



Wexham Neighbourhood Plan– Scope

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening

Final Screening Outcome

November 2024

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1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

Introduction

1.1 Summary

As a result of the assessment in section 3, it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the draft NDP. As such, it does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.

This conclusion has been sent to the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England for consultation.

1.2 SEA Background

This screening report is designed to determine whether or not the content of the draft Wexham Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

It is the responsibility of the local planning authority, Buckinghamshire Council (BC), to determine if the Directive is engaged by the provisions of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is then the responsibility of the Wexham Parish Council (WPC) as the 'qualifying body' that is bringing forward a plan proposal, to undertake the SEA and to prepare an 'environmental report' if required. This screening opinion has been prepared by Alison Eardley, professional planning consultant, as agreed with BC and the WPC.

The screening process is based upon consideration of standard criteria to determine whether the plan is likely to have "significant environmental effects". The result of the process is detailed in this Screening Opinion.

The legislative background (Section 1.2) outlines the regulations that require the need for this screening exercise. Section 2 provides a screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the emerging WNP Plan to establish whether there is a need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The main consideration as to whether an SEA is required on a Neighbourhood Plan is if it is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. Neighbourhood Plans containing land allocations for development that are not included in the local authority's plan, are likely to require SEA. Neighbourhood Plans which do not contain such allocations (or simply reflect allocations already identified as part of a local authority plan) are less likely to require SEA.

The purpose of the WNP is to establish a planning framework for the development and use of land within the parish of Wexham. The WNP will cover the whole of the Wexham Parish. **There are no site allocations within the neighbourhood plan.**

The neighbourhood area was designated by BC on 12 September 2023. A working version of the draft Neighbourhood Plan has informed the informal screening opinion.

In general terms, the WNP seeks to guide the principles for the use of land for housing and other development whilst safeguarding and improving valued features of the local environment.

The WNP covers the period 2024 to 2040 and the vision statement is as follows:

Wexham Parish, and the individual settlements within it, will retain its rural character and community spirit. Any new development will be directed to the most sustainable parts of the parish and its design will respect the natural environment and our heritage whilst meeting the needs of all age groups in the community.

We will strive to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the parish, notably Langley and Black County Parks. We will support opportunities that enable our residents and visitors to access our natural spaces more easily, such as through a heritage trail and information boards.

Community facilities such as Harvey Memorial Hall (the village hall) and the St Mary's Church and Hall will remain focal points for the community and they will, where possible, be improved to become more attractive to residents. New facilities will be supported to meet our community needs.

The following objectives have been identified to deliver the vision:

Objective 1: To safeguard the rural character of the parish. This includes improving access to our Country Parks, protecting the Green Belt, safeguarding the important views into and out of the villages and across the wider landscape and protecting trees, hedgerows and ponds.

Objective 2: To preserve and celebrate our built heritage and the identities of the individual settlements. All new development must be carefully and sustainably designed to enhance what exists already. The merging of the villages and neighbouring settlements—for instance Slough—will be guarded against.

Objective 3: To support the diversity of wildlife and habitats that is found here, including within the two Country Parks.

Objective 4: To protect our local facilities and look at ways to improve them or provide new ones as needed.

Objective 5: To support limited housing growth that helps to meet the needs of residents in terms of size, tenure (to buy/to rent) and affordability of homes.

Objective 6: To improve and better connect our network of footpaths, cycle ways and bridleways so that people can access local and nearby facilities and the country parks more easily. We also lobby for funds and projects that help to alleviate traffic-related concerns locally.

1.3 Legislative Background

The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Detailed Guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication '[A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive](#)' (ODPM 2005).

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Sustainability Appraisals (SA) to be produced for all Local Development Documents to meet the requirement of the EU Directive on SEA. It is considered best practice to incorporate requirements of the SEA Directive into an SA.

Although an SA cannot be made a requirement of a Neighbourhood Plan, one of the 'Basic Conditions' on which the plan is examined, is that the plan "contributes to the achievement of sustainable development". The SA process is an established method and a well- recognised 'best practice' method for doing this. It may therefore be advised, where an SEA is identified as a requirement, an SA should be incorporated with an SEA, at a level of detail that is proportionate to the content of the Neighbourhood Plan.

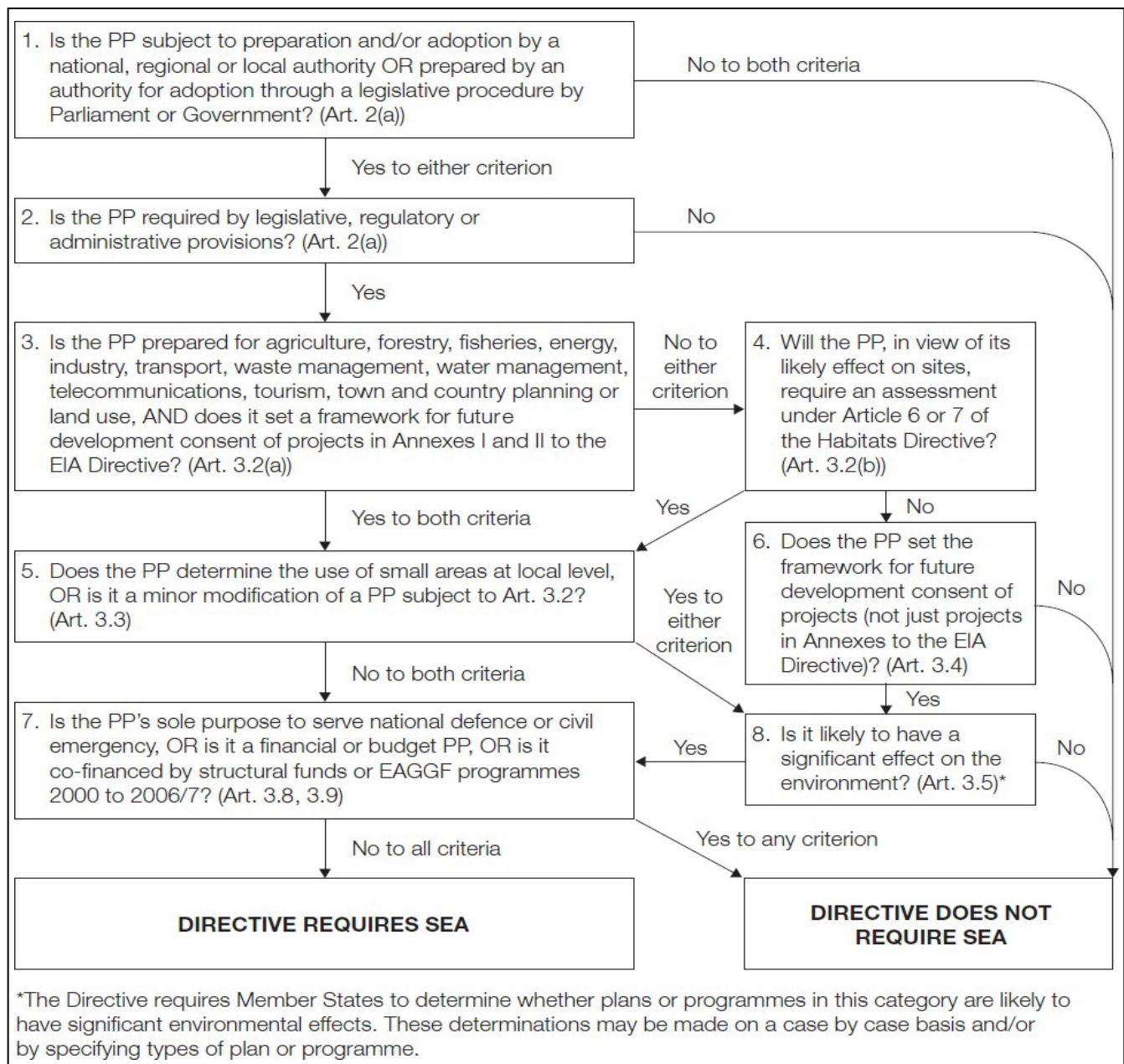
2 Strategic Environmental Assessment

2.1 Overview

The diagram below illustrates the process for screening a planning document to ascertain whether a full SEA is required.

