

# **Screening Statement on the determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and European Directive 2001/42/EC for the East Challow Neighbourhood Development Plan**

**12 AUGUST 2021**

## **SUMMARY**

Following consultation with the statutory bodies, Vale of White Horse District Council (the 'Council') determines that East Challow Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. An initial screening opinion was used to determine whether or not the contents of the emerging East Challow Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/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**

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

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

## **EAST CHALLOW NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

6. The East Challow NDP will contain the following objectives and policies:

### *Objectives*

- *Maintaining the separate identities of East Challow, Grove and Wantage*
- *To preserve and enhance the open countryside and farmed landscape setting around the village as a recreational resource and for its intrinsic beauty and tranquillity.*
- *To retain the character of the village by designating a number of important spaces as Local Green Spaces.*
- *To acknowledge the climate emergency and being proactive in assisting the low-carbon transition.*
- *To maintain and enhance the existing green corridors and their relationship with the natural environment*
- *To protect and enhance existing facilities that are important to the community and to set out requirements from development*
- *To improve the parking situation in the village*
- *To improve and expand existing footways and cycle routes*
- *To ensure that development reflects and respects the vernacular in the village with respect to design and density*
- *To ensure that development reflects the housing needs of the community*
- *To support formal and informal recreation in the village*
- *To support and encourage business development*

### *Policies which;*

- *Protects the landscape, character and setting of East Challow and the AONB*
- *Designated local green spaces*
- *Encourages renewable and low carbon energy*
- *Supports existing and new businesses*
- *Protects locally important views*
- *Retain and enhances green infrastructure and biodiversity*
- *Supports new community facilities and improvements to existing facilities*
- *Seek to protect and enhance the historic route of the Wilts and Berks Canal*

7. East Challow is defined as a larger village in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031. East Challow has not been allocated any specific housing requirements or development sites within the Local Plan.
8. The East Challow Neighbourhood Plan contains policies to maintain and enhance the local character and landscape of the village and the immediate area. The NDP looks to ensure that there is a separation of settlements between East Challow and the surrounding settlements and also looks to protect locally important views and designates local green spaces.
9. The NDP also seeks to protect community facilities and support low carbon developments within the NDP area. There are also a number of policies supporting new and existing businesses and a policy on delivering a well-balanced mix of housing types as identified in the East Challow Housing Needs Survey. The plan does not allocate any sites for housing.
10. Overall, we note that the plan does not allocate any sites for development and places great emphasis on conserving the character and appearance of the village and surrounding area.

## **CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

11. The Screening Opinion was sent to Natural England, the Environment Agency, Historic England and Oxfordshire County Council on 26 April 2021 for a four-week consultation period. The responses in full are presented in Appendix 4.
12. Natural England confirmed that no SEA or Appropriate Assessment is required for the East Challow Neighbourhood Plan.
13. The Environment Agency did not provide comments on the SEA Screening.
14. Historic England confirmed that the plan is unlikely to result in significant effects within the historic environment and therefore agree that an SEA is not required.
15. Oxfordshire County Council confirmed that they have no comments on the East Challow SEA and HRA Screening Opinion.

## **CONCLUSION**

16. As a result of the screening undertaken by the Council, the following determination has been reached.
17. The East Challow NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the East Challow Neighbourhood Development Plan is not required.

