



North Norfolk District Council

# Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

Blakeney Neighbourhood Plan – Draft examination version (December 2020)

**26<sup>th</sup> April 2021** (Final)

North Norfolk District Council  
Planning Policy Team

01263 516318

[planningpolicy@north-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@north-norfolk.gov.uk)

Planning Policy

North Norfolk District Council

Holt Road, Cromer, NR27 9EN

[www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/blakeneynp](http://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/blakeneynp)

All documents can be made available in  
Braille, audio, large print or in other languages.  
Please contact 01263 516318 to discuss your requirements



# Contents

1	Introduction .....	1
2	Legislative Background .....	1
3	SEA Screening Criteria.....	4
4	Assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan.....	6
5	Determination.....	11

## Appendix 1: Consultation Responses.



# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 In some circumstances a neighbourhood plan could have significant environmental effects and may fall within the scope of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- 1.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment, SEA is the process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes prior to their final adoption. SEA is a tool used internationally to improve the environmental performance of plans so that they can better contribute to sustainable development.
- 1.3 Establishing whether a Neighbourhood Plan takes into account SEA is an important legal requirement. The Independent Examiner subsequently appointed to consider the Neighbourhood Plan for Blakeney will check that it meets the 'Basic Conditions' set out in the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)<sup>1</sup>. One of the Basic Conditions is whether the Neighbourhood Plan is compatible with European obligations, as incorporated into UK law, in order to be legally compliant. Whether a neighbourhood plan requires a strategic environmental assessment and the level of detail needed will depend on what is proposed in the draft Neighbourhood Plan and the characteristics of the local area
- 1.4 In meeting these obligations, the national PPG sets out that an initial screening stage is required to establish whether a Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. As the “responsible body” this report sets out North Norfolk District Council's conclusions in respect of the:
  - Screening report undertaken by NNDC on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan steering group, which can be viewed online at: <https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/info/planning-policy/neighbourhood-plans/blakeney-neighbourhood-plan/>
  - The responses to this report from the statutory consultees – contained in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.5 This assessment relates to the Draft Examination version 2 December 2020 of the emerging Blakeney Neighbourhood Plan 2020- 2040 and follows earlier consultation on the pre submission version of the emerging neighbourhood plan at regulation 14 stage of neighbourhood plan preparation and consultation on the HRA screening assessment with the statutory bodies.

## 2 Legislative Background

- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessment legislation is European Union Directive 2001/42/EC<sup>2</sup> which requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken for certain types of plans or programmes that could have a significant environmental effect. This was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

<sup>2</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042>

Regulations 2004, commonly referred to as the SEA Regulations<sup>3</sup>. The Government published 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM 2005)<sup>4</sup>, which provides more detailed guidance on how an SEA should be carried out.

- 2.2 In accordance with the provisions of the SEA Directive and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) (Regulation 9(1)), the Council must determine if a plan requires an environmental assessment. This process is commonly referred to as a "screening" assessment. Where the Council determines that an SEA is not required, then the Council must, under Regulation 9(3), prepare a statement setting out the reasons for this determination- this report. Where it is determined that proposals in a Neighbourhood Plan are likely to have significant environmental effects, the Neighbourhood Plan may require a strategic environmental assessment. Draft Neighbourhood Plan proposals should then be assessed to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant Environmental effects as prescribed in regulation 12 (2)& (3) of the above legislation.
- 2.3 An SEA can be required in some limited situations where a sustainability appraisal is not needed. Neighbourhood planning is one of these situations. Sustainability Appraisals (SAs) may incorporate the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations, which implement the requirements of the 'Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.
- 2.4 A Sustainability Appraisal ensures that potential environmental effects are given full consideration alongside social and economic issues and it is good practice to do one to understand how a plan is to deliver sustainable development. However, NPPF Planning Practice Guidance states that there is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood plan to undertake a sustainability appraisal as set out in section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It does however remain a basic condition test for neighbourhood planning to demonstrate whether the neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This is the purpose of the SEA Screening Report and the subsequent issue of the Determination Report.
- 2.5 Whether a Neighbourhood Plan requires an SEA, and if so, the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan. The national PPG<sup>5</sup> suggests that an SEA may be required, 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; and
  - 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.

