site.

Hackpen Hill SAC – Approximately (15km)

13. Hackpen Hill SAC is an extensive area of unimproved chalk grassland in the North Wessex Downs and is considered to be one of the most important areas in the UK for the rare early gentian. The site has a variety of aspect and gradients, with the grassland dominated by red fescue and upright brome. The herb flora includes a significant population of early gentian, as well as autumn gentian, fragrant orchid, frog orchid, horseshoe vetch, common rock-rose and dwarf thistle.
14. The Site Improvement Plan for Hackpen Hill indicates that no current issues affecting the Natura 2000 feature have been identified. The HRA of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan stated there are no pressures and threats identified currently affecting this site.

ASSESSMENT

15. As required under Regulation 106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'), the qualifying body (East Hagbourne 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 Review to result in significant effects associated with:

Physical loss of/damage to habitat:

16. Any development resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan Review will be located within the neighbourhood area.
17. There are no European sites *within* the Neighbourhood Plan Review area, therefore loss of habitat from within the boundaries of a European site can be ruled out in relation to all sites.
18. 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). One 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:

- **Little Wittenham SAC (great crested newt).**

19. The HRA (March 2019) produced alongside the Local Plan 2035 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. Research has found that great crested newts at Little Wittenham SAC migrate within woodland and 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 offsite habitats associated with Little Wittenham SAC can be screened out of further assessment.**

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

20. The most recent HRA of the emerging South Oxford 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.'

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

Air pollution

22. Air pollution is most likely to affect European sites where plant, soil and water habitats are the qualifying features, 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 (N) availability that can then affect plant health, productivity and species composition. In terms of vehicle traffic, nitrogen oxides (NO_x, i.e. NO and NO₂) are considered to be the key pollutants. Deposition of nitrogen compounds may lead to both soil and freshwater acidification, and NO_x can cause eutrophication of soils and water.
23. Based on the Highways Agency Design for Road and Bridges (DMRB) Manual Volume 11, Section 3, Part 1 (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.
24. None of the European sites stated in the HRA around South Oxfordshire that are within 200 metres of strategic roads are within 17km of East Hagbourne. Accordingly, effects in relation to air quality can be screened out.

Increased recreational pressure

25. The 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.'⁴
26. The HRA also 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

⁴ South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 Habitats Regulation Assessment (March 2019), available from https://data.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=1670533189&CODE=0CB90C6B9ECD6BE1C0A4B61F9C07CAB4

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.

27. East Hagbourne NDP area is approximately 4km 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.
28. In the 2018 HRA assessment for East Hagbourne NDP, it was highlighted that the increased visitor levels which are likely to occur as a result of the modest increase in population in East Hagbourne may result in increased pressure on the habitats on the reserve as a whole. Due to the restricted access policies 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.
29. 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.
30. **As the East Hagbourne NDP Review does not allocate any further housing or development, likely significant effects in relation to visitor pressure and the impacts of recreation can remain ruled out and do not need to be considered further.**

Changes to hydrological regimes

31. 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 East Hagbourne with aquatic or wetland habitats, or those identified as sensitive to changes in water quality or quantity, are:
- **Cothill Fen SAC (12km):** has calcium rich springwater-fed fens that have been identified as sensitive to water pollution and hydrological changes.
 - **Little Wittenham SAC (4km):** 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.

32. 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.
33. **The NDP Review does not allocate any new/additional residential, employment or infrastructure development than that allocated in the original NDP; therefore, likely significant effects in relation to potential to affect water quality / quantity or flow regimes at sensitive European sites can be screened out.**

In combination effects

34. 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 East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan Review. 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 Core Strategy, Local Plan 2011 or as part of the HRA for the relevant NDP. Paragraphs 4 to 30 of this assessment have considered how the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan Review is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites.
35. **With regard to the conclusions of paragraphs 4 to 33, it is considered that the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan Review, taking into account other relevant plans and projects, is not likely to give rise to significant in-combination effects.**

CONCLUSION

36. The East Hagbourne NDP Review 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 East Hagbourne NDP is not required.

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

1. Characteristics of the Plan, having regard to:	
(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	<p>The East Hagbourne NDP Review 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 NDP Review does not allocate any new/additional residential, employment or infrastructure development than that allocated in the original NDP.</p>
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	An NDP must be in conformity with the Local Plan for the District. It does not influence other plans. The East Hagbourne NDP Review is unlikely to influence other Plans or Programmes within the statutory development plan.
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	National policy requires a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread through plan-making, including the East Hagbourne NDP Review. A basic condition of the East Hagbourne NDP Review is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. One of its policies, as well as one of its objectives, continues to address supporting sustainable development that meets the needs of residents now and in the future.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and	The environmental impact of the proposals within the East Hagbourne NDP Review are unlikely to be significant due to the minor scale of new proposals. Policies in the East Hagbourne NDP aim to support sustainable development in the village and aim to maintain and enhance biodiversity, wildlife and green spaces for the health and wellbeing of the community.