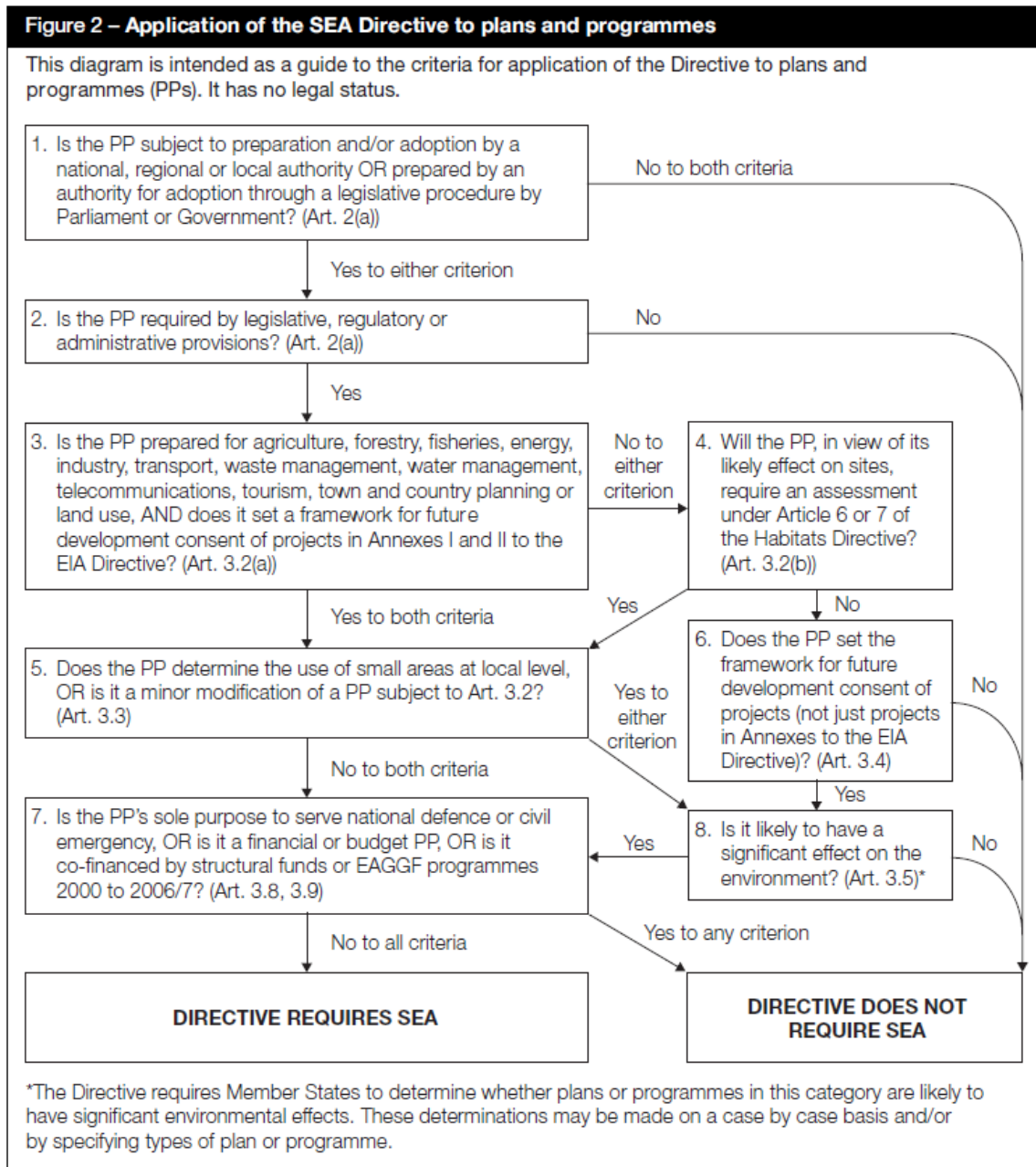
18. Based on the assessment presented in Appendices 1 & 3, the East Challow NDP is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment.
19. The East Challow NDP does not require a Strategic Environment Assessment.

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

**Signed:** 

**Date:** 12/08/2021

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



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

Stage	Y/N	Explanation
<p>1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>The preparation of and adoption of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is allowed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by the East Challow NDP Steering Group, a working group who report to the East Challow Parish Council (as the “relevant body”) and will be “made” by Vale of White Horse District Council as the local authority. The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is subject to the following regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2016</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2016</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2017</li> </ul>
<p>2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Whilst the Neighbourhood Development Plan is not a requirement and is optional under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, it will, if “made”, form part of the Development Plan for the District. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive.</p>

		National Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 051 Reference ID: 41-051-20150209) sets out that draft neighbourhood plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This assessment should be undertaken in accordance with the requirements set out in <a href="#">regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004</a> .
3. Is the Neighbourhood Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II (see Appendix 2) to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	N	The East Challow NDP is prepared for town and country planning and land use and will set out a framework for future development in East Challow, including the development of residential uses. These projects are not of the scale referred to in Article 4(2) of the EIA Directive – listed at Annex II of the directive.
4. Will the Neighbourhood Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	N	The East Challow NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the East Challow NDP in Appendix 2.
5. Does the Neighbourhood Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Y	The East Challow NDP will determine the use of sites/small areas at a local level.
6. Does the Neighbourhood Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Y	When made, the East Challow NDP will include a series of policies to guide development within the parish boundary. This will inform the determination of planning applications providing a framework for future development consent of projects.

