

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 Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Development Plan

22 NOVEMBER 2021

SUMMARY

Following consultation with statutory bodies, Vale of White Horse District Council (the 'Council') determines that the Sutton Courtenay 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 Sutton Courtenay 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 and Natural England. 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 Sutton Courtenay NDP against each criterion to ascertain whether a SEA is required.

4. Part of the screening process also includes the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening, which can be found in Appendix 2. The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening concluded that the Sutton Courtenay 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 Sutton Courtenay NDP is not required.
5. Appendix 3 considers whether the plan is likely to have likely significant effects on the environment.
6. These two assessments feed into Table 1 and the SEA screening opinion.
7. The council's screening opinion concluded that the implementation of the Sutton Courtenay NDP would not result in likely significant effects on the environment and therefore would not require an SEA.

SUTTON COURTENAY NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

8. The Sutton Courtenay NDP will contain the following vision, objectives:

Vision

- To maintain and improve a positive and welcoming community spirit across the whole village which includes everybody.
- To provide a built environment that promotes the wellbeing for all social groups and age through amenities.
- To protect and enhance its distinct rural character whilst taking advantage of excellent.

connections to world-class science and business.

Objectives

Community

- To seek an enhanced inter connectivity across the village.
- To seek to ensure the provision of social amenities meets the demands of a growing village.
- To seek to ensure the infrastructure meets the demands of a growing village.
- To preserve and enhance historic village assets.

Environmental and Economy

- To maintain living green spaces.
- To maintain appropriate separation between the village and neighbouring settlements.

- To maintain and regenerate parcels of green spaces in addition to trees and vegetation of amenity value within the Parish.
- To maintain and enhance access to Public Rights of Way, Local Green Spaces, views and waterways.
- To use land efficiently and to preserve best and most versatile agricultural land.
- To promote and support local business.
- To encourage and support home working.

Housing

- To give priority for new housing to meet local needs including a greater availability range of affordable housing for residents.
 - To seek to ensure new developments are of high-quality design, built to a high sustainability standard and reinforce local distinctiveness.
 - To ensure all new developments are appropriate and integrated within the built up area.
 - To ensure that the design and location of new development is resilient to the effects of climate change and flooding.
9. Sutton Courtenay is defined as a larger village in the Vale of White Horse (VoWH) Local Plan.
10. The Neighbourhood Plan will sit alongside, and complement, the VoWH Local Plan 2031. The Local Plan allocates the site East of Sutton Courtenay for 200 homes, with the site being in the Neighbourhood Plan area.
11. The Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood plan is not proposing to allocate any sites for development. Instead, the Plan's policies will steer development to reflect the existing character of the village and to meet local housing needs and aspirations of current and future residents. The policies also seek to protect existing green infrastructure during the development process and to encourage the development of additional green infrastructure. Policies will aim to help deliver the pla's objectives which were developed through consultation with the residents.
12. 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 area. It is therefore concluded that the implementation of the Sutton Courtenay NDP would not result in likely significant effects on the environment.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

13. The Screening Opinion was sent to Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England on 22 July 2021 for a four week consultation period. The responses in full are in Appendix 4.

14. Natural England and Historic England agree with the Initial Screening Opinion and consider that the plan does not require an SEA or Appropriate Assessment.
15. The Environment Agency did not respond.

CONCLUSION

16. As a result of the screening undertaken by the Council and the responses from the statutory consultees, the following determination has been reached.
17. The Sutton Courtenay NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Development Plan is not required.
18. Based on the assessment presented in Appendices 1 & 3, the Sutton Courtenay NDP is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment.
19. The Sutton Courtenay NDP does not require a Strategic Environment Assessment.

