

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 Longworth Neighbourhood Development Plan

August 2015

Introduction

1. This screening report is used to determine whether or not the contents of the Longworth Neighbourhood Plan require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These require an SEA to be undertaken on any land use plan or programme 'which sets the framework for future development consent of projects'.
2. However, there are exceptions to this requirement 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 National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 167, advises that assessments should be proportionate, and should not repeat policy assessments that have already taken place.
4. To assess whether an SEA is required a screening process must be undertaken based on a standard set of criteria. This must be subject to consultation with English Heritage, the Environment Agency and Natural England. The results of the screening process must be detailed in a Screening Statement, available to the public.

Longworth Neighbourhood Plan

5. The Longworth Neighbourhood Plan will contain policies to support development in the village that will be sustainable and that will not adversely impact on the rural nature of the village. Retaining the character and appearance of the village and of the Conservation Area is particularly important. The plan will include a design policy which is likely to define the character of different parts of the village, including its conservation area.
6. The plan does not allocate any sites for housing, retail or employment and seeks to limit housing to small scale infill, in accordance with the district's emerging and adopted Local Plans.

The Screening Process

7. The key to the screening decision is the determination of whether the Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, using the criteria set out in Annex II of the Directive and Schedule 1 of the Regulations. These criteria are set out in the table in Appendix 1, alongside the response in relation to the Longworth Neighbourhood Plan.
8. 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. This process has been set out and followed in Table 1 to ascertain whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required for the Longworth Neighbourhood Plan.
9. Also part of the screening process is the Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening, which can be found in Appendix 2, and the assessment of likely significance of effects on the environment, which can be found in Appendix 3. This screening will determine whether an Appropriate Assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan is required. These two assessments feed-in to Table 1 and the SEA screening assessment.

Statutory Consultees

10. The initial Screening Opinion was sent to English Heritage, Natural England and the Environment Agency for comment on 8 July 2015.
11. Natural England concluded that as far as their strategic environmental interests are concerned, there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed neighbourhood plan.
12. Historic England concluded that the Longworth Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have a significant environmental effect and that an SEA is not required for the plan.
13. The Environment Agency did not provide a response to the consultation. A reminder email was sent to them prior to the deadline. The council had not received a response from the Environment Agency up to a week past the deadline. As a result, it can be assumed that that the Environment Agency consider the Longworth Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have a significant environmental effect and that an SEA is not required for the plan.

Conclusion

14. The Longworth Neighbourhood Plan does not require an Appropriate Assessment.
15. The Longworth Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

16. The Longworth Neighbourhood Plan is to determine the use of small areas at a local level.

17. It is determined that as a result of the screening undertaken by the Council a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required for the Longworth Neighbourhood Plan.

Appendix 1 - Extract from 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive', DCLG 2005,