7. Is the Neighbourhood Plan's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	N	N/A
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	The plan is not likely to have significant effects on the environment. See assessment of the likely significance of effects on the environment in Appendix 3.



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

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Local Authority is the “competent authority” under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and needs to ensure that Neighbourhood Plans have been assessed through the Habitats Regulations process. This looks at the potential for significant impacts on nature conservation sites that are of European importance<sup>1</sup>, also referred to as Natura 2000.
2. This Screening Assessment relates to a Neighbourhood Development Plan that will be in general conformity with the strategic policies within the development plan<sup>2</sup> (the higher level plan for town and country planning and land use). This Screening Assessment uses the Habitats Regulations Assessment of Vale of White Horse District Council’s Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (LPP2)<sup>3</sup> as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the East Challow Neighbourhood Development Plan is likely to result in significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites either alone or in combination with other plans and policies and, therefore, whether an ‘Appropriate Assessment’ is required.

## LEGISLATIVE BASIS

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

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

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

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

<sup>2</sup> Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (December 2016) and Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (October 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Vale of White Horse LPP2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (February 2018 Update)

*“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 for that purpose as it considers appropriate.*
- (4) In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, and subject to regulation 107, the plan-making authority must give effect to the land use plan only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site or the European offshore marine site (as the case may be).*
- (5) A plan-making authority must provide such information as the appropriate authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the discharge by the appropriate authority of its obligations under this Chapter.*

*(6) This regulation does not apply in relation to a site which is—*

- (a) a European site by reason of regulation 8(1)(c), or*
- (b) a European offshore marine site by reason of regulation 18(c) of the Offshore Marine Conservation Regulations (site protected in accordance with Article 5(4) of the Habitats Directive).*

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

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

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

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

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

## **ASSESSMENT**

5. As required under Regulation 106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'), the qualifying body (East Challow Parish Council) provided the required information to enable Vale of White Horse District Council to determine whether the assessment under Regulation 105 is required. Consideration has been given to the potential for the development proposed by the neighbourhood plan to result in significant effects associated with:

- Physical loss of/damage to habitat;
- Non-physical disturbance e.g. noise/vibration or light pollution;
- Air pollution;
- Increased recreation pressure; and
- Changes to hydrological regimes.

6. There are two European sites with the Vale of White Horse District – Cothill Fen SAC and Hackpen Hill SAC. European sites also lie in adjoining districts and those with potential for longer range and indirect effects include Oxford Meadows SAC (Oxford City), River Lambourn SAC (West Berkshire) and Little Wittenham SAC (South Oxfordshire). The East Challow NDP has the following relationships with these areas:

- Hackpen Hill SAC (Approx. 3.7km)
- River Lambourn SAC (Approx. 12.6km)
- Cothill Fen SAC (Approx. 14.2km)
- Little Wittenham SAC (Approx. 19.4km)
- Oxford Meadows SAC (Approx. 23km)

*Hackpen Hill SAC (Approx. 3.7km)*

7. Hackpen Hill has slopes with a wide variety of aspect and gradient. Most of the grassland is dominated by red fescue *Festuca rubra*, but this is replaced by upright brome *Bromus erectus* on some middle and

lower slopes. The herb flora includes horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, common rockrose *Helianthemum nummularium*, dwarf thistle *Cirsium acaule*, autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella*, fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea* and frog orchid *Coeloglossum viride*. An enclosed, ungrazed strip on Hackpen Down contains hawthorns and elder scrub, interspersed with upright brome grassland and herbs including sainfoin *Onobrychis viciifolia* and basil thyme *Acinos arvensis*.

8. The key environmental conditions that support the features of European interest are appropriate management, minimal air pollution, and absence of direct fertilisation.
9. The Site Improvement Plan for Hackpen Hill indicates that no current issues affecting the Natura 2000 feature have been identified. Based on this and given there is not any additional development being proposed within the NDP, it is considered that there will be no additional effects on the SAC.