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-directive-guidance>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal> para 013 Ref ID: 11-013-20140306

- 2.6 It remains the responsibility of the Local planning authority to ensure that all the regulations appropriate to the nature and scope of a [Neighbourhood Plan](#) proposal submitted to it have been met in order for the proposal to progress to examination. It remains the qualifying body's responsibility to make every effort to ensure the resultant draft neighborhood plan that it submits to the local planning authority for independent examination:
- Meets each of the Basic Conditions ;
  - Has been prepared in accordance with the correct process and all those required to be consulted have been;
  - Is accompanied by all the required documents<sup>6</sup>
- 2.7 The draft neighbourhood plan is shortly to commence publication under regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. This has been informed by the earlier screening report which has been undertaken by North Norfolk District Council and consulted on with the statutory bodies, Historic England, Natural England & the Environment Agency.

## Habitat Regulations

- 2.8 Schedule 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012<sup>7</sup> refers to the Habitats Directive. The Regulations require Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening to be undertaken (by the qualifying Body) to identify if a Neighbourhood Plan would have a significant impact on nature conservation sites that are of European importance, also referred to as Natura 2000 sites. Article 6 (3) of the EU habitats Directive<sup>8</sup> and Regulation 61 of the Habitats and Species Regulations 2010<sup>9</sup> (as amended) requires that an Appropriate Assessment is carried out on any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a European Site.
- 2.9 European Sites are defined in regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2010, and consist of candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas, as defined in regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species. These are also reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework, NPPF, which also refers to Ramsar sites, which are listed in accordance with the international Ramsar Convention. The NPPF requires decision makers to apply the same protection and process to Ramsar sites as that set out in legislation for European sites<sup>10</sup>.
- 2.10 To fulfil the legal requirements to identify if likely significant effects will occur on European Sites through the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan group have requested a separate HRA Screening Assessment and Determination from the District Council as the competent authority in Law.

---

<sup>6</sup> PPG Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 11-031-20150209

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/637/pdfs/ukxi\\_20120637\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/637/pdfs/ukxi_20120637_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/guidance\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/guidance_en.htm)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/490/contents/made>