	<p>East Hagbourne NDP contains the following environmental designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BAP Priority Areas • Flood Zones • Great Crested Newt distribution • Local Nature Reserve • Local Wildlife Sites • Protected Species Buffer • Tree Preservation Orders <p>There are also 4 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within 17km of the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Wittenham SAC - approx. 4km • Cothill Fen SAC - approx. 12km • Hartslock Woods SAC - approx. 11km • Hackpen Hill SAC – approx. 16km <p>There are also the following SSSI's located within the following distances of East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aston Upthorpe SSSI – approx. 3km • Little Wittenham SSSI – approx. 4km <p>The NDP Review proposes to introduce two new policies (regarding Wildlife Buffers and enhancing Wildlife Habitat) and two new appendices (Design Guide/Code and a Strategy for People and Nature). It proposes to expand the area of one Local Green Space and add two additional small green spaces as 'Assets of Local Distinctiveness'. The NDP vision and objectives remains the same, with no amendments. The Review plan seeks to maintain and enhance its green spaces and biodiversity.</p> <p>We are of the opinion the minor Neighbourhood Plan Review proposals are unlikely to harm the designations listed and there would not be likely significant effects to the environment.</p>
--	---

<p>(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).</p>	<p>The proposed development in the East Hagbourne NDP Review 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 East Hagbourne NDP Review is likely to have modest but enduring positive environmental effects. The effects are not likely to be reversible, as they relate to development. However, the proposals are minor and will be of a local scale.</p> <p>The NDP Review proposes to introduce two new policies (regarding Wildlife Buffers and enhancing Wildlife Habitat) and two new appendices (Design Guide/Code and a Strategy for People and Nature). It proposes to expand the area of one Local Green Space and add two additional small green spaces as 'Assets of Local Distinctiveness'. The NDP vision and objectives remains the same, with no amendments.</p> <p>The proposals will have positive cumulative benefits for the area. The effects will be of a local scale and the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan add detail to existing development plan policies offering protection to biodiversity/wildlife, the natural environment, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and designated heritage assets to sustain and enhance their significance and setting.</p> <p>No new/additional development than that allocated in the original NDP is proposed that would cause likely significant effects. Given the scale of what is proposed, the effects are not likely to be significant.</p> <p>The plan is also likely to have positive minor social effects through the protection of the green infrastructure network in its Strategy for People and Nature.</p>

(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	It is intended that the positive social effects, through a sustainable suite of policies, will have positive cumulative benefits for the area. However, given the nature and scale of the proposals in the plan, these are not likely to be significant.
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects;	The effects of the plan are unlikely to have transboundary ⁵ 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 NDP Review relates to the parish of East Hagbourne, which is part of the AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). The NDP Review proposals continue to ensure that effects on the rural character and visual amenity of the AONB are minimised. The potential for environmental effects is also likely to be small and localised.
(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use; and	<p>The East Hagbourne NDP Review area contains the following special natural characteristics and cultural heritage elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeological Constraints • AONB • Conservation Area • Listed Buildings • Local Heritage Assets • Tree Preservation Orders <p>There are also the following SSSI's located within the following distances of East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aston Upthorpe Downs SSSI – approx. 3km • Little Wittenham SSSI – approx. 4km <p>There are also 4 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within 17km of the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Wittenham SAC - approx. 4km • Cothill Fen SAC - approx. 12km

⁵ Transboundary effects are understood to be in other Member States.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hartslock Woods SAC - approx. 11km • Hackpen Hill SAC – approx. 16km <p>The East Hagbourne NDP Review offers an opportunity to enhance the natural environment and the cultural heritage of the area through the proposals being considered.</p> <p>The SACs and SSSI are located outside the NDP designated area. Little Wittenham SAC is the closest SAC to the designated neighbourhood area, approximately 4km from the neighbourhood plan boundary; and Little Wittenham SSSI is the closest SSSI to the neighbourhood area, approximately 4km from the East Hagbourne NDP area.</p> <p>The principles in the NDP Review and its new appendices include encouraging any development to enhance or create wildlife buffers and habitats. The adopted NDP already included policies ensuring development would maintain, restore or enhance the local landscape character (including the AONB). Taking into consideration the proposals in the plan Review, they are not considered to cause likely significant effects to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.</p> <p>The HRA Screening Assessment in Appendix 2 concluded that the East Hagbourne NDP Review is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects; therefore, an Appropriate Assessment of the East Hagbourne NDP Review is not required.</p> <p>A vulnerability faced by the parish is the risk of coalescence with Didcot. The NDP Review continues to propose to preserve the rural setting of the village and prevent its coalescence with other settlements. A further vulnerability of the parish is the impact of householder and small scale developments within the built-up area on the character and appearance of the listed</p>
--	---