#### *River Lambourn SAC (Approx. 12.6km)*

10. The River Lambourn SAC is a site of approximately 27 hectares located wholly within West Berkshire and consists of the River Lambourn water body. The Lambourn supports Bullhead (*Cottus gobio*) populations inhabiting chalk streams in central southern England. Good water quality, coarse sediments and extensive beds of submerged plants provide an excellent habitat for the species. The presence of Brook lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*) is also a qualifying feature of the site.
11. The River Lambourn SAC is within approximately 12.6km of the NDP area however the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 scoped out this site as it was deemed that no actual pathway existed connecting it to development under the Local Plan 2031 Part 2. Based on this and given there is not any additional development being proposed within the NDP, it is considered that there will be no additional effects on the SAC.

#### *Cothill Fen SAC (Approx. 14.2km)*

12. Cothill Fen is designated as a SAC for its calcium-rich, spring fed fens and alder woodlands on floodplains.
13. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impact of water pollution and hydrological changes, as well as air pollution and the impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition upon the calcium-rich water-fed fens.
14. The Site Improvement Plan for Cothill Fen indicates that hydrological changes, water pollution and air pollution are threats requiring investigation. With regard to the East Challow Neighbourhood Plan, no development sites are being proposed to be allocated and so the threats of air quality, recreational pressure and hydrology to the Cothill Fen SAC are not likely to be impacted.

*Little Wittenham SAC (Approx. 19.4km)*

15. This site supports one of the largest known breeding populations of great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* in the UK. The site also supports an outstanding breeding assemblage of amphibians, which include smooth newt, common frogs and common toads, and of dragonflies and damselflies.
16. The calcareous flushes in the woodland have extensive deposits of tufa and support a specialized invertebrate fauna which includes a number of rare species. These include the soldier flies *Oxycera analis* and *O. pardalina*.
17. The woodland ponds and streams support a wide diversity of dragonflies and damselflies. A total of 16 species are known to breed on the site including the brown hawkler *Aeshna grandis*, migrant hawkler *A. mixta*, emperor dragonfly *Anax imperator* and ruddy darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*.
18. Additional aquatic habitat is provided by a backwater of the River Thames which provides suitable conditions for the white-legged damselfly *Platycnemis pennipes*, club-tailed dragonfly *Gomphus vulgatissimus* and red-eyed damselfly *Erythromma najas*. The associated riverine woodland supports the Loddon lily *Leucojum aestivum*.
19. The nationally scarce plant greater dodder *Cuscuta europaea* is regularly seen growing parasitically on nettle *Urtica dioica* alongside the River Thames.
20. The site is approximately 6km south-east of Abingdon-on-Thames, less than 4km from Didcot, and less than 3km from the district boundary.
21. The Site Improvement Plan for Little Wittenham indicated that invasive species and public access and disturbance are threats that require investigating. With regard to the East Challow Neighbourhood Plan, no development sites are being proposed to be allocated and so the threats of invasive species and public access and disturbances to the Little Wittenham SAC are not likely to be impacted.

*Oxford Meadow SAC (Approx. 23km)*

22. Oxford Meadows SAC is adjacent to the north-eastern boundary of Vale of White Horse district. The site is designated as a SAC for its lowland hay meadows and creeping marshworts.
23. The Site Improvement Plan for Oxford Meadows indicates hydrological changes and invasive species are threats requiring investigation. With regard to the East Challow Neighbourhood Plan, no development sites are being proposed to be allocated and so the threats of hydrological

changes and invasive species to the Oxford Meadow SAC are not likely to be impacted.

24. Overall, the neighbourhood plan does not allocate any sites for development or promote additional development beyond what is supported in the adopted Development Plan. None of the SACs are located within the East Challow NDP area and the closest is approximately 3.7km from the boundary of the NDP area. Therefore, the East Challow NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 200, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, taking the above into account.
25. The Council has considered the HRA of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (October 2019) in respect of the potential in combination effects of the proposals in the East Challow Neighbourhood Plan. As the East Challow NDP is not proposing any additional development beyond that already considered in Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 or Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2, we consider that the East Challow NDP is not likely to give rise to significant in combination effects.