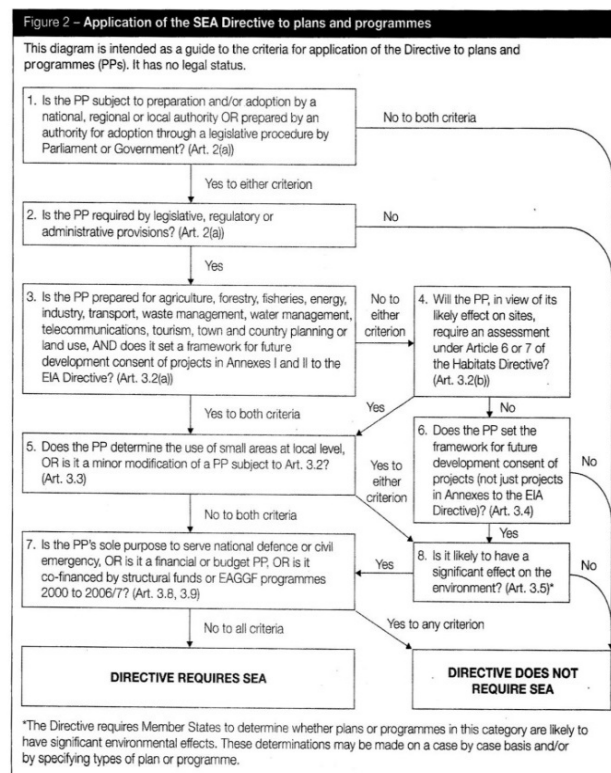
<sup>10</sup> NPPF para 118

### 3 SEA Screening Criteria

- 3.1 The process for determining whether or not an SEA is required is called screening. The SEA screening is a two stage interrelated process. The first part considers the Neighbourhood Plan against the SEA assessment flow chart set out in the national guidance “A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive”<sup>11</sup>, (Paragraph 2.18, Figure 2, ODPM, 2005). The second part of the assessment is required in order to answer specific questions contained in the above, specifically question 8 and considers whether the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, using criteria drawn from the EU SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004<sup>12</sup>.
- 3.2 The regulations state that before making a determination the three statutory consultation bodies, The Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, must be consulted.

The process taken follows the application of the SEA Directive as set out in Figure 2 of ‘A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’ followed by application of the criteria determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC (Annex 11) and Schedule 1 of the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004:

Figure 1: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes



[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf\\_paragraph\\_2.18](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf_paragraph_2.18)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-directive-guidance>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/contents/made>



**Table 1: Criteria for Determining the Likely Significance of Effects.**

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to

- 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 degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development, - environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
- the cumulative nature of the effects,
- the trans-boundary nature of the effects,
- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
  - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
  - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
  - intensive land-use,
- the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

Source: Annex 11 of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC and Schedule 1 of the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004:

## 4 Assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan

### 4.1 Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

STAGE	Y/N	REASON
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 and adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan is allowed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The NP is being prepared by the parish council (as the “relevant body”) and will be “made” by North Norfolk District Council as the local authority subject an independent examination and community referendum. The preparation of NP’s is subject to the following regulations: The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, the Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012, and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.
2. Is the Neighbourhood Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? ( Art.2(a))	Y	Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan is not a requirement of the Town and Country Planning Act as amended by the Localism Act 2011, it will be “made” and eventually form part of the Development Plan for the District. These are directed by legislative processes and it is 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 II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	Y/N	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan can include these policy areas and could provide, at a Neighbourhood Area level, the framework for development that would fall within Annex II of the EIA Directive. Developments that fall within Annex I are ‘excluded’ development for Neighbourhood Plans (as set out in the Localism Act 2011 and Section 61(k) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as subsequently amended).</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared to set out a framework for town and country planning and “land use” within the parish of Blakeney. Its role is to complement the higher order strategic Framework that already exists for land use planning across the District.</p> <p>The strategic framework for development is set by the adopted Core Strategy and the emerging Local Plan of the North Norfolk District Council. The Neighbourhood Plan process requires alignment to be in general conformity with these, the assessment of which is part of the iterative process</p>

STAGE	Y/N	REASON
		<p>The Neighbourhood Plan does not anticipate being the tool to manage development of the scale and nature envisaged by Annex I and Annex II of the EIA Directive.</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/y</p>	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan could potentially have impacts on sites covered by the Habitats Directive. A number of European sites span the Neighbourhood Plan Area, including the Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC, The North Norfolk Coast SAC, and the North Norfolk Coast SPA, North Norfolk Coast Ramsar site and North Norfolk Coast SSSI.</p> <p>The North Norfolk plan level HRA work undertaken for the adopted Site Allocations document, 2011 concluded that the site allocations set out within the plan would not cause an adverse effect on any of the European sites, with the commitment of North Norfolk District Council to progress key measures at a strategic level in relation to recreation. The site have since been built out.</p> <p>An Interim Habitats Regulation Assessment was carried out as part of North Norfolk District Council emerging Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation in May 2019 and acknowledges that policies in the emerging Local Plan have been developed with the need to protect European sites understood, and as such the policies contain strong wording and supporting text that enables a conclusion of no likely significant effects for most of the emerging policies, concluding that there are measures in progress capable of necessary strategic measures to conclude NLSE. The emerging final HRA / appropriate assessment for the preferred sites for allocation in the emerging Local plan concluded that there was no LSE from urban effects but that a project level HRA would be sufficient to address any localised issues from development in relation to the preferred sites. A HRA screening determination for the BNP following consultation with the statutory bodies concluded that that there are likely to be no adverse effects upon the integrity of any European sites from the policies contained in it subject to the addition of some clarification wording.</p> <p>The BNPA Includes a number of sensitive European sites but mainly includes qualitative policies that do not stipulate any quantum or location of growth and the expectation is that the final Draft Neighbourhood Plan, (referendum version) will be in general conformity with the existing and emerging Local Plan. The NP has however not undergone examination and it is therefore, appropriate and precautionary at this stage to conclude that there remains a possibility that an assessment</p>