	<p>buildings, Conservation Area, archaeological sites and AONB. However, limited infill development is already supported in the development plan. Therefore, it is considered that this would not give rise to likely significant environmental effects.</p> <p>The objectives of the East Hagbourne NDP Review continue to set out how the plan will honour the historic and rural character of the parish, its villages, and its setting, as well as maintain and enhance the natural environment and green spaces.</p> <p>The plan is considered to have a neutral effect on cultural heritage because there is no indication given in the plan Review and appendices that the plan would go beyond national and local policy and therefore, it is considered that the effects of the proposals in the plan Review are not likely to be significant.</p> <p>Environmental quality standards or limit values are not considered likely to be significantly affected by the East Hagbourne NDP Review.</p> <p>In light of the minor proposals in the East Hagbourne NDP Review, the plan is also not likely to cause significant effects in relation to intensive land use.</p>
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	<p>A small section of the south-east edge of the NDP area is within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which is recognised to contain a distinctive character, natural beauty and some of the finest landscapes in England.</p> <p>The importance of the AONB is already recognised in the policies of the existing NDP. The plan Review retains these policies and does not allocate any new/additional development than that in the original NDP. The NDP policies continue to 'conserve and enhance the landscape' and aim to 'maintain, restore or enhance the local landscape character, paying special attention to long-distance views including towards the AONB'. Therefore, in light of the minor</p>

	additional proposals in the East Hagbourne NDP Review, the plan is not likely to cause significant effects on the AONB.
--	---

Appendix 4 – Statutory Consultee Responses

HISTORIC ENGLAND

By email only to: [REDACTED]@southandvale.gov.uk

Our ref: [REDACTED]

Your ref: East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan SEA

Main: 020 7973 3700

e-seast@historicengland.org.uk

[REDACTED]@historicengland.org.uk

Date: 07/06/2023

Dear Sir or Madam

East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan Review SEA Screening Opinion

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on this consultation. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied.

The information supplied indicates that the plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We also note that the plan does not propose to allocate any new sites for development.

On the basis of the information supplied, and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with the Council that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

The views of the other two statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for an SEA is made. I should be pleased if you can send a copy of the determination as required by REG 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

We should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by you with your correspondence. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the SEA process and, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan) where we

consider that, despite the SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the relevant local authorities are closely involved throughout the preparation of the plan and its assessment. They are best placed to advise on; local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the Historic Environment Record (HER), how the allocation, policy or proposal can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets.

Please do contact me, via email if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Historic Places Adviser

NATURAL ENGLAND

Date: 07 June 2023

Our ref: [REDACTED]

Your ref: East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan

[REDACTED]
South Oxfordshire/Vale of White Horse District Council
BY EMAIL ONLY
[REDACTED] [@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@southandvale.gov.uk)

Dear [REDACTED]

Neighbourhood Plan – Review SEA & HRA Screening

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 2021.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment

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

Neighbourhood Plan

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

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

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

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

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

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




Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

Natural England agrees with the report's conclusions that the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European Site, either alone or in combination and therefore no further assessment work would be required.

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

Yours sincerely


Consultations Team

Date: 11 July 2023
Our ref: 
Your ref: East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan

South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District
Council
BY EMAIL ONLY
@southandvale.gov.uk

Dear 

East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan - Update Neighbourhood Plan - SEA/HRA Screening Opinion

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 23 June 2023. 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.

Natural England is a statutory consultee in neighbourhood planning and must be consulted on draft neighbourhood development plans by the Parish/Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums where they consider our interests would be affected by the proposals made.

Natural England does not have any specific comments on this draft neighbourhood plan.

However, we refer you to the attached annex which covers the issues and opportunities that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and to the following information.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Further information on protected species and development is included in [Natural England's Standing Advice on protected species](#).

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission [standing advice](#).

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If an Strategic Environmental Assessment is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

For any further consultations on your plan, please contact:
consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the person.

Consultations Team

Annex 1 - Neighbourhood planning and the natural environment: information, issues and opportunities

Natural environment information sources

The [Magic](#)¹ website will provide you with much of the nationally held natural environment data for your plan area. The most relevant layers for you to consider are: **Agricultural Land Classification, Ancient Woodland, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Local Nature Reserves, National Parks (England), National Trails, Priority Habitat Inventory, public rights of way (on the Ordnance Survey base map) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (including their impact risk zones)**. Local environmental record centres may hold a range of additional information on the natural environment. A list of local record centres is available from [the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres](#).