The ODPM publication “A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive” (2005) sets out the approach to be taken in order to determine whether SEA is required.

Figure 1: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes (from “A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive”)



This assessment is therefore split into two parts. Part 1 runs the draft WNP through the questions outlined in the diagram above and includes commentary on whether the need for SEA is triggered.

Part 2 further assesses stage 8, on whether there is a likely significant impact. The screening opinion takes a 'precautionary approach' and when it is unclear as to how the Directive may be applied it is assumed that there are possible likely significant effects.

The three statutory consultation bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England), as well as Bucks Council, will be consulted to determine whether they agree with the conclusion of the informal screening opinion, in establishing whether the WNP requires an SEA and whether it may have a 'significant environmental effect'. The diagram below illustrates the process for screening a planning document to ascertain whether a full SEA is required

2.2 Part 1 - Application of the Directive to the draft NDP

Summary of the Neighbourhood Plan	
Name of the Plan	The Wexham Neighbourhood Plan
Geographic coverage of the Plan	The Parish of Wexham
Key topics/scope of the Plan	To retain and enhance the unique character of each settlement within the Parish whilst setting out the criteria against which sustainable growth may be supported. Identifying the environmental assets in the area to safeguard these against loss and better connect them where feasible. To
<p>Key issues / policies</p> <p>Policy W1: Sustainable development: This policy that will set out where development would be appropriate and how it can be delivered in the most sustainable way in the parish by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seeking to retain Green Belt. The Government consultation on national policy may introduce 'Grey Belt', for instance former quarry sites. The policy seeks to ensure that any such sites are carefully planned and managed. ▪ Directing development near to existing facilities. ▪ Restricting development that would link up the individual settlements in the parish and also to restrict further merging with Slough. 	

- Supporting the redevelopment of brownfield sites.
 - Supporting mixed uses.
 - Ensuring that development is well-connected to the public rights of way network
- Ensuring that the amount of development does not put an unacceptable strain on infrastructure capacity

Policy W2: Meeting Local Housing Needs: The WNP is not allocating sites for housing or other development. Where housing is brought forward (for instance via the Local Plan or windfall), this policy will ensure that any new housing meets the needs of our community. It will be underpinned by a Local Housing Needs Assessment:

- More smaller (in terms of number of bedrooms) homes suited to the needs of those wishing to downsize and also those looking to buy or rent their first home.
- More affordable homes, particularly to rent.
- Homes that are designed to meet the changing needs of individuals as they progress through the different stages of life.
- Supporting self- and custom-build homes.
- Housing for those wishing to downsize.
- Housing that is accessible and adaptable.

Policy W3: Design and Character of development: The policy will ensure that any new development contributes positively to local character and is designed according to the Wexham Design Guidance being prepared.

Policy W4: Energy Efficiency and Design: This policy seeks to ensure that development meets the highest environmental standards in terms of its construction, materials and energy use. This will help to mitigate against climate change and contribute to achieving the national target of zero net carbon by 2050.

- following basic passive environmental design including use of efficient and insulative materials.
- integrating renewable energy systems into new development, including existing and new public buildings.
- reducing water consumption including through recycling 'greywater'.
- supporting community-scale energy schemes.
- promoting sustainable forms of transport through priority systems for pedestrians and cyclists.

Policy W5: Local heritage: The policy identifies non-designated heritage assets to be considered for their historic/architectural value in planning terms.

Policy W6: Landscape and biodiversity: The policy will support wildlife and biodiversity locally. It

will map out the green spaces, corridors and areas of water/ponds/streams that provide important habitats for a range of species. The policy will:

- Safeguard natural features that are typical of our parish and encourage new development to incorporate such features.
- Protect our woodland, trees and hedgerows and find ways to extend and better connect these.
- Prioritise the planting of native species.
- Support the inclusion of 'wildlife friendly features' in developments, such as bird and bat boxes and hedgehog fencing.
- Encourage access to open space for our residents and visitors.

Policy W7: Local Green Space – The policy seeks to designate a number of Local Green Spaces in the parish

Policy W8: Locally significant views – The policy identifies three particularly important views in the parish that should be protected from development.

Policy W9: Dark Skies – The policy seeks to restrict the impact of light pollution, especially on the darker parts of the parish.

Policy W10: Getting around – The policy supports opportunities to enhance walking and cycling locally (and equestrian) in order to reduce reliance on the car at least for shorter journeys.

Policy W11: Public parking – The policy will seek to safeguard parking that exists, support the provision of secure cycle parking and explore ways to improve public parking for the country parks and local amenities including the schools.

Policy W12: Local facilities – The policy seeks to safeguard existing facilities and provides detail as to additional facilities that would be supported should the opportunity arise, perhaps through a strategic allocation, to deliver these.

Table 1. Establishing the need for SEA by following the flowchart in Figure 1.

Stage	Y/N	Justification
1) Is the PP (plan or programme) 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 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) makes provisions for the preparation and adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by the Parish Council (as the ‘qualifying body’) and will be ‘made’ by Bucks Council (as the Local Planning Authority) following a successful referendum as set out by the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulation 2012 (as amended).</p> <p>GO TO STAGE 2</p>
2) Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	N	<p>As per the Town and County Planning Act 1990 (as amended) Neighbourhood Plans are not mandatory and there is no obligation on the Parish Council to bring forward a plan proposal.</p> <p>GO TO STAGE 3</p>
3) Is the PP 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 to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	N/A	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared for town and country and land use planning purposes, but it does not set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive (Art 3.2(a)) therefore:</p> <p>NOT APPLICABLE</p>

Stage	Y/N	Justification
4) Will the PP, in view of its likely effects on sites require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2(b))	N	<p>The neighbourhood plan area does not include any Natura 2000 sites (Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas).</p> <p>The Parish falls within the 5.6km Zone of Influence for the Burcham Beechams SAC, but the WNP is not allocating sites for development and none of the policies are considered to impact on the SAC or other designated sites. It is unlikely therefore to require an HRA.</p>
5) Does the PP 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)	N	<p>The existing strategic planning context and the absence of a true indicative housing number means that it will be difficult for this Neighbourhood Plan to effectively anticipate its quantum of housing growth.</p> <p>In addition to this, there are no provisions for Neighbourhood Plans to make detailed amendments to Green Belt boundaries in this location at this time (as per paragraph 145 of the NPPF).</p> <p>The BC new Local Plan is at a very early stage.</p> <p>The WNP focusses therefore on setting out key principles by which any future development should be considered against. It also seeks to designate Local Green Spaces though they would not change the current use of open land.</p> <p>GO TO STAGE 8</p>
6) Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)		NOT APPLICABLE

Stage	Y/N	Justification
7) Is the PP'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)		NOT APPLICABLE
8) Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	It is anticipated that there will be no likely significant effects on the environment. SEE TABLE 2

2.3 Part 2 – Likely significant effects on the environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below, together with a commentary on whether the draft NDP would trigger the need for a full assessment.

