

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 Chinnor Neighbourhood Development Plan Review II

8 September 2023

SUMMARY

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

INTRODUCTION

1. An initial screening opinion was used to determine whether the contents of the pre-submission Chinnor Neighbourhood Development Plan Review II (Chinnor NDP) require 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, Natural England and Oxfordshire County Council. 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 Chinnor 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.

CHINNOR NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW II

9. The Chinnor NDP Review II contains the following vision and objectives:

Vision

'The Chinnor Neighbourhood Development Plan seeks to promote the continuing enhancement and sustainable improvement of our thriving and vibrant community within the Parish development boundary, whilst protecting its distinctive character and rich heritage.'

It will seek to develop facilities and infrastructure necessary to meet the economic, social and environmental concerns, including the threats of Climate Change, through mitigation and adaptation. The Plan also seeks to address the issues of local residents and businesses and to recognise that any further development must integrate well with current housing stock both in design, affordability and location.

It recognises the inability of the present infrastructure to successfully cope with sewage, traffic, roads, medical and educational facilities, which must be a major consideration of any further substantial development if the Parish of Chinnor is to continue to be an attractive place to live and work'.

Objectives

Objective 1

'To ensure that new residential developments will directly address the future needs of all residents in the Plan area in general, and to provide for the needs of young and elderly people in particular'.

Objective 2

'To promote sustainable residential developments by ensuring that the location and design of any new development is resilient to the effects of climate change, and to mitigate and adapt by securing sustainable building practices which conserve energy, water resources and materials.'

Objective 3

'To safeguard the intrinsic character and heritage of Chinnor, its surrounding countryside and its setting adjacent to the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'.

Objective 4

'To protect and improve existing community facilities and negotiate additional facilities in consequence of new development'.

Objective 5

'To promote sustainable transport solutions for development and to address the physical and environmental issues arising from through and local traffic on the local highway network'.

Objective 6

'To provide a supportive environment for existing and new enterprises/businesses which can flourish and add vitality, prosperity and employment opportunities, whilst also addressing the identified infrastructural needs of the village'.

Objective 7

'To promote the development of appropriate community facilities and infrastructure to sustain the longer-term viability and vitality of the Plan area'.

Objective 8

'Protect, foster and enhance Chinnor's natural environment and biodiversity, and build boundaries for the benefit of the people, flora, fauna and wildlife of the area'.

Policies

Policy CH H1 – Infill Residential Development
Policy CH H2 – Affordable Housing
Policy CH H3 – Tenancy Mix
Policy CH H4 – Allocation of Affordable Housing for Local People
Policy CH H5 – Retirement Housing
Policy CH H6 – Site Allocations
Policy CH H7 – Development Boundary
Policy CH H8 – Sustainable Homes
Policy CH C1 – Design
Policy CH C2 – Conservation Areas
Policy CH C3 – Heritage Assets
Policy CH GP1 – Local Green Space
Policy CH GP2 – Protection of Habitats of Significance
Policy CH GP3 – Public Rights of Way (PROW)

Policy CH CF1 – The Protection of Community Facilities
Policy CH CF2 – Healthcare Facilities
Policy CH R1 – Protection of Existing Retail Facilities
Policy CH B1 – Protection of Existing Employment Premises
Policy CH B2 – Enhancement of Employment Facilities
Policy CH T1 – Enhancement of Tourism Facilities
Policy CH E1 – Education Facilities