STAGE	Y/N	REASON
		may be required at this stage. Given this ambiguity both question 5 and 6 of the flowchart are enacted.
5 Does the Neighbourhood Plans determine the use of small areas at local level, Or is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art 3.2? ( Art3.3)	Y	A Neighbourhood Plan can determine the use of small areas at a local level. The Neighbourhood Plan for Blakeney focuses on qualitative and supportive policies. The Plan proposes no site allocations, sets no growth target
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	Once “made” a Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the statutory Development Plan and will be used by North Norfolk District Council in the determination of planning applications. The intention is that the Neighbourhood Plan will provide a land use policy framework for future development at a local level and be used together with the adopted higher order Plan form part of the Development Plan for the neighbourhood plan area.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment	N	From the application of criteria for determining the likely significant effects below it is considered it is unlikely that there will be any significant effect.

#### 4.2 SEA Screening Stage 2: SEA Directive Article 3(5) Annex II – Application of Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects of a Neighbourhood Plan

Criteria in Annex 11 of the SEA Directive	Response	Is there a significant effect?
(1) Characteristics of the plan and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:		
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 strategic framework for development is set by the adopted Development Plan and the emerging Local Plan of North Norfolk District Council. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to deliver any growth or locational requirements	No
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or	The Neighbourhood Plan will be adopted alongside the higher order Local Plan and form part of the District’s Development Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan will expand	No

programmes including those in a hierarchy;	upon, providing supplementary information on a local scale.	
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	Any Development that comes forward through the NP will be subject to environmental considerations of the Core Strategy and the Local Plan when adopted. These policies have been subject to sustainability appraisal and HRA, and are in place to ensure that sustainable development is achieved.	No
Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme;	There are not considered to be any significant environmental problems which are specific to the area, above and beyond those considered and addressed in the Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies which provide / seek positive consideration to environmental protection.	No
The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The implementation of community legislation is unlikely to be affected by the Neighbourhood Plan.	No
(2) Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:		
The probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects;	The Neighbourhood Plan does not bring forward growth and as such is unlikely to bring forward development of an extent that would result in a significant intensification of Local land Use.	No
The cumulative nature of the effects;	It is considered unlikely that the degree of development proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan when combined with the Core Strategy and the emerging Local Plan will introduce significant cumulative environmental effects. Whilst both documents are being written, the Local Plan has been subject to full SEA and Habitats Regulations and Sustainability Appraisal. The Neighbourhood Plan impacts on the integrity of the European sites are considered to be limited as the neighbourhood plan does not seek to increase in population and overall visitor numbers, and remains largely qualitative. It also introduces some consideration of the environmental impacts at a local level.	No