Table 2. Assessing Likely Significant Effects (LSE) for the characteristics of plans and programmes, with particular regard to the following criteria.

SEA Directive Criteria	LSE	Reason
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	N	The Neighbourhood Plan will, if 'made', form part of the statutory development plan. As such, it will contribute to the framework for development consents of projects. The WNP does not allocate any specific development sites.
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	N	The Neighbourhood Plan, where possible, will respond to, but is unlikely to influence, other plans or programmes beyond the designated Area. A Neighbourhood Plan can only contain non-strategic policies for its Area, and it must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the South Bucks District Local Plan adopted in March 1999 and the South Bucks Core Strategy adopted February 2011 and have regard to national policies and advice. None of the policies in the WNP are likely to have a direct impact on other plans in neighbouring areas but may have a limited influence over the formation of future strategic policies.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	N	The WNP recognises the importance of the environment and the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure and built heritage within the neighbourhood area. It is considered that the WNP will have a positive impact on built and natural

SEA Directive Criteria	LSE	Reason
		environment locally, which is reflected in the scope of the plan and key policies.
Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	N	There are no specific environmental problems relevant to the WNP. Impacts upon environmental aspects such as flood risk, ecology and landscape, have been considered and no negative outcomes are predicted.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	N	The WDP will not affect implementation of European Community environmental legislation (or those now transcribed in UK law).

Table 3. Assessing Likely Significant Effects (LSE) for the characteristics of the effects and the area likely to be affected, with particular regard to the following criteria.

SEA Directive Criteria	LSE	Reason
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	N	The NDP does not allocate land for development. It sets out where any development would be most appropriate and the overarching principles that should be considered to ensure that it is sustainable. It is therefore unlikely that there will be irreversible damaging environmental impacts that will arise from the provisions of the WNP.
The cumulative nature of the effects	N	Significant effects are considered unlikely as the WNP is not allocating sites. Negative cumulative effects from the WNP are not predicted.
The transboundary nature of the effects	N	There are no transboundary effects of the WNP with other European states
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g.	N	The WNP does not create any significant risks to human health nor the environment.

SEA Directive Criteria	LSE	Reason
due to accidents).		
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	N	The WNP covers the Parish of Wexham which contains a number of small settlements. The population is circa 2,500 people (2021 census). Significant effects are not predicted across or outside of this geographical area.
<p>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, iii. intensive land-use 	N	<p>The parish is currently washed over by Green Belt. There is one designated Country Park and another Country Park (both managed by BC) in the parish. There is an SSSI and some areas of ancient woodland. From a built heritage perspective, to the north-west, part of the Framewood Road, Wexham Conservation Area falls in the parish. There are numerous nationally listed buildings.</p> <p>Environmental protection is one of the main policy themes of the WNP. The WNP will provide greater policy support to sustain and enhance cultural, heritage and green infrastructure assets. It will also include policies to manage the design of new development coming forward within the area which will help protect the character of the settlements.</p> <p>The NDP is not predicted to exceed standards or environmental limits.</p> <p>The NDP seeks to make efficient use of land by directing development to land within the limits to built development thus more likely to be in-fill plots and previously developed land.</p>

SEA Directive Criteria	LSE	Reason
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	N	<p>The parish lies within the Colne Valley Regional Park. There is one SSSI (within Black Park) in the Parish, and parts of the Parish fall within SSSI Impact Risk Zones from SSSI's in adjoining areas. There is one Conservation Area, Framewood Wood, Wexham, that falls partially in the Parish.</p> <p>As the WNP does not propose to allocate any development, it is unlikely to have any significant effects. Indeed the policies seeks to safeguard and protect natural and built environmental assets.</p>
Part 2 Overall Conclusion		The Wexham Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment.

2.4 SEA Screening Outcome

As a result of the assessment in section 3, it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the draft NDP.

As such, it does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.

This conclusion has been sent to the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England for consultation.

3 Habitat Regulations Assessment Introduction

3.1 Summary

This screening opinion has been prepared by Alison Eardley, professional planning consultant, as agreed with BC and the WPC. It draws on the findings of the [Buckinghamshire Council HRA Scoping Report](#), published in March 2023 and considers the potential impacts of the emerging policies of the Wexham Neighbourhood Plan.

As a result of the assessment in Section 3, it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Wexham Neighbourhood Plan.

As such, the 'appropriate assessment' stage of the HRA process that ascertains the effect on integrity of the European Site) does not need to be undertaken.

This conclusion has been sent to Natural England for consideration.

3.2 HRA Background

This Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report concerns the Wexham Neighbourhood Plan (WNP), which has been produced by Wexham Parish Council (WPC) in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

The WNP covers the period 2024 to 2040 and the vision statement is as follows:

Wexham Parish, and the individual settlements within it, will retain its rural character and community spirit. Any new development will be directed to the most sustainable parts of the parish and its design will respect the natural environment and our heritage whilst meeting the needs of all age groups in the community.

We will strive to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the parish, notably Langley and Black County Parks. We will support opportunities that enable our residents and visitors to access our natural spaces more easily, such as through a heritage trail and information boards.

Community facilities such as Harvey Memorial Hall (the village hall) and the St Mary's Church and Hall will remain focal points for the community and they will, where possible, be improved to become more attractive to residents. New facilities will be supported to meet our community needs.

The following objectives have been identified to deliver the vision:

Objective 1: To safeguard the rural character of the parish. This includes improving access to our

Country Parks, protecting the Green Belt, safeguarding the important views into and out of the villages and across the wider landscape and protecting trees, hedgerows and ponds.

Objective 2: To preserve and celebrate our built heritage and the identities of the individual settlements. All new development must be carefully and sustainably designed to enhance what exists already. The merging of the villages and neighbouring settlements—for instance Slough—will be guarded against.

Objective 3: To support the diversity of wildlife and habitats that is found here, including within the two Country Parks.

Objective 4: To protect our local facilities and look at ways to improve them or provide new ones as needed.

Objective 5: To support limited housing growth that helps to meet the needs of residents in terms of size, tenure (to buy/to rent) and affordability of homes.

Objective 6: To improve and better connect our network of footpaths, cycle ways and bridleways so that people can access local and nearby facilities and the country parks more easily. We also lobby for funds and projects that help to alleviate traffic-related concerns locally.

The aim of this HRA screening report is to assess whether this Neighbourhood Plan would, alone or in combination with other adopted plans and policies, cause any likely significant effects on European sites.

3.3 Legislative and Guidance

The Natura 2000 network consists of sites across Europe designated for their nature conservation importance. The Network is formed of Special Areas of Conservation for species, plants and habitats and Special Protection Areas for bird species.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are designated under the European Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the ‘Habitats Directive’). Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are classified under the European Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (the ‘Birds Directive’).

To help protect the Natura 2000 network, there are particular requirements for plans and projects. Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states:

‘Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the 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’.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the ‘Habitats Regulations’), the UK’s transposition of the Habitats Directive and Regulation 102, provides:

‘(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’.