10. The first Chinnor NDP was adopted as part of the district council's development plan in October 2017. The plan was tested against the now superseded Core Strategy (2012) and Saved policies from the Local Plan (2006), however, it was prepared considering the emerging Local Plan, particularly the emerging policy direction and its reasoning and evidence. It was determined that the NDP would not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as this would repeat policy assessment undertaken by the SEA of the emerging Local Plan.
11. The first Chinnor NDP Review was adopted as part of the district council's development plan on 20 May 2021. The plan was again tested against the now superseded Core Strategy (2012) and Saved policies from the Local Plan (2006), however it was also prepared considering the emerging Local Plan, particularly the emerging policy direction and its reasoning and evidence. The Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening (September 2019) of the first Chinnor NDP Review concluded that a full Strategic Environmental Assessment would not be required.
12. The NDP Review II proposes to introduce one new policy (CH E1 - Education Facilities) to support the expansion of existing schools/pre-schools or development of new schools/pre-schools. It proposes to add one additional Local Green Space (Mill Lane Community Garden) and proposes four areas/buildings as additional Community Facilities (Millie's Deli; Pound Garden and War Memorial; Buds that Blossom Nursery; and Parade of Shops on Middle Way). The NDP vision and some of its objectives have been reworded (to add clarity and context). It also proposes one new Objective (8), centred around the natural environment and protecting it; and updates its 'Action Points' for Chinnor Parish Council.
13. The Review Plan also adds a biodiversity net gain target of at least 10% to policy CH CP2 - Protection of Habitats of Significance; and updates Policy CH H6 - Site Allocations, to differentiate between site allocations that have already been completed and those that are yet to be completed. The Review II plan seeks to maintain and enhance its green spaces and biodiversity. Whilst other minor modifications/updates are proposed to some of the existing supporting text, these are not substantial.
14. The Chinnor NDP Review II will continue to plan positively, with a wide

range of policies covering, for example: housing, a range of facilities, conservation areas and heritage assets, Local Green Spaces, sustainable homes and protection of habitats.

15. Policies in the Chinnor NDP Review II will continue to support sustainable appropriate development in the neighbourhood area, which will not adversely impact on the parish's character and heritage.
16. Overall, we note that the plan Review II does not allocate any new housing or employment sites for development, it updates its existing housing allocations policy to clearly differentiate between previously allocated sites that have already been completed and those yet to be completed and continues to place great emphasis on conserving the character and appearance of the area.
17. It is therefore concluded that the implementation of the Chinnor NDP Review II would not result in likely significant effects on the environment.

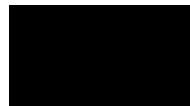
CONSULTATION RESPONSES

18. The screening opinion was sent to Natural England, the Environment Agency, Historic England and Oxfordshire County Council on 1 August 2023 for a four-week consultation period. The responses in full are presented in Appendix 4.
19. Historic England confirmed their agreement that the preparation of an SEA is not required.
20. Oxfordshire County Council confirmed they did not have any comments to make on the SEA Screening Opinion.
21. Natural England advised that, 'significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and significant effects on Habitats sites, either alone or in combination, are unlikely'. They also confirmed that 'the proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined'.
22. The Environment Agency did not provide comments on the SEA Screening Opinion.

CONCLUSION

23. As a result of the screening undertaken by the Council, the following determination has been reached:
24. The Chinnor NDP Review II is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Chinnor Neighbourhood Development Plan is not required.
25. Based on the assessment presented in Appendices 1 & 3, the Chinnor NDP Review II is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment.
26. The Chinnor NDP Review II does not require a Strategic Environment Assessment.