## **CONCLUSION**

26. The East Challow NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the East Challow NDP is not required.

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

<b>1. Characteristics of the Plan, having regard to:</b>	
<p>(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;</p>	<p>The East Challow NDP would, if adopted, form part of the Statutory Development Plan and as such does contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects. However, the Plan will sit within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework and the strategic policies of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031.</p> <p>The East Challow Neighbourhood Plan contains policies to maintain and enhance the local character and landscape of the village and the immediate area. The NDP looks to ensure that there is a settlement gap between East Challow and the surrounding settlements and also looks to protect locally important views and designates local green spaces.</p> <p>The NDP also seeks to protect community facilities and support low carbon developments within the NDP area. There are also a number of policies supporting new and existing businesses and a policy on delivering a well-balanced mix of housing types as identified in the East Challow Housing Needs Survey. The plan does not allocate any sites for housing.</p> <p>The Plan also includes policies to improve and extend the existing footpath and cycle path network and to protect historic route and the community value of the Wilts and Berks Canal.</p>
<p>(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;</p>	<p>A Neighbourhood Development Plan must be in conformity with the Local Plan for the District. It does not influence other plans.</p> <p>The East Challow Neighbourhood plan is unlikely to influence other Plans or Programmes within the Statutory Development Plan.</p>

<p>(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;</p>	<p>National policy requires a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread through plan-making, including the East Challow NDP. A basic condition of the East Challow NDP is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Within this wider context, the East Challow NDP itself is unlikely to have a significant positive or negative effect.</p>
<p>(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and</p>	<p>The environmental impact of the proposals within the East Challow NDP is likely to be minimal as the plan does not allocate any sites for development or support additional development beyond what is supported in the Development Plan. Policies in the East Challow NDP will aim to support sustainable development in the village that will not adversely impact on the rural nature of the village. Retaining the local character and surrounding landscape is particularly important.</p> <p>The East Challow NDP area contains the following;</p> <p><i>Ancient Woodland</i>  <i>Archaeological Constraints</i>  <i>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i>  <i>BAP priority habitats</i>  <i>Flood Zone</i>  <i>Great Crest New Distribution</i>  <i>Listed Building Structures</i>  <i>Protected Species buffer</i>  <i>Registered Park and Garden</i>  <i>Tree Preservation Orders</i></p> <p>The NDP does seek through a policy to conserve and enhance the designated heritage assets and their settings, both above and below ground, due to their historic significance and their contribution to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place.</p>



	<p>There are a number of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within close proximity to the East Challow NDP area;</p> <p><i>Hackpen Hill SAC (Approx. 3.7km)</i>  <i>River Lambourn SAC (Approx. 12.6km)</i>  <i>Cothill Fen SAC (Approx. 14.2km)</i>  <i>Little Wittenham SAC (Approx. 19.4km)</i>  <i>Oxford Meadows SAC (Approx. 23km)</i></p> <p>There are also several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) within 10km of the East Challow NDP area;</p> <p><i>Hackpen, Warren and Gramp's Hill Downs SSSI – approx. 3.6km</i>  <i>Whitehorse Hill SSSI – approx. 6.6km</i>  <i>Seven Barrows SSSI – approx. 7.2km</i>  <i>Croker's Hole SSSI – approx. 8.1km</i>  <i>Fernham Meadows SSSI – approx. 8.8km</i></p> <p>Given the NDP is not allocating sites we are of the opinion the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose any development that is likely to significantly affect these designations as the plan seeks to conserve the village, its character and setting.</p>
<p>(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).</p>	<p>The proposed development in the East Challow NDP has been judged not to have an impact on Community legislation. The Plan does include a policy relating to the Wilts and Berks Canal seeking to protect the historic route of the canal and to ensure its value to the community is not lost.</p>
<p><b>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b></p>	
<p>(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;</p>	<p>The East Challow NDP is likely to have modest but enduring positive environmental effects. The effects are not likely to be reversible as they relate to development. However, they will be of a local nature and limited in scale since the neighbourhood plan is not promoting additional development.</p>