Priority habitats are those habitats of particular importance for nature conservation, and the list of them can be found [here](#)². Most of these will be mapped either as **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**, on the Magic website or as **Local Wildlife Sites**. Your local planning authority should be able to supply you with the locations of Local Wildlife Sites.

National Character Areas (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each character area is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. NCA profiles contain descriptions of the area and statements of environmental opportunity, which may be useful to inform proposals in your plan. NCA information can be found [here](#)³.

There may also be a local **landscape character assessment** covering your area. This is a tool to help understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify the features that give it a sense of place. It can help to inform, plan and manage change in the area. Your local planning authority should be able to help you access these if you can't find them online.

If your neighbourhood planning area is within or adjacent to a **National Park** or **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (AONB), the relevant National Park/AONB Management Plan for the area will set out useful information about the protected landscape. You can access the plans on from the relevant National Park Authority or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty website.

General mapped information on **soil types** and **Agricultural Land Classification** is available (under 'landscape') on the [Magic](#)⁴ website and also from the [LandIS website](#)⁵, which contains more information about obtaining soil data.

Natural environment issues to consider

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#)⁶ sets out national planning policy on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. [Planning Practice Guidance](#)⁷ sets out supporting guidance.

Your local planning authority should be able to provide you with further advice on the potential impacts of your plan or order on the natural environment and the need for any environmental assessments.

Landscape

Your plans or orders may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes. You may want to consider identifying distinctive local landscape features or characteristics such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls and think about how any new development proposals can respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness.

If you are proposing development within or close to a protected landscape (National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or other sensitive location, we recommend that you carry out a landscape assessment of the proposal. Landscape assessments can help you to choose the most appropriate sites for development and help to avoid or minimise impacts of development on the landscape through careful siting, design and landscaping.

-
- 1 <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>
 - 2 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>
 - 3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making>
 - 4 <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>
 - 5 <http://www.landis.org.uk/index.cfm>
 - 6 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
 - 7 <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/>

Wildlife habitats

Some proposals can have adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites or other priority habitats (listed [here](#)⁸), such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or [Ancient woodland](#)⁹. If there are likely to be any adverse impacts you'll need to think about how such impacts can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

Priority and protected species

You'll also want to consider whether any proposals might affect priority species (listed [here](#) ¹⁰) or protected species. To help you do this, Natural England has produced advice [here](#)¹¹ to help understand the impact of particular developments on protected species.

Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services for society. It is a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution. If you are proposing development, you should seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of a higher quality in line with National Planning Policy Framework para 112. For more information, see [Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land](#) ¹².

Improving your natural environment

Your plan or order can offer exciting opportunities to enhance your local environment and should provide net gains for biodiversity in line with the [National Planning Policy Framework](#). If you are setting out policies on new development or proposing sites for development, you should follow the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy and seek to ensure impacts on habitats are avoided or minimised before considering opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. You may wish to consider identifying what environmental features you want to be retained or enhanced or new features you would like to see created as part of any new development and how these could contribute to biodiversity net gain and wider environmental goals.

Opportunities for environmental enhancement might include:

- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Think about how lighting can be best managed to reduce impacts on wildlife.
- Adding a green roof to new buildings.
- Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.

[Defra's Biodiversity Metric](#) should be used to understand the baseline biodiversity value of proposed development sites and may be used to calculate biodiversity losses and gains where detailed site development proposals are known. For small development sites the [Small Sites Metric](#) may be used. This is a simplified version of [Defra's Biodiversity Metric](#) and is designed for use where certain criteria are met. Where on site measures for biodiversity net gain are not possible, you should consider off site measures.

You may also want to consider enhancing your local area in other ways, for example by:

- Setting out in your plan how you would like to implement elements of a wider Green Infrastructure Strategy (if one exists) in your community.
- Assessing needs for accessible greenspace and setting out proposals to address any deficiencies or enhance provision. Natural England's [Green Infrastructure Framework](#) sets out further information on green infrastructure standards and principles
- Identifying green areas of particular importance for special protection through Local Green Space designation (see [Planning Practice Guidance](#)¹³).

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-land-assess-proposals-for-development/guide-to-assessing-developmentproposals-on-agricultural-land>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space>

- Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks or on verges, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).
- Planting additional street trees.
- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition, or clearing away an eyesore).

Natural England's [Environmental Benefits from Nature tool](#) may be used to identify opportunities to enhance wider benefits from nature and to avoid and minimise any negative impacts. It is designed to work alongside [Defra's Biodiversity Metric](#) and is available as a beta test version.