This means that any proposed plan that may affect a European site (Special Area of Conservation or Special Protection Area) must first undergo an assessment to look at its potential impacts applying the precautionary principle. The assessment determines if the plan is likely to adversely affect the integrity of the European site(s) concerned. This process is known as a Habitats Regulations Assessment and the first stage considers any likely significant effects (the screening stage). Following the 2018 *People over Wind* ruling, mitigation measures cannot be applied at the screening stage in order to rule out likely significant effects and thus prevent the plan progressing to the second stage (appropriate assessment).

Where likely significant effects are identified at the screening stage, the second stage of the HRA process is triggered. The appropriate assessment looks at the implications of a plan for a European site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. Furthermore, mitigation measures may be introduced at the appropriate assessment stage to avoid or reduce the effects of a plan on the European site(s). Before a plan may be given effect, the plan-making authority as competent authority must ascertain that it would not adversely affect the integrity of the European site(s).

In terms of neighbourhood plans, the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 require a submitted neighbourhood plan to include a statement explaining how the proposed neighbourhood development plan meets the basic conditions set out in paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990³. One of these basic conditions is that the neighbourhood plan must be compatible with EU obligations and needs to demonstrate that it is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

4 Relevant designated sites

4.1 Sites relevant to Wexham Parish

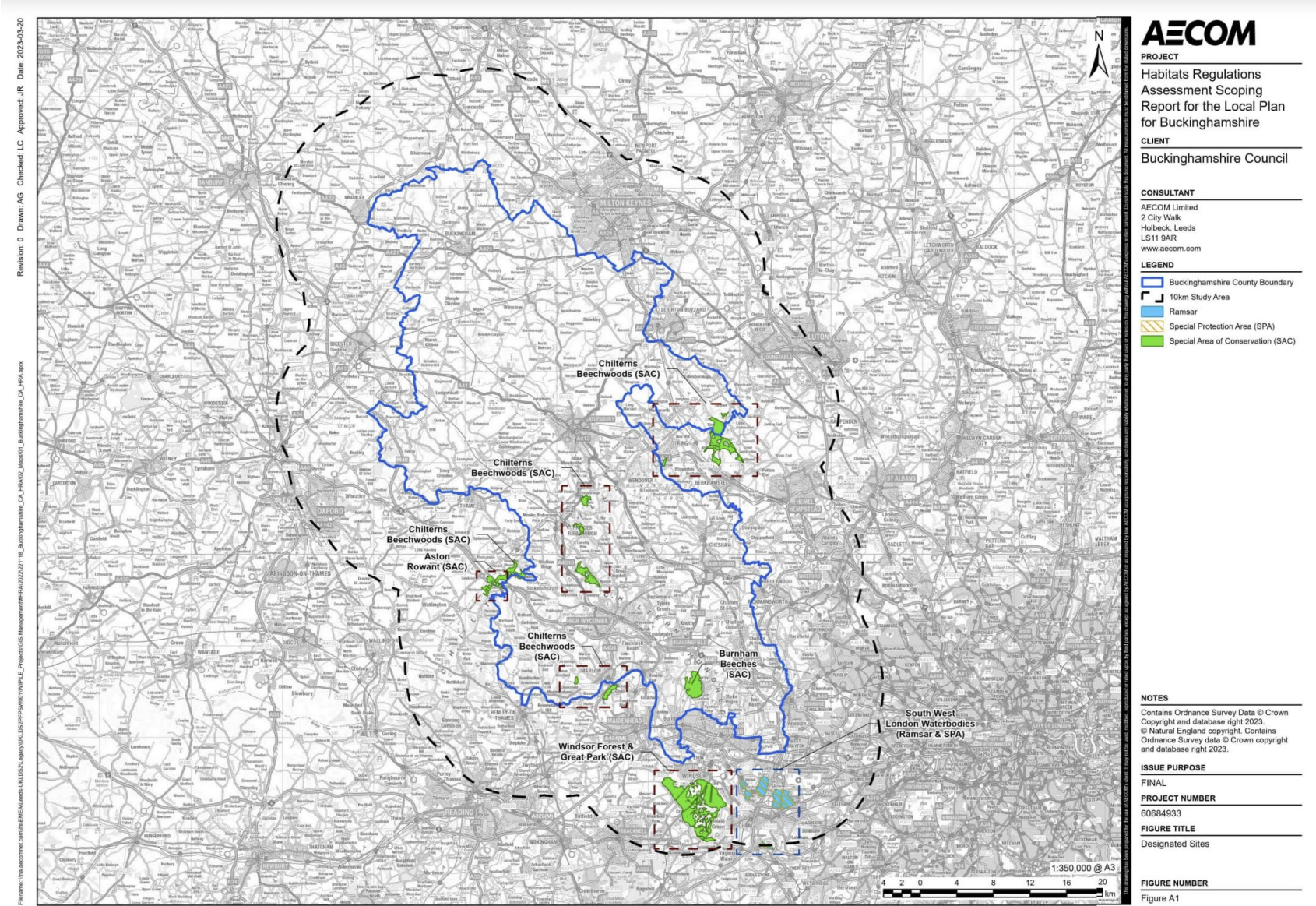
Buckinghamshire Council (BC) have prepared, for their emerging Local Plan, an HRA Scoping Report, which identifies the following internationally designated sites of relevance to the county as a whole. These are either located in or within a 10km boundary of Buckinghamshire. See Figure 1 for a map.

Internationally Designated Site	Location
Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	This SAC is fragmented, consisting of Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI, Aston Rowant Woods SSSI, Bisham Woods SSSI, Bradenham Woods, Park Wood & The Coppice SSSI, Ellesborough and Kimble Warrens SSSI, Hollowhill and Pullingshill Woods SSSI, Naphill Common SSSI, Tring Woodlands SSSI and Windsor Hill SSSI. Most fragments are in Buckinghamshire, although the largest fragment (Ashridge Commons and Woods) is split between Buckinghamshire and Dacorum.
Aston Rowant SAC	Located partly within the BC boundary. Located on the south-west of the authority border approximately half the SAC is within the authoritative boundary.
Burnham Beeches SAC	Located within the BC boundary.
Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC	Located 2 km south of BC boundary.
South West London Waterbodies SPA	Main body located 2.5 km south of the BC authority. This site is fragmented into nine areas.
South West London Waterbodies Ramsar	Main body located 2.5 km south of the BC authority. This site is fragmented into nine areas.

The two sites of relevance to Wexham are:

- Burcham Beeches SAC: Much of the Parish lies within the 5.6km Zone of influence of Burnham Beeches SAC.
- Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC lies approximately 2km from the BC boundary and approximately 5km from the southern part of the parish.

Figure 2: Internationally designated sites of relevance to Buckinghamshire (source: BC HRA Scoping Report, 2023)



4.2 Burnham Beeches SAC

Due to significant adverse public access and disturbance impacts from development on Burnham Beeches SAC, a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been developed, which sets out a mitigation strategy to avoid further impact.

It includes two zones: a 500m buffer which prevents residential development, and a 5.6km Zone of Influence which requires any net new homes within this boundary zone of the SAC will need to mitigate the likely effects of the development.

Much of Wexham Parish falls within the 5.6km zone of influence (Figure 2).