<p>(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;</p>	<p>The NDP proposes to designate local green spaces that are off value to the local community and protect locally important views as well ensure that there are gaps between East Challow village and the surrounding settlements. These will likely have a positive cumulative benefit for the area. However, given the scale of what is proposed, the positive effects are not likely to be significant.</p> <p>The plan is also likely to have positive social effects through the protection of community facilities and existing businesses and through the provision of development that would meet the needs of the local community. This is however considered to be local in nature and not significant.</p>
<p>(c) the transboundary nature of the effects;</p>	<p>The effects of the Plan are unlikely to have transboundary<sup>3</sup> impacts.</p>
<p>(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);</p>	<p>The policies in the plan are unlikely to present risks to human health or the environment.</p>
<p>(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);</p>	<p>The East Challow NDP related to the parish of East Challow. The NDP is not allocating any sites for development and therefore, as it will not promote any development that is above and beyond what is already supported in the Development Plan, the potential for environmental effects is likely to be small and localised.</p>
<p>(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;</p> <p>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or</p> <p>(iii) intensive land-use; and</p>	<p>The East Challow NDP area contains the following special natural characteristics and cultural heritage elements;</p> <p><i>Ancient Woodland</i>  <i>Archaeological Constraints</i>  <i>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i>  <i>BAP priority habitats</i>  <i>Flood Zone</i>  <i>Great Crest New Distribution</i>  <i>Listed Building Structures</i>  <i>Protected Species buffer</i>  <i>Registered Park and Garden</i>  <i>Tree Preservation Orders</i></p>

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

	<p>The policies within the NDP seek to protect and where possible enhance the natural characteristics and cultural heritage assets. These policies are not likely to give rise to significant effects as any effect will be at a local level. In addition, no sites are being proposed to be allocated for development within the plan. Therefore, it is considered that there would not be significant effects to the special natural characteristics, cultural heritage assets and the environment.</p>
<p>(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.</p>	<p>The south of the East Challow Neighbourhood Plan area falls within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.</p> <p>The East Challow NDP proposes a policy which requires proposals to reflect the characteristics which define the special character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and individual landscape character areas as recommended through the Landscape Character Assessment and Village Character Appraisal. Although this is likely to have an effect on the environment, it is not likely to be significant as National policy already places great weight to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The policy within the NDP adds additional local detail to achieve the requirement within National policy to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.</p>

## Appendix 4

### Natural England

Date: 11 May 2021  
Our ref: 351078



Vale of White Horse District Council

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

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Dear Dorottya Faludi

East Challow Neighbourhood Plan – SEA/HRA Screening Opinion

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 26 April 2021 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

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 / Habitats Regulation Assessment**

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils) are concerned, that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan. East Challow Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any sites for development and as such, we are in agreement with the council that no SEA or Appropriate Assessment is required. Should the Neighbourhood Plan decide to allocate sites for development, this opinion may need to be revised.

#### **Neighbourhood Plan**

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

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

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

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

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

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

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Isabella Jack at [Isabella.jack@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Isabella.jack@naturalengland.org.uk). For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

Yours sincerely

Isabella Jack  
Sustainable Development Adviser  
Thames Solent Team, Natural England

## Historic England

**From:** Scott, Andrew <Andrew.Scott@HistoricEngland.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 21 May 2021 10:56  
**To:** Faludi, Dorottya  
**Cc:** Lloyd Sweet, Robert  
**Subject:** RE: East Challow Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening Opinion - please reply by 24 May

Dear Dorottya,

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the SEA Screening decision for the East Challow Neighbourhood Plan. I am happy to confirm that the plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects within areas of interest to Historic England. We therefore agree that an SEA is not required to inform the development of the plan.

We would of course request a review of this opinion should the plan change significantly in scope.

Kind regards

Andrew

Andrew Scott  
Assistant Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas  
London and South East Region

Historic England  
4th Floor, Cannon Bridge House  
25 Dowgate Hill | London | EC4R 2YA

## Oxfordshire County Council

**From:** Steere-Smith, Sarah - Communities <Sarah.Steere-Smith@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 21 May 2021 13:40  
**To:** Faludi, Dorottya  
**Subject:** RE: East Challow Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening Opinion - please reply by 24 May

Hi Dorottya,

Oxfordshire County Council have no comments on the East Challow Neighbourhood Plan SEA and HRA Screening Opinion.

Kind regards,  
Sarah

Sarah Steere-Smith  
Planner  
Strategic Planning