Authorised by: Ricardo Rios
On behalf of Head of Planning

Signed: *R. Rios*

Date: 22/11/2021

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

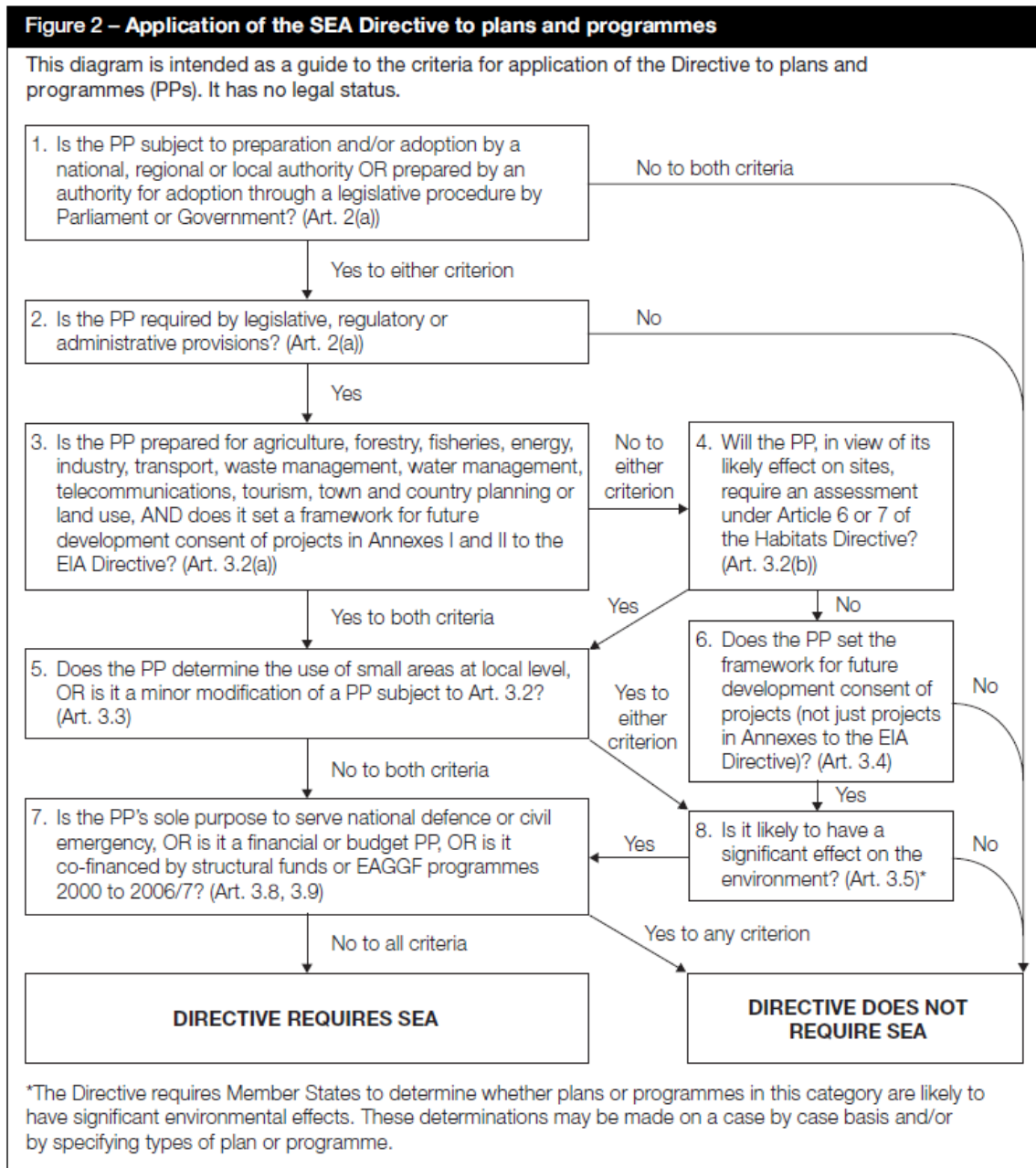


Table 1: Application of SEA Directive as shown in Appendix 1

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 Sutton Courtenay NDP Steering Group, a working group who report to the Sutton Courtenay 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"> • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 • The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 • The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2017
<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>

<p>3. Is the Neighbourhood Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II (see Appendix 2) to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The Sutton Courtenay NDP is prepared for town and country planning and land use and will not set out a framework for future development of projects that would require an EIA.</p>
<p>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))</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The Sutton Courtenay NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Sutton Courtenay NDP in Appendix 2.</p>
<p>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)</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>The Sutton Courtenay NDP will determine the use of sites/small areas at a local level.</p>
<p>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)</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>When made, the Sutton Courtenay NDP will include a series of policies to guide development within the village. This will inform the determination of planning applications providing a framework for future development consent of projects.</p>
<p>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,</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>N/A</p>

3.9)		
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 Sutton Courtenay 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 importance¹, 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 plan² (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)³ as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Sutton Courtenay 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:

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

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

³ 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. There are two European sites within 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) and Little Wittenham SAC (South Oxfordshire). The Sutton Courtenay NDP has the following relationships in terms of distance with these areas:

- Cothill Fen SAC (Approx. 7km)
- Little Wittenham SAC (Approx. 6km)
- Hackpen Hill SAC (Approx. 16km)
- Oxford Meadows SAC (Approx. 13km)

Cothill Fen SAC (Approx. 7km)

6. Cothill Fen is designated as a SAC for its calcium-rich, spring fed fens and alder woodlands on floodplains.
7. 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.