The [HRA Scoping Report prepared for BC](#) states, in relation to the emerging Local Plan:

Burnham Beeches SAC lies entirely within BC boundary, specifically within the existing Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils Local Plan area. Neighbouring local authorities include Slough Borough Council, Wycombe District Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

A report, commissioned from Footprint Ecology, provides conclusions on the Impacts of Urban Development at Burnham Beeches SAC. To date there have been a number of further surveys including visitor studies, work summarising the pressures from local housing, and work summarising management of recreation at Burnham Beeches. Recreational pressure as an impact pathway of likely significance from increasing levels of urban development are varied and have long been a concern. Growing levels of urban development will increase these recreational pressures and mean increasing challenges to maintain the conservation interest of what is a relatively small, isolated and vulnerable SAC.

Due to the differing local plan timescales, a strategic over-arching approach to the Burnham Beeches SAC Mitigation Strategy has not been pursued. Each planning authority is developing its own independent mitigation strategy aided by strategic guidance from Natural England. Taken together, these mitigation strategies will seek to avoid adverse impacts on site integrity at Burnham Beeches SAC as a result of increased public access and disturbance. The published Buckinghamshire mitigation strategy is intended to address the requirement to avoid, or mitigate, adverse impacts on the integrity of Burnham Beeches SAC from local plan led development as originally set out in the (now withdrawn) Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan. The strategy seeks to provide mitigation for the duration of the impact (in perpetuity, taken as 80 years). Throughout this period, regular strategic reviews will take place every five years, or more frequently if changes to legislation, housing numbers within a defined zone of influence or evidence necessitate.

The Burnham Beeches SAC Mitigation Strategy originally developed for the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan is comprised of two components: Presumption against development with 500m of Burnham Beeches SAC; and financial contributions from all net new development within a defined zone of influence (500m – 5.6km) towards a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) at Burnham Beeches SAC.

New housing that is directly adjacent to the SAC will pose particular risks and recreational use of Burnham Beeches is particularly high from those who live in close proximity to the SAC. Recreational pressure should be scoped into any further HRA reporting and should be strongly considered as part of the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire (LPFB).

In addition to the emerging recreation mitigation strategy, Wallingford HydroSolutions (WHS) produced the Burnham Beeches Hydrology study. The study investigates the hydrological functioning of the Burnham Beeches SAC and evaluates the sensitivity of the site to the potential hydrological impacts associated with development within the catchments for streams draining into the Beeches. There is potential for such developments to have an adverse impact on the qualifying interests within the Beeches SAC through reductions in water quantity and quality. As a result of the likely significant impact of development within 500m of the SAC, South Bucks District Council referred all developments within the 500m exclusion zone discussed above to the City of London (as site owners) and Natural England for their comments, although this has since been refined to net new development within the four stream catchments feeding the SAC.

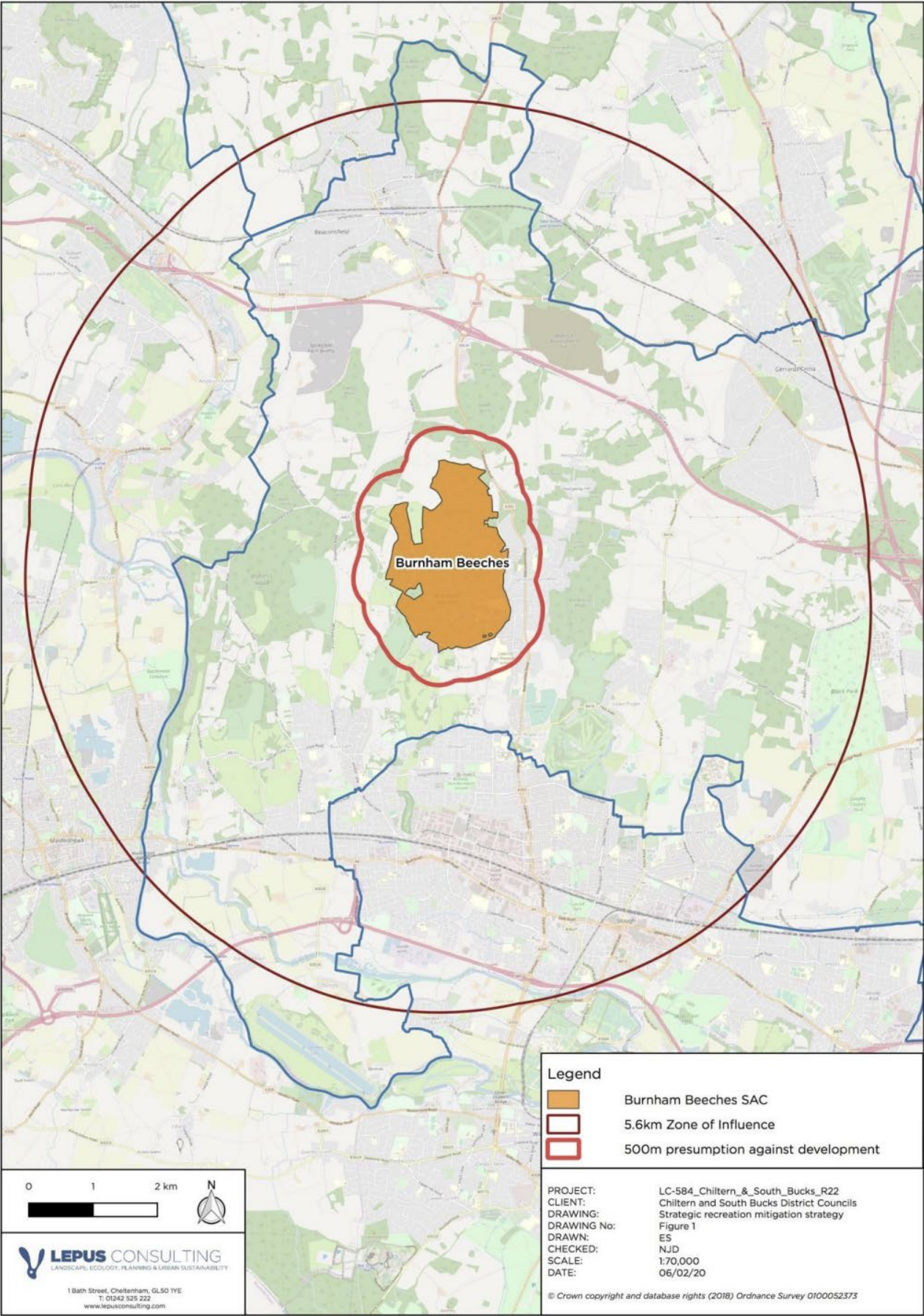
The potential hydrological effects of urbanisation within the streams draining into Burnham Beeches are associated within the alteration of water balance and reduced water quality. These potential impacts, including alteration of water balance and reduced water quality. A small proportion of the designated features, the beech trees, are situated within close proximity to the stream network and hence sensitive to changes in water balance and water quality. The report includes guidance for prospective developers, guidance on surface water management and construction best practice, as well as detailed investigations into how urbanisation will alter runoff.

From this the hydrological study, South Buckinghamshire District Council produced the Development Management Guidance Note: Hydrology in Burnham Beeches.

The purpose of this guidance is to take on the advice of the WHS report and ensure that future development does not result in further reductions in natural runoff within the catchments draining to the SAC and that the water quality of that runoff is not reduced.

The overall aim of the aforementioned reports is to minimise or negate any adverse impacts to the SAC arising from alterations to the hydrology caused by new development and help maintain the natural hydrological functioning within the Burnham Beeches SAC. Hydrological impacts should be scoped into any further HRA reporting and should be strongly considered as part of the LPFB.