Authorised by: [REDACTED] - Head of Policy and Programmes



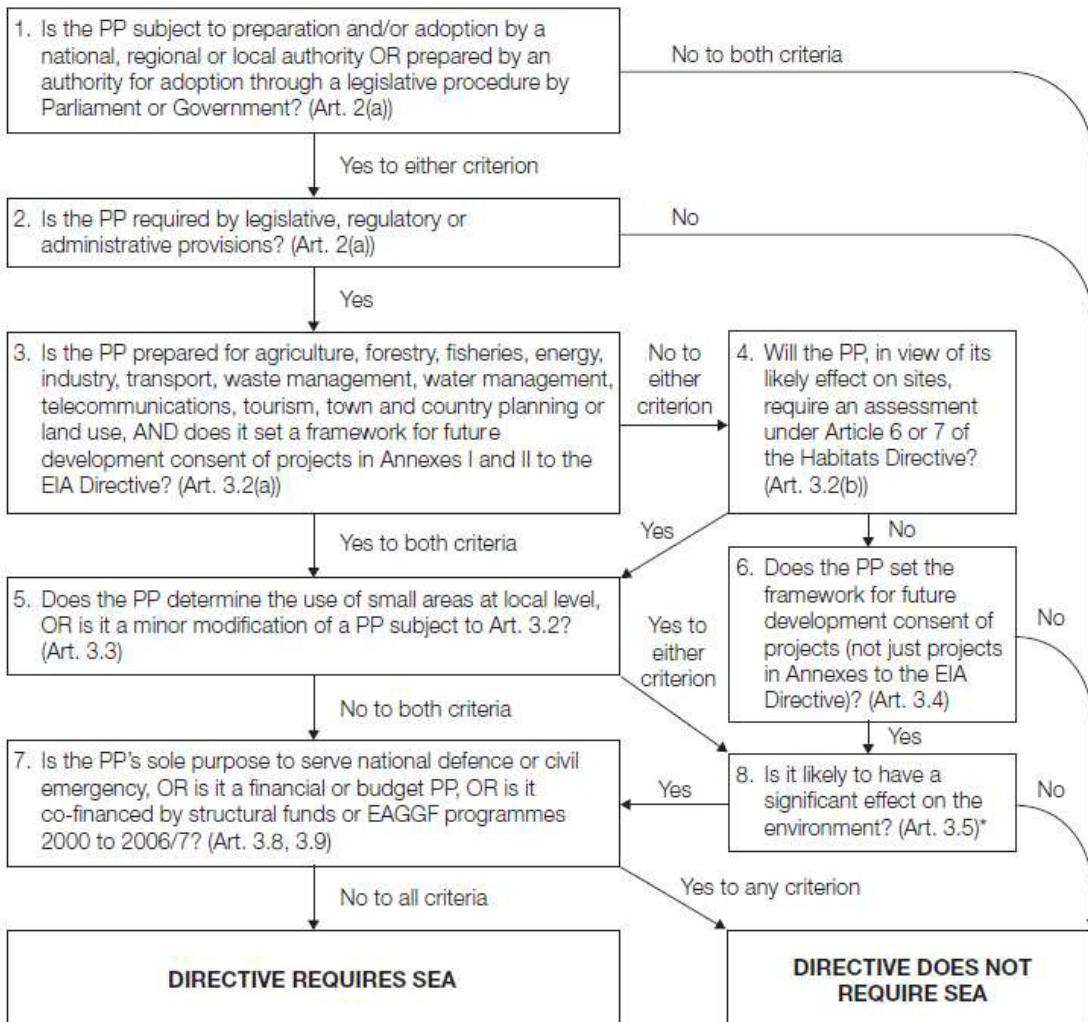
Signed:

Date: 8 September 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 II is being prepared by the Chinnor NDP Steering Group, a working group who report to Chinnor 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 Chinnor NDP Review II 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 Chinnor NDP Review II is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Chinnor NDP Review II 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 Chinnor NDP Review II 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 Chinnor NDP Review II 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.
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Appendix 2 - Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Chinnor Neighbourhood Development Plan Review II

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 II 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 Chinnor Neighbourhood Development Plan Review II 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 Chinnor's Neighbourhood Area and have been taken into consideration:

Chilterns Beechwoods SAC – within NDP area

6. The Chilterns Beechwoods SAC mainly runs adjacent to and also has a slight overlap with the south-west border of the NDP Area. This 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.
7. The HRA of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan confirms that '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'.
8. Individual stag beetles may travel outside of the SAC boundary, although it is unlikely that they will travel far – it is generally only the male stag beetles that flies during the summer months, and the females beetles rarely flies. Research suggests that 2km may be an appropriate buffer inside which sites could be functionally connected, as this is the distance that males travel to females during the breeding season.

Aston Rowant SAC – 3km

9. The HRA of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan confirms ‘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.
10. 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’.