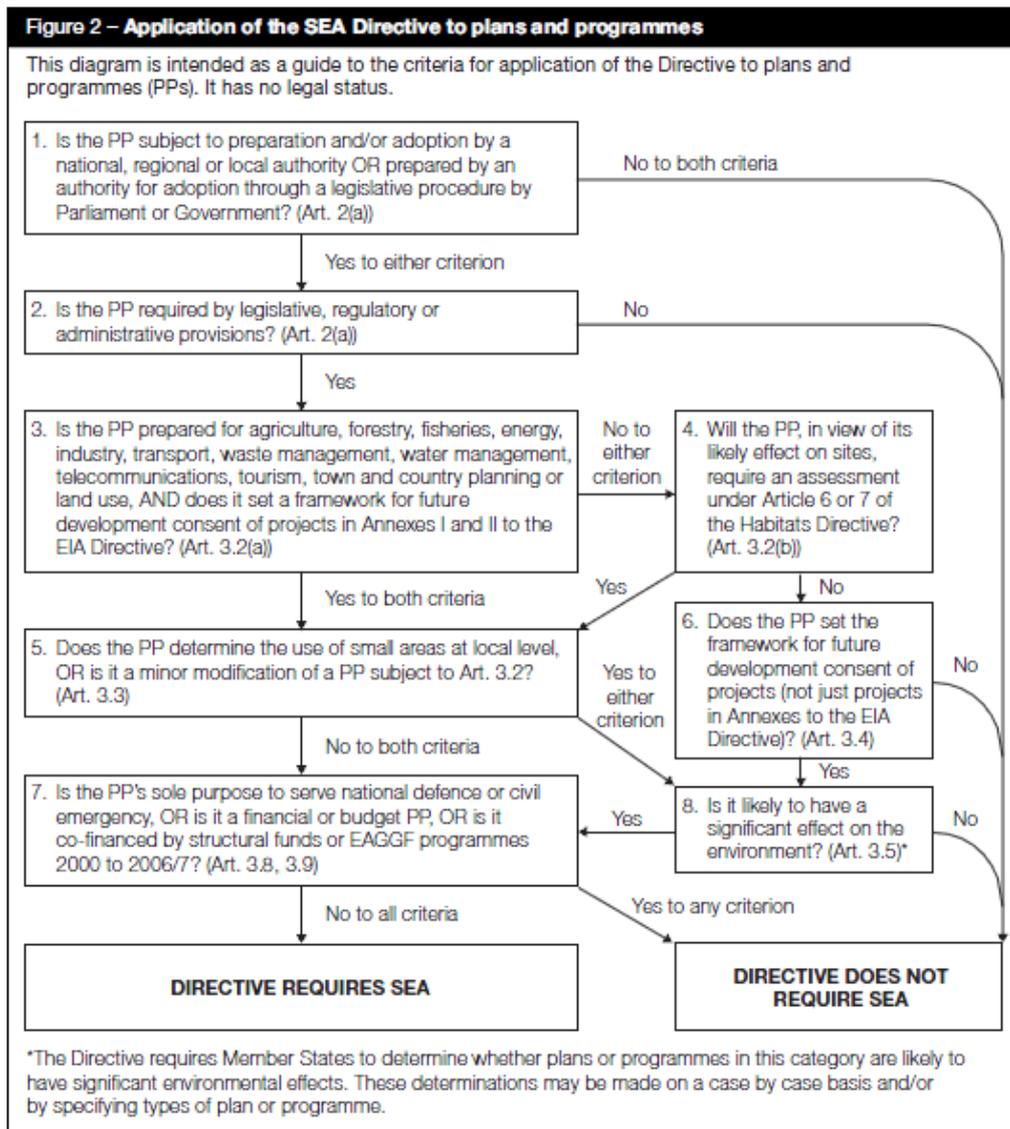


Table 1: Application of SEA Directive as shown in Appendix 1

Stage	Y/N	Explanation
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	The preparation of and adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan is allowed under The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Neighbourhood Plan will be prepared by Longworth Parish Council (as the “relevant body”) and will be “made” by the Vale of White Horse District Council as the local authority. The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is subject to the following regulations: The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012.
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	N	Whilst the Neighbourhood 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.
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	N	The Neighbourhood Plan is prepared for town and country planning and land use and does set out a framework for future development in Longworth. The Longworth Neighbourhood Plan will set a framework for ensuring any development is appropriate for a rural village and retains the character and appearance of the area. It seeks to protect important green spaces from development, and also to protect existing community facilities from unnecessary loss.

II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))		
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	See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Longworth Neighbourhood Plan 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	Determination of small sites at 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	The Neighbourhood Plan will be used to determine future planning applications
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	N	N/A

2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)		
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	See Assessment of Significance of Effects on the Environment Likely in Appendix 3

Appendix 2 - Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Longworth Neighbourhood Plan

Introduction

1. The Local Authority is the “competent authority” under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, and needs to ensure that Neighbourhood Plans have been assessed through the Habitat Regulations process. This looks at the potential for significant impacts on nature conservation sites that are of European importance, also referred to as Natura 2000.
2. This Screening Assessment relates to a Neighbourhood Development Plan that will be in general conformity with the higher level strategic plan (the adopted Local Plan 2011 and the emerging Local Plan 2031 Part 1). This Screening Assessment uses the Vale of White Horse District Council: Local Plan 2031 Part 1 HRA as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Longworth Neighbourhood Plan is likely to result in significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites 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.”