Little Whittenham SAC (Approx. 6km)

8. One of the best studied great crested newt sites in the UK, Little Wittenham comprises two main ponds set in a predominantly woodland context (broadleaved and conifer woodland is present). There are also areas of grassland, with sheep grazing and arable bordering the woodland to the south and west. The River Thames is just to the north of the site, and a hill fort to the south. Large numbers of great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* have been recorded in the two main ponds, and research has revealed that they range several hundred metres into the woodland blocks.

9. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impact of public access and disturbance, and invasive fish species upon great crested newt.

Hackpen Hill SAC (Approx. 16km)

10. 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*.
11. The key environmental conditions that support the features of European interest are appropriate management, minimal air pollution, and absence of direct fertilisation.

Oxford Meadow SAC (Approx. 13km)

12. Oxford Meadow is designated as a SAC for its lowland hay meadows and creeping marshworts.
13. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of hydrological changes and the invasive species of *Crassula* upon creeping marshworts.
14. As required under Regulation 106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'), the qualifying body (Sutton Courtenay 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:
15.
 - 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.
16. The 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 Sutton Courtenay NDP area and the closest is approximately 6km from the boundary of the NDP area. Therefore, the Sutton Courtenay NDP is

unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, taking the above into account.

17. 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 Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan. As the Sutton Courtenay 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 Sutton Courtenay NDP is not likely to give rise to significant in combination effects.
18. Appendix 2 of this assessment has considered how the development proposed in the Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. Given the plan does not propose any allocations and having regard to the conclusions of Appendix 2, it is considered that the development proposed in the Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to give rise to significant in combination effects.

CONCLUSION

19. The Sutton Courtenay 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 Sutton Courtenay NDP is not required.

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

1. Characteristics of the Plan, having regard to:	
(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	The Sutton Courtenay 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, the strategic policies of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (December 2016) and the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (October 2019).
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	<p>A Neighbourhood Development Plan must have regard to national policy and be in conformity with the Local Plan for the District. It does not influence other plans.</p> <p>The Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood plan is unlikely to influence other Plans or Programmes within the Statutory Development Plan.</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>National policy requires a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread through plan-making, including the Sutton Courtenay NDP. A basic condition of the Sutton Courtenay NDP is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.</p> <p>It is noted that a number of the NDP objectives do relate to the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view of promoting sustainable development. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To ensure that any new development is of high-quality design, built to a high sustainability standard and reinforces local distinctiveness. - To maintain and enhance access to Public Rights of Way, Local Green Spaces, views and waterways. - To seek to ensure the provision of social amenities meets the demands of a growing village.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To preserve and enhance historic village assets. - To maintain and regenerate parcels of green spaces in addition to trees and vegetation of amenity value within the Parish. - To ensure that the design and location of new development is resilient to the effects of climate change and flooding. <p>In order to meet the basic conditions the plan will have to integrate environmental considerations in particular with a view to promote sustainable development.</p>
<p>(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and</p>	<p>The environmental impact of the proposals within the Sutton Courtenay 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 Sutton Courtenay NDP will aim to support sustainable development in the village that will not adversely impact on the local distinctiveness of the village. Retaining the character and appearance of the village is particularly important.</p> <p>The Sutton Courtenay NDP will contain policies to maintain and enhance the environment by maintaining and regenerating parcels of green spaces in addition to trees and vegetation of amenity value within the Parish as well enhancing access to Public Rights of Way, Local Green Spaces, views and waterways.</p> <p>Policies in the Sutton Courtenay NDP will aim to support sustainable development in the village by ensuring any growth that does come forward provides appropriate infrastructure. The plan does not allocate any sites for housing and seeks to maintain the rural character of the village.</p> <p>The Sutton Courtenay NDP contains the following environmental designations:</p>