ASSESSMENT

11. As required under Regulation 106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the ‘Habitats Regulations’), the qualifying body (Chinnor Parish Council) provided the required information to enable South Oxfordshire District Council to determine whether assessment under Regulation 105 is required. Consideration has been given to the potential for the proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan Review II to result in significant effects associated with:

Physical loss of/damage to habitat:

12. There is one European site (Chilterns Beechwoods SAC) within the Neighbourhood Plan Review II area, which runs adjacent to and has a slight overlap with the south-west border of the NDP Area. **Loss of habitat from within the boundaries of a European site can be ruled out in relation to the NDP Review**, as the Plan Review does not allocate any new development sites and the boundaries of the European site are also not within the Chinnor NDP development boundary, already designated in previous Chinnor NDPs.
13. 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 (the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC) has mobile species (stag beetle) amongst their qualifying features that could travel outside of the site to make use of other areas of habitat.

14. 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 2km may be an appropriate buffer inside which sites could be functionally connected, as this is the distance that males travel to females during the breeding season. Chilterns Beechwoods SAC is a composite of nine SSSIs and Bisham Woods SSSI, which is the part of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC that supports the qualifying stag beetle population, is greater than 2km from the District and NDP area 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

- 15.** The HRA (March 2019) of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 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.'
- 16. Though the Chilterns Beechwood SAC is within the designated neighbourhood area, the NDP Review II does not allocate any further housing or development than that already allocated in the adopted NDP. Therefore, effects in relation to noise, vibration and light pollution can be screened out of further assessment.**

Air pollution

- 17.** 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 (NOx, 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 NOx can cause eutrophication of soils and water.
- 18.** 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.

19. Two of the European sites stated in the HRA around South Oxfordshire that are within 200 metres of strategic roads are within 17km of Chinnor (Aston Rowant SAC (M40) and Chilterns Beechwoods SAC (A404, A4010)). **However, the NDP Review II does not allocate any new or additional residential, employment or infrastructure development than that allocated in the original NDP. Accordingly, effects in relation to air quality can be screened out.**

Increased recreational pressure

20. 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
21. 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 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.
22. Chinnor's NDP area is approximately 3km from Aston Rowant SAC, and the HRA confirms that 'the site's qualifying features are considered to be fairly resilient to recreation pressure, with changes to habitat management more likely to be an issue. Access to the site can be effectively managed as there are two relatively small car parks and only two main footpaths - there are no plans to increase parking capacity or change the access management policy'.
23. Part of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC is also within and also adjacent to the NDP area. The HRA confirms that '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

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 within South Oxfordshire, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects'.

- 24. As the Chinnor NDP Review II does not allocate any new or additional residential, employment or infrastructure development than that allocated in the original NDP, likely significant effects in relation to visitor pressure and the impacts of recreation can be ruled out.**

Changes to hydrological regimes

- 25. European sites at which aquatic or wetland environments support qualifying features have the potential to be affected by changes in water quantity or quality. However, Chinnor NDP area is not within 17km of any European sites with aquatic or wetland habitats, or those identified as sensitive to changes in water quality or quantity; 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

- 26. 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 Chinnor Neighbourhood Plan Review II. 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 26 of this assessment have considered how the Chinnor Neighbourhood Plan Review II is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites.**

- 27. With regard to the conclusions of paragraphs 4 to 26, it is considered that the Chinnor Neighbourhood Plan Review II, taking into account other relevant plans and projects, is not likely to give rise to significant in-combination effects.**

CONCLUSION

- 28. The Chinnor NDP Review II 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 Chinnor 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 Chinnor NDP Review II 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 II does not allocate any new/additional residential, employment or infrastructure development than that allocated in the current, adopted 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 Chinnor NDP Review II 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 Chinnor NDP Review II. A basic condition of the Chinnor NDP Review II is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. One of its policies, as well as two 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	<p>The environmental impact of the proposals within the Chinnor NDP Review II are unlikely to be significant due to the minor scale of new proposals. Policies in the plan 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> <p>Chinnor NDP contains the following environmental designations:</p>

- Ancient Woodland
- BAP Priority Areas
- Flood Zones
- Great Crested Newt distribution
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Protected Species Buffer
- Tree Preservation Orders

There are 2 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within 17km of the Chinnor Neighbourhood Development Plan Review II:

- Chilterns Beechwoods SAC - runs adjacent to and has a slight overlap with the south-west border of the Chinnor NDP Area.
- Aston Rowant SAC - approximately 3km.