Figure 3: Burnham Beeches SAC



4.3 Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC

The Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC is designated for habitats that are directly sensitive to recreational trampling pressure. The site supports a high number of ancient and veteran trees, the root zones of which are particularly sensitive to soil compaction and hydrological changes that arise from trampling damage and this is referenced in the Supplementary Advice on the Conservation Objectives. Furthermore, the violet click beetle, Annex II species of the SAC, is dependent on a sufficient supply of decaying timber, the removal of which could adversely impact its population abundance.

The SAC lies approximately 2km south of Buckinghamshire Council boundary, well within the typical 5km core recreational catchment that is established for inland terrestrial European sites. However, for this SAC there is a very well-established path network and relevant ancient trees are thus sufficiently protected from the main areas of recreational focus to prevent damage to the root systems. Due to its extensive management Windsor & Maidenhead Local Plan established that the SAC is resilient to recreational disturbance and concluded that no likely significant effects from this impact pathway will arise. Regarding the violet click beetle, it is generally not possible to relate development plans to relatively rare, isolated behaviours. For example, only a very small proportion of visitors will remove deadwood or decaying timber from within the SAC, which is not expected to significantly decrease the habitat available to the beetle.

Windsor Forest and Great Park is a well-established visitor spot, providing an attractive and well-maintained destination for well over five million visitors a year. The Crown Estate Management team has significant management capacity for the protection of the SAC defining features.

5 Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening

5.1 Key Questions

This screening assessment has regard to the conservation objectives notably of the two sites described above.

Key questions relating to the neighbourhood plan are included in Table 1 below and, along with the screening assessment, help to establish if an appropriate assessment is required.

Table 1. Key questions relating to the Neighbourhood Plan

Key Questions	Y/N	Comments
(1) Is the plan connected with or necessary to the management of the designated sites	N	The plan is not linked to the management of the designated sites.
(2) Does the plan propose new development or allocation sites for development?	N	The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for allocation or development.
(3) Are there any other projects or plans that together with the Wexham Neighbourhood Plan, could impact upon the integrity of a European site (a.k.a. the 'in combination effect')?	N	Plans with the potential to create in combination effects include the adopted Local Plan for BC, neighbouring Local Plans and other Neighbourhood Plans in Buckinghamshire and the wider area. However, as the WNP is not allocating sites for development, it is highly unlikely that in combination effects of this sort will be observed as a result of this Plan.

5.2 Assessment of Policies

For it to be concluded that a policy would have no likely significant effect on a European site, one of the reasons listed in *Figure 3* usually applies.

Figure 3: Common reasons why likely significant effects are not expected

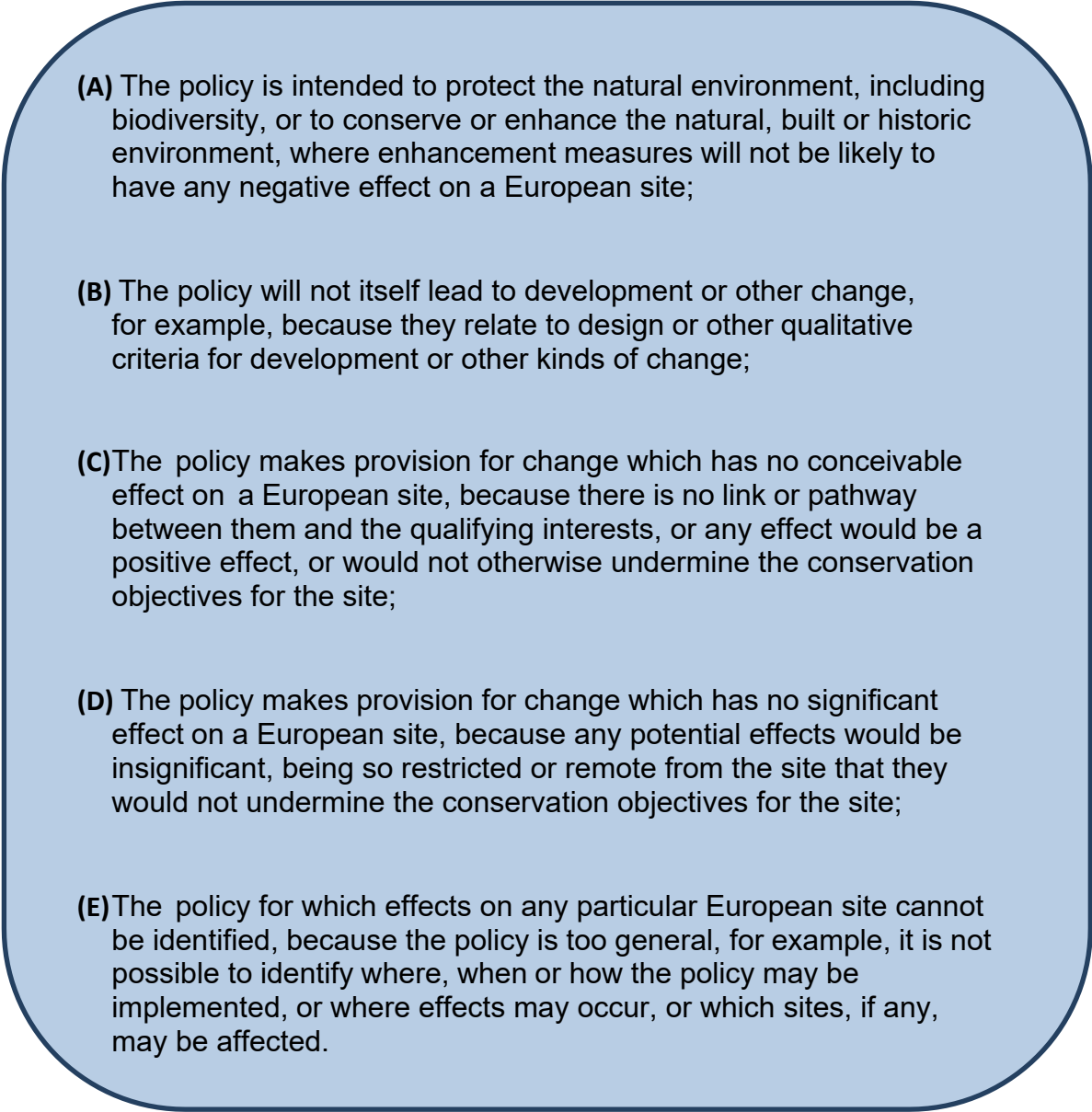
- 
- (A)** The policy is intended to protect the natural environment, including biodiversity, or to conserve or enhance the natural, built or historic environment, where enhancement measures will not be likely to have any negative effect on a European site;
 - (B)** The policy will not itself lead to development or other change, for example, because they relate to design or other qualitative criteria for development or other kinds of change;
 - (C)** The policy makes provision for change which has no conceivable effect on a European site, because there is no link or pathway between them and the qualifying interests, or any effect would be a positive effect, or would not otherwise undermine the conservation objectives for the site;
 - (D)** The policy makes provision for change which has no significant effect on a European site, because any potential effects would be insignificant, being so restricted or remote from the site that they would not undermine the conservation objectives for the site;
 - (E)** The policy for which effects on any particular European site cannot be identified, because the policy is too general, for example, it is not possible to identify where, when or how the policy may be implemented, or where effects may occur, or which sites, if any, may be affected.