	<p><i>Flood Zones</i> <i>BAP priority habitats</i> <i>TPOs</i></p> <p>There are also the following designations outside the NDP area (the distances are approximate and measured from the NDP area):</p> <p><i>Frilford Heath Ponds and Fens SSSI – 7km</i> <i>Barrow Farm Fens SSSI – 5km</i> <i>Culham Brake SSSI - 3km</i> <i>Iffley Meadows SSSI – 10km</i> <i>Appleton Lower Common SSSI- 10km</i> <i>Hurst Hill SSSI – 10km</i> <i>Cothill Fen SAC – 7km</i> <i>Little Wittenham SAC – 6km</i> <i>Hackpen Hill SAC – 16km</i> <i>Oxford Meadow SAC – 13km</i></p> <p>Given the NDP is not allocating sites; the amount of potential infill sites within the village and their relationship to the designations within the NDP area we are of the opinion the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose any development that is likely to harm these designations. Therefore, the proposals in the plan are unlikely to significantly effect the environment.</p>
<p>(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).</p>	<p>The proposed development in the Sutton Courtenay NDP has been judged not to have an impact on Community legislation.</p>
<p>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</p>	
<p>(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is generally likely to influence development for a period of 10 years from its adoption, which is in line with national guidance. The Sutton Courtenay 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</p>

	<p>local scale through limited infill sites within the village.</p> <p>The plan proposes to protect local green spaces, important views and existing facilities whilst ensuring that new developments are built to a high sustainability standard. This will have positive cumulative benefits for the area. However, given that the Plan does not propose any development allocations the impact of the proposals is likely to be limited.</p> <p>The plan is also likely to have positive social effects through the support of development that fits with the design and character of the local area and is supported by the appropriate infrastructure.</p>
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	It is intended that the positive social effects of supporting sustainable development will have positive cumulative benefits for the area. These are however unlikely to be significant.
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects;	The effects of the Plan are unlikely to have transboundary ³ impacts.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	The policies in the plan are unlikely to present risks to human health or the environment.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	The Sutton Courtenay NDP relates to the parish of Sutton Courtenay, though it does extend into Milton Parish. The neighbourhood area also excludes a parcel of land at the south of the parish which constitutes the Milton Park Enterprise Zone and the Strategic Employment allocation as well as industrial land that is not part of the enterprise zone or employment allocation. 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 and therefore the potential for environmental effects is also likely to be small and localised.
(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:	The Sutton Courtenay NDP area contains the following special natural characteristics and cultural elements:

³ Transboundary effects are understood to be in other Member States.

<p>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use; and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listed buildings - Conservation Area - Archaeological constraints - TPOs - Protected Species Buffer - Great Crested Newt Distribution - Registered Park and Gardens <p>The Sutton Courtenay NDP offers an opportunity to enhance the natural environment and the cultural heritage of the area through the policy proposals being considered.</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 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 and therefore there would not be likely significant effects to the environment.</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>

APPENDIX 4 – STATUTORY CONSULTEE RESPONSES

NATURAL ENGLAND

Date: 05 August 2021
Our ref: 361174



Vale of White Horse District Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

Hornbeam House
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Dear Sir/Madam

Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA Screening Opinion (Consultation Request)

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 22 July 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 Regulations 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. We therefore agree with the screening conclusion that an SEA/HRA is not required.

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/HRA 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 me at 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.

Yours faithfully,

Isabella Jack
Sustainable Development Adviser
Thames Solent Team
Natural England

HISTORIC ENGLAND

Thank you for inviting Historic England's comment on the screening of the Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan for Strategic Environmental Assessment. As Historic England's remit is limited to advising on the implications of planning for the historic environment, our assessment of the plan's potential environmental effects has been limited to these areas.

I am happy to agree that we do not feel the plan has potential for likely significant effects within our areas of interest and, as such agree with the Council's determination to screen out the need for SEA.

Sutton Courtenay has a notably rich historic environment, marking an ancient crossing point of the River Thames and retaining elements of a medieval streetscape and settlement pattern. As such, we retain the right to request a review of this screening opinion should the plan change significantly in scope at a later stage of drafting.

We hope these comments are of assistance but would be pleased to answer any queries relating to them.

Yours sincerely

Robert Lloyd-Sweet

Robert Lloyd-Sweet | Historic Places Adviser | South East England | Historic England
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