There are also the following SSSIs located within the following distances of Chinnor Neighbourhood Development Plan:

- Chinnor Hill SSSI - within the NDP area.
- Chinnor Chalk Pit SSSI - within the NDP area.
- Aston Rowant Woods SSSI - runs adjacent to and has a slight overlap with the south-west border of the NP Area.
- Aston Rowant SSSI - approximately 3 km.
- Lodge Hill SSSI - approximately 3 km.
- Aston Rowant Cutting SSSI - approximately 3 km.
- Wormsley Chalk Banks SSSI - approximately 4 km.
- Shirburn Hill SSSI - approximately 5 km.

The NDP Review II proposes to introduce one new policy (CH E1 - Education Facilities) to support the expansion of existing schools/pre-schools or development of new schools/pre-schools. It proposes to add one additional Local Green Space (Mill Lane Community Garden) and proposes four areas/buildings as additional Community

	<p>Facilities (Millie's Deli; Pound Garden and War Memorial; Buds that Blossom Nursery; and Parade of Shops on Middle Way). The NDP vision and some of its objectives have been reworded (with overall consistent themes but with added clarity and context). It also proposes one new Objective (8), centred around the natural environment and protecting it; and updates its 'Action Points' for Chinnor Parish Council.</p> <p>The Review Plan also adds a biodiversity net gain target of at least 10% to policy CH CP2 - Protection of Habitats of Significance; and updates Policy CH H6 - Site Allocations, to differentiate between previously allocated sites that have already been completed and previously allocated sites yet to be completed. The Review II plan seeks to maintain and enhance its green spaces and biodiversity. Whilst other minor modifications/updates are proposed to some of the existing supporting text, these are not substantial.</p> <p>The NDP Review II does not allocate any new or additional residential, employment or infrastructure development than that allocated in the current, adopted NDP.</p> <p>We are of the opinion the minor NDP Review II proposals are unlikely to harm the designations listed above and that there would not be likely significant effects to the environment.</p>
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The proposed development in the Chinnor NDP Review II has been judged not to have an impact on Community legislation.
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:	
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	The Chinnor NDP Review II is likely to have modest but enduring positive environmental effects. The effects are not likely to be reversible, where they relate to development.

	<p>However, the proposals are minor and will be of a local scale.</p> <p>Please see 1(d) for a description of all NDP Review II proposals.</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 Review II reinforce the protection offered to Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and the AONB. No additional development is proposed near sensitive locations that would cause likely significant effects and 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 further Community Facilities, in its Policy CH CF1.</p>
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	<p>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.</p>
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects;	<p>The effects of the plan are unlikely to have transboundary⁵ impacts.</p>
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	<p>The policies in the plan are unlikely to present risks to human health or the environment.</p>
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	<p>The NDP Review II relates to the parish of Chinnor, which is part of the Chilterns AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). The NDP Review II proposals continue to ensure that effects on the intrinsic character and heritage of Chinnor, its surrounding countryside and its setting with the AONB are minimised; and the Review II does not allocate any new/additional sites. The potential for environmental effects is also likely to be small and localised.</p>