Table 2 illustrates the findings of the screening assessment for each of the emerging policies within the WNP, with reference to the 5 reasons above where applicable. This assessment determines whether there is a likely significant effect from these policies on the designated European sites.

Table 2: Assessment of Policies within the Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood Plan Policy			Likely Significant Effects on SPA/SAC?	
Ref	Title	Aim	Y/N	Explanation
W1	Sustainable development	Ensure development occurs in sustainable locations that environmental features are protected	N	Encourages sustainable development only and sets out the overarching principles to achieve this as they relate to Wexham. Unlikely to impact significantly upon designated sites. Reasons A and B
W2	Meeting local housing needs	Encourages consideration of local housing needs wherever practical and subject to viability assessment.	N	Influences mix/size/type/tenure and affordability of future housing only thus unlikely to impact significantly upon designated sites. Reason B
W3 / W4	Character, heritage and design	Two policies that encourage design of development sensitive to local character, that help mitigate climate change, with carefully considered drainage and that conserves heritage assets.	N	Policies relate to the design of development only with broad principles established. These do not apply to specific sites and no sites are allocated. No impact upon designated sites. Reason B
W5	Heritage assets	Identified on-designated heritage assets in the parish	N	Seeks to preserve/conserve locally important heritage assets. Unlikely to impact significantly upon designated sites. Reason A
W6 – W9	Environment and green space	Suite of policies that provide protection and enhancements for wildlife, local green spaces, landscape, views and dark skies.	N	Protective policies that will have no significant impact on designated sites. Reason A

Neighbourhood Plan Policy			Likely Significant Effects on SPA/SAC?	
Ref	Title	Aim	Y/N	Explanation
W10 - W11	Transport and movement	Policies that improve walking and cycling opportunities, preserve and support parking provision and reduce reliance on private car.	N	Improvements in active travel opportunities will have no significant impact on designated sites. Reason A
W12	Community facilities	Safeguards the existing community facilities	N	The policy protects existing local facilities to serve the local community. Unlikely to have significant impacts on designated sites.

As can be seen in Table 2, no policies in the Wexham Neighbourhood Plan were not found to have a likely significant effect on the designated sites.

5.3 HRA Screening Conclusion

As a result of the assessment in Section 3, it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Wexham Neighbourhood Plan.

As such, the 'appropriate assessment' stage of the HRA process that ascertains the effect on integrity of the European Site) does not need to be undertaken.

This conclusion has been sent to Natural England for consideration. The response will be recorded in Appendix A.

6. Conclusion

Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency were consulted for 5 weeks between 3 October and 8 November 2024 and the responses received are included in this screening outcome.

Based on the draft screening assessment and the statutory responses received, the council's final screening outcome is that the Wexham Neighbourhood Plan - Scope does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

Furthermore, under the Habitat Regulations (HRA) it is not considered there is any need for an HRA Report or to proceed to Stage 2 of HRA- an Appropriate Assessment.

Consultation Responses

Date: 08 October 2024
Our ref: 489686
Your ref: Wexham Neighbourhood Plan



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

T 0300 060 3900

Buckinghamshire Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Sir / Madam

Wexham Neighbourhood Plan

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 03 October 2024 which was received by Natural England on 03 October 2024

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 line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the [Planning Practice Guidance](#). This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

- 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.

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".

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 a 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

Ben Ramachandra
Nature Recovery officer
Thames Solent Area Team

By email only to: Neighbourhoodplanning@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Our ref: PL00797087

Your ref: Wexham Neighbourhood Plan SEA

Main: 020 7973 3700

e-seast@historicengland.org.uk

louise.dandy@historicengland.org.uk

Date: 18/11/2024

To whom it may concern

Wexham Neighbourhood Plan 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 Wexham 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 there are no site allocations.

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

Louise Dandy
Historic Places Adviser

Hertfordshire and North London Neighbourhood Plan Advice Note

Updated: June 2021

Neighbourhood Plans provide a unique opportunity to deliver enhancements to the natural environment at the local level. This document sets out the key environmental issues, within our remit, which should be considered.

We have had to prioritise our limited resource and focus on strategic plans where the environmental risks and opportunities are highest. This advice note sets out our substantive response to Neighbourhood Plan consultations including Strategic Environmental Assessment screening and scoping.

Together with Natural England, English Heritage and Forestry Commission we have published joint advice on neighbourhood planning which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans. This is available at: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/consider-environment-neighbourhood-plans/>

Drawing up a neighbourhood plan is a fantastic opportunity to build community resilience to climate change and make the local natural environment better. Opportunities include:

- New green spaces and improvements to public space through new development. This could include planting trees, creating rainwater gardens or enhancing local waterways for water quality and biodiversity.
- Recognising the value of certain environmental features within a plan area, e.g. a floodplain, wetland habitat or rivers. Identify these features and outline how you intend to protect them and improve them.
- Helping a community to manage and adapt to the risk of flooding and climate change by incorporating natural features and green space to manage and store water, and supporting the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).
- Promoting energy and water efficiency measures for new builds. These measures will reduce the cost of construction for developers and help to reduce utility bills for future occupiers. This will also help reduce unsustainable water consumption and carbon emissions.

We also recommend your Plan takes account of relevant Local Planning Authority's policies, plans and strategies including Local Planning Authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, flood risk strategies (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/flood-risk-management-current-schemes-and-strategies>), and the Thames River Basin Management Plan (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/289937/geth0910bswa-e-e.pdf) as appropriate.

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
03459 88 11 88

The information below explains the key issues we would consider in reviewing your Plan. We aim to reduce flood risk, while protecting and enhancing the water environment.

Infrastructure Delivery

We recommend that environmental infrastructure, including habitat enhancements, water storage areas, and green space, is taken into account if the Plan looks to fund local infrastructure.

Flood risk

Development must be safe and should not increase the risk of flooding.

Neighbourhood Plans should conform to national and local policies on flood risk:

If a Neighbourhood Plan is proposing sites for development please check whether there are any areas of Flood Zones 2 or 3 within the proposed site allocations. You can view a site's flood zone on the Flood Map for Planning on our website: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

If the proposed allocation is located within Flood Zone 2 or 3 you should consult the Flood Risk and Coastal Change pages of the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG):

<http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change/>.

Here you can determine whether the flood risk vulnerability of the proposed development and the flood zone are compatible. In accordance with national planning policy the Sequential Test should be undertaken to ensure development is directed to the areas of lowest flood risk taking into account climate change. This should be informed by the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning and the Local Planning Authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), if they have one. We recommend you contact the Local Planning Authority to discuss this requirement further.

If the Neighbourhood Plan proposes development in flood risk areas, the Strategic Environmental Assessment should include baseline information about the flood risks, and include it as a key sustainability issue and as an objective.

We would have concerns if development is allocated in this high risk flood zone without the Sequential Test being undertaken. It is important that your Plan also considers whether the flood risk issues associated with these sites can be safely managed to ensure development can come forward.

We can provide any flooding information which we have available – such as predicted flood levels and historical flood data. Please note that there may be a charge for this information. Please contact our Customers and Engagement Team at HNLequiries@environment-agency.gov.uk for further details. In addition to the above you should also check with the Local Planning Authority's Neighbourhood Planning team with regards to other sources of flooding (such as surface water, groundwater, sewers and historic flooding) as detailed in their Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), now has responsibility for local flood risk management and may hold flooding information that is not identified on our Flood Map.