Assessment

4. There are two Special Areas of Conservation in the Vale district: Cothill Fen and Hackpen Hill. Outside of the district but close to it are Little Wittenham located in South Oxfordshire District and Oxford Meadows located in Oxford City.
5. A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) was prepared for the submission version of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1. This found that pending consultation with Natural England, the development set out in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 will not lead to likely

significant effects on any European sites, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans.

6. The HRA for the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 analyses the draft policies using a traffic light system approach where green means there are no likely significant effects on European sites and amber means that more detailed screening is required. There is no red category specified. Under this system Core Policy 8, which relates to the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe sub-area in which Longworth is located, is rated as amber with the following explanation:

“There is potential for increased road transport past the Oxford Meadows SAC as a result, and therefore further assessment of air quality effects on this site are required before a conclusion on LSE can be reached. New development may also lead to increased visitor pressure on the SAC.

There is also potential for new development to have effects on Cothill Fen SAC (recreational pressure, water resources, water quality) and these require further consideration.”

7. The Longworth Neighbourhood Plan will not allocate sites for housing and therefore will not result in an increase in traffic using the A420 and A34 to Oxford. The Neighbourhood Plan will therefore not result in potential air quality effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC.
8. The other Local Plan 2031 Part 1 policies relevant to Longworth are categorised as green, meaning that there are no likely significant effects.

Conclusion

9. The Longworth Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects on any Natura 2000 sites and an Appropriate Assessment for the Longworth Neighbourhood Plan is not required.

Appendix 3 - Assessment of 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;	The Longworth Neighbourhood Plan 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 sits within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework, the adopted Local Plan 2011 and the emerging Local Plan 2031 and the projects for which this Plan helps to set a framework are local in nature and have limited resource implications.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	The Longworth Neighbourhood Plan will be in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework. The policies within the document will conform with the Council's strategic policies and complement the adopted Local Plan 2011 and the emerging Local Plan 2029 Part 1. The Longworth Neighbourhood Plan 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;	The Longworth Neighbourhood Plan contains policies that ensure development is suitable for a small village and seek to conserve the environmental features as they currently exist. These policies will be in conformity with national and local policies as required by the basic conditions. Development would also be subject to the policies in the adopted Local Plan 2011 and/or the emerging Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and 2 and therefore all environmental considerations would be covered by policy.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and	Longworth Parish contains the following environmental designations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation area • Listed buildings • Scheduled monument • Nature and Conservation Target Areas • Ancient Woodland • Flood Zones 2 and 3 • Tree Preservation Orders

	The majority of these designations are outside of the built up area of the village. The Neighbourhood Plan does not propose any development that is likely to harm these designations as the plan seeks to conserve the village, its character and setting. The policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will require these designations to be protected.
(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 Longworth Neighbourhood Plan is not directly relevant to any of these.
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 Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have modest but enduring positive environmental effects. The effects are not likely to be reversible as they relate to development. However, they will be of a local scale.
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	It is intended that the positive effects will have positive cumulative benefits for the area.
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects;	Longworth is located in close proximity to other settlements, including the larger village of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor, and the smaller hamlets of Hinton Waldrist and Fyfield. The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to ensure that Longworth retains its own identify, and there are no site allocations for development beyond the existing built-up area of the village.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	There are no significant risks to human health or the environment.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	The Neighbourhood Plan relates to the parish of Longworth. The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects are likely to be small.
(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (i) special natural	The main vulnerability of the parish is the impact of householder and small scale developments on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. One of

<p>characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use; and</p>	<p>the aims of the plan is to ensure development conserves and enhances the Conservation Area through detailed design policies. Another vulnerability faced by the parish is the recent housing expansion affecting the built up area of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor towards Longworth village. The two settlements are separated by the A420 which acts both as a physical barrier and parish boundary between the two settlements. As a result, it is highly unlikely that the open countryside gap between the A420 and the settlement of Longworth will be eroded through new development over the plan period.</p>
<p>(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.</p>	<p>There are no areas or landscapes with recognised national, Community or international protection status affected by the neighbourhood plan.</p>