⁵ 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use; and 	<p>The Chinnor NDP Review II area contains the following special natural characteristics and cultural heritage elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeological Constraints • AONB (Chilterns) • Conservation Area • Listed Buildings • Local Heritage Assets • Scheduled Ancient Monuments • Tree Preservation Orders <p>There are also 2 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within 17km of the Chinnor Neighbourhood Development Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chilterns Beechwoods SAC - runs adjacent to and has a slight overlap with the south-west border of the Chinnor NDP Area. • Aston Rowant SAC - approximately 3km. <p>Detail on each Special Area of Conservation's features, objectives, pressures, and threats related to development can be found in Appendix 1 of South Oxfordshire Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment Report (December 2018), and in Appendix 2 of this report. We have already set out Appendix 2 that the Chinnor 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 Chinnor NDP Review II is not required.</p> <p>There are also the following SSSIs located within the following distances of Chinnor Neighbourhood Development Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinnor Hill SSSI - within the NDP area. • Chinnor Chalk Pit SSSI - within the NDP area. • Aston Rowant Woods SSSI - runs adjacent to and has a slight overlap
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	<p>with the south-west border of the NP Area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aston Rowant SSSI - approximately 3 km. • Lodge Hill SSSI - approximately 3 km. • Aston Rowant Cutting SSSI - approximately 3 km. • Wormsley Chalk Banks SSSI - approximately 4 km. • Shirburn Hill SSSI - approximately 5 km. <p>The Chinnor NDP Review II offers an opportunity to enhance the natural environment and the cultural heritage of the area through the proposals being considered.</p> <p>Given the NDP Review II is not allocating any additional development to that in the current NDP, we are of the opinion that the Neighbourhood Plan Review II is unlikely to result in significant effects on the nearby SSSIs. It also does not propose any development that is likely to harm the other designations listed above, as the plan seeks to conserve the village, its character and setting; and its policies require such designations to be protected. Therefore, there would not be likely significant effects to the environment.</p> <p>The NDP Review II encourages new development to protect habitats. The NDP Review II proposals continue to ensure that effects on the intrinsic character and heritage of Chinnor, its surrounding countryside and its setting with the AONB are minimised. They also set out how the plan will enhance Chinnor's natural environment and biodiversity. Taking into consideration the proposals in the NDP Review II, 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 Chinnor NDP Review II is unlikely to have significant</p>
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	<p>effects on Natura 2000 sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects; therefore, an Appropriate Assessment of the Chinnor NDP Review II is not required.</p> <p>A vulnerability faced by the parish is the impact of householder and small scale developments within the built-up area on the character and appearance of the listed 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 plan is considered to have a neutral effect on cultural heritage because there is no indication given in the NDP Review II 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 II are not likely to be significant.</p> <p>Environmental quality standards or limit values are not considered likely to be significantly affected by the Chinnor NDP Review II.</p> <p>In light of the minor proposals in the Chinnor NDP Review II, 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>The area covered by the Chinnor NDP Review II includes part of the Chilterns AONB, recognised to contain some of the finest landscapes in England.</p> <p>The importance of the AONB is already recognised in the existing NDP. The plan Review II continues the aim to 'safeguard the intrinsic character and heritage of Chinnor, its surrounding countryside and its setting adjacent to the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. Therefore, in light of the minor additional proposals in the Chinnor NDP Review II, the plan is not likely to cause significant effects on the AONB.</p>

Appendix 4 – Statutory Consultee Responses

NATURAL ENGLAND

Date: 29 August 2023

Our ref: 444155

Your ref: Chinnor Neighbourhood Plan

[REDACTED]
Vale of White Horse & South Oxfordshire District Councils
BY EMAIL ONLY

[REDACTED] @southandvale.gov.uk

Dear [REDACTED]

Chinnor Neighbourhood Plan Review II SEA/HRA Screening Opinion

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 01 August 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.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:

- **significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,**
- **significant effects on Habitats sites¹, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.**

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

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 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 an SEA. Further information 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 an SEA. 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 an SEA 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 a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Consultations Team

¹ Habitats sites are those referred to in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (Annex 2 - glossary) as "any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites".

HISTORIC ENGLAND

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

Our ref: PL00793722

Your ref: Chinnor Neighbourhood Plan Review II SEA

Main: 020 7973 3700

e-seast@historicengland.org.uk

[REDACTED] @historicengland.org.uk

Date: 30/08/2023

Dear Sir or Madam

Chinnor Neighbourhood Plan Review II 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 Chinnor Neighbourhood Plan Review II) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied.

There are a number of designated heritage assets within the area; the information supplied however 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 additional 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

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

From: [REDACTED] - Oxfordshire County Council
<[REDACTED]@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 23 August 2023 15:43
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Chinnor Neighbourhood Plan Review II SEA/HRA Screening Opinion

Good Afternoon,

Thank you for your email. OCC do not have any comments to make on the draft SEA and HRA Screening Opinion for the Chinnor Neighbourhood Plan Review II. We will submit our comments to the pre-submission neighbourhood plan for Chinnor to the Parish Council.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]
Planner
Strategic Planning

[REDACTED] | Oxfordshire.gov.uk