Climate Change Allowances

The Local Authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment should indicate the extent of flood zones with likely climate change. On 19 February 2016, we published new guidance for planners and developers on how to use climate change allowances: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessments-climate-change-allowances>

Flood Defences

Areas of your Neighbourhood Plan area, or proposed sites, may be given protection by a flood defence/alleviation scheme. Where this is the case the Plan should acknowledge this and identify the level of protection provided (including any climate change allowance). It should be noted that flood defences are intended to protect existing properties and are not to facilitate new development in areas that would otherwise be impacted by flooding. Any assessment of development behind flood defences should consider the impacts of a breach or overtopping. Where it is determined that new development should be behind a flood defence financial contributions may be sought to maintain or improve the structure.

Thames Estuary 2100 (Tidal Defences)

In line with requirements set out in the Thames Estuary 2100 (TE2100) plan, developments in this location will need to demonstrate how the flood defence could be raised in the future to meet the demands of climate change.

No activities on site should preclude access to the flood defence from maintenance or prevent the future raising of flood defences. In some cases we hold technical drawings of flood defence structures which may be of use. To request these you should contact our Customers and Engagement Team at hnlquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Ecology and Water Management

Proximity to watercourse/ Ecology

Main rivers can be viewed on the Environment Agency's map:

<https://environment.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=17cd53dfc524433980cc333726a56386>

The neighbourhood plan should draw upon evidence of designated or non-designated sites of nature conservation sites of international, national or local importance, and seek to ensure these sites are safeguarded and there is no degradation to these sites. The mitigation hierarchy of avoid mitigate and compensate should be followed to ensure this.

In accordance with national policy, any development proposal should avoid significant harm to biodiversity and seek to protect and enhance it; delivering **biodiversity net gain**. The forthcoming Environment Bill will mandate when enacted the demonstration of a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain using the Defra Biodiversity Metric 2.0 (or subsequent version), even where development proposals do not result in biodiversity loss. The Neighbourhood Plan could identify opportunities to incorporate requirements for achieving biodiversity and wider environmental net gains.

The provision of green infrastructure, particularly along rivers, can bring about benefits for people and wildlife. Creating networks of green space and habitats can also ensure wildlife are able to migrate and move across sites more easily enabling recovery and resilience of different wildlife species. The Neighbourhood Plan could play a role in helping to preserve, safeguard and establish green buffer zones along rivers by including policies or design guidance for their area. Even where buffer zones do not currently exist it is becoming more vital that we create them not just for the benefit of biodiversity but to reduce flood risk and increase our resilience to climate change.

This is a key way in which we can carry out our legal duty to further and promote the ecological and landscape value of rivers and land associated with them. In urban areas, in particular, rivers have often been degraded by past development, and we expect that any new development should go some way to redress the balance.

Neighbourhood Plans provide an opportunity to promote river restoration and enhancements helping us all to achieve the targets to improve waterbodies as part of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). There should be no deterioration in water quality and development should bring about improvements to the ecological status of any water body. Local WFD catchment data for the rivers in your area can be obtained from: <http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/RiverBasinDistrict/>. We have identified WFD action measures for specific locations or whole reaches of watercourse (e.g. river bank restoration, improving fish passage, etc) and can be obtained from hnl.enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk on request.

Objectives to achieve WFD improvements across all sectors are outlined in the Thames River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) (<https://www.gov.uk/search?q=River+Basin+Management+Plans>).

An assessment of the potential impacts of the Neighbourhood Plan on watercourses under WFD should be included within the SEA/SA appraisal, making use of the datasets available above.

Groundwater Quality

Development must not cause pollution to the water environment.

Aquifers and Source Protection Zones

Some of your local area, and specific potential site allocations, may be located upon or within aquifers and Source Protection Zones (link below). SPZ 1 is especially sensitive. You might consider these within your Plan and when allocating sites. The relevance of the designation and the potential implication upon development proposals should be seen with reference to our Groundwater Protection guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/groundwater-protection>

To see if a proposed development is located within a Source Protection Zone, please use our online map: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/groundwater-source-protection-zones-spzs>

Land Contamination

You must consider land contamination when preparing your plan. Managing it during development is key to addressing past contamination and preventing further impacts during development.

You can establish if a site may be contaminated in several ways. Your Local Authority may hold a register of sites it knows to be contaminated. A list of potentially contaminated sites can be accessed on the following link:

<https://www.clare.co.uk/useful-government-legislation-and-guidance-by-country/76-key-documents/198-doe-industry-profiles>

We recommend you contact your Local Authority's Environmental Health team who may hold records on known/potential land contamination. Please note our primary concern is with regards to water quality. Your Local Authority's Environmental Health team will advise you on issues related to human health.

Your plan may include areas which are located on aquifers and Source Protection Zones. These areas represent the most sensitive and highest risk in terms of potential pollution to protected groundwater supplies, some of which are used for drinking water. These should be considered within your plan if growth or development is proposed here. Further information can be accessed on the following links:

Guiding principles for the Land Contamination

<https://www.clare.co.uk/useful-government-legislation-and-guidance-by-country/192-guiding-principles-for-land-contamination-gplc>

Approach to Groundwater Protection:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/692989/Environment-Agency-approach-to-groundwater-protection.pdf

Water supply and foul drainage

When allocating sites in your Plan, you will need to consider if the water supply and foul drainage infrastructure can accommodate the development. Your local water company can provide further information about water supply and sewerage capacity. Our '[Water Stressed Areas – final classification](#)' 2013 explains that our area is seriously water stressed. This is particularly significant as population numbers rise and there are increased impacts from climate change on water resource availability and reliability. The Neighbourhood Plan should consider what further measures could help the local area achieve water sustainability that are not already in the Local Plan, water efficiency standards and measures including the retrofitting of existing buildings.

Surface water drainage

The inclusion of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) should always be a consideration within any development to reduce the risk of surface water flooding on and off site. The Lead Local Flood Authority, is the main contact for SUDS issues. However, we have interest in SUDS from a groundwater protection perspective and improving water quality.

The collection and dispersal of clean surface water to ground to recharge aquifer units and prevent localised drainage or surface systems flooding in heavy rainfall is encouraged. However, dispersal into the ground through soakaways or other infiltration systems requires a site-specific investigation and risk assessment. Generally, we would accept roof drainage going to soakaway (or other systems), but other surface drainage may need to go through treatment systems or to foul main, for instance vehicle parking. Infiltrating water has the potential to cause mobilisation of contaminants present in shallow soil/made ground which could ultimately cause pollution of underlying groundwater resources. Where contamination is known or suspected, remedial or other mitigating measures will likely be required so that it can be demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to Controlled Waters.

We advise applicants to follow our guidance – Groundwater Protection. This is a report that highlights the importance of groundwater and encourages industry and other organisations to act responsibly and improve their practices. This can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/groundwater-protection>

The design of the drainage systems should be in line with G1, G9, G12 and G13 position statements: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/groundwater-protection-position-statements>

Please note

This document is a response to a Neighbourhood Plan consultation and does not represent our final view in relation to any future planning application made in relation to any site. You should seek your own expert advice in relation to technical matters relevant to your neighbourhood plan before submission.

If you have any questions please contact the Hertfordshire and North London Sustainable Places team: HNL SustainablePlaces@environment-agency.gov.uk