The trans-boundary nature of the effects;	The Neighbourhood Plan policy areas outlined provide supplementary policy areas on a local scale. European sites are broader than the NPA and as such there is the potential for impacts beyond the NPA. However, given the qualitative nature of the NP and the lack of scale and level of growth proposed it is considered that the trans-boundary effects would not be significant.	No
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);	The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to produce any significant effects in relation to this criteria	No
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	The Neighbourhood Plan covers the parish of Blakeney. The 2011 census recorded the usual resident population of as 775. This is in comparison to the usual resident population of 101,499 of North Norfolk and an area of 96,333 hectares. The small spatial extent and the magnitude of the population affected are not considered significant for the purpose of the SEA.	No
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:  i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;  ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values  iii) Intensive land use	<p>i) The Plan Area contains a number of listed buildings and contains the Blakeney Conservation Area and is part of the wider Glaven Valley Conservation Area. The Neighbourhood Plan by virtue of the “basic conditions” will however be in general conformity to the existing Development Plan, and emerging Local Plan which contains detailed policies on the Historic Environment across the District to ensure that they are not vulnerable to significant impacts from development.</p> <p>ii) The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to result in exceedance of environmental quality standards, such as those relating to air, water, and soil quality.</p> <p>iii) The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to bring forward development of an extent that would result in a significant intensification of Local land Use.</p>	<p>i) No</p> <p>ii) No</p> <p>iii) No</p>
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	The Plan Area includes listings which reflect the cultural and heritage value of the area such as listed buildings and conservation area. Both the LP and the NP have policies that require the consideration of such assets.	No

4.3 As a result of the assessment, it is considered that it is unlikely to be any significant environmental effects from the implementation of the proposals in the emerging

December 2020 Draft Neighbourhood Plan for Blakeney. As such it is considered under the Regulation9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and programmes Regulations 2004, that the emerging draft Blakeney neighbourhood plan does not require an SEA to be undertaken.

## **5 Determination**

- 5.1 As a result of the assessment in section 5, it is considered that it is unlikely to be any significant environmental effects from the implementation of the proposals in the emerging Draft Neighbourhood Plan for Blakeney (December 2020). As such it is considered under the Regulation9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and programmes Regulations 2004, that the emerging draft Blakeney neighbourhood as of December 2020 plan does not require an SEA to be undertaken.
- 5.2 Natural England, Historic England and The Environment Agency as the statutory bodies were consulted between 12 March 2021 and 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021 on the Screening Report issued March 2020. Their responses, where received are appended to this report.
- 5.3 On the basis of material supplied, and with the understanding that there are no housing allocations included in the neighbourhood plan Natural England and the Environment Agency agree with the Council's SEA screening assessment. No comments were received from Historic England.

Appendix 1 Consultation Responses.



North Norfolk District Council  
Holt Road  
Cromer  
Norfolk  
NR27 9EN

**Our ref:** AE/2021/125994/01-L01  
**Your ref:** SEA screening  
**Date:** 22 April 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

**BLAKENEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SEA & HRA SCREENING  
CONSULTATION**

Thank you for consulting us on the SEA screening consultation for the Blakeney Neighbourhood Plan. We have reviewed the submitted SEA screening report and can confirm that we do not disagree with the conclusion reached in the Screening outcome paragraph 6.1.

The neighbourhood plan does not allocate any land for development and therefore we do not consider that a SEA report is required as there is unlikely to be significant environmental effects.

If however a SEA report is screened in then we request that Flood Risk is considered within the report.

We trust the above is useful.

Yours faithfully



**Miss Natalie Kermath  
Planning Advisor**

Direct e-mail [natalie.kermath@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:natalie.kermath@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Date: 17 March 2021  
Our ref: 346562  
Your ref: Blakeney Neighbourhood Plan SEA & HRA Screening Consultation



---

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

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

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Iain Withington

## **Blakeney Neighbourhood Plan SEA & HRA Screening Consultation**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 12 March 2021 which was received by Natural England on 12 March 2021

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 / Habitat 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.

### **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 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

Julie Lunt  
Consultations Team

# Annex 1 - Neighbourhood planning and the natural environment: information, issues and opportunities

## Natural environment information sources

The [Magic](#)<sup>1</sup> website will provide you with much of the nationally held natural environment data for your plan area. The most relevant layers for you to consider are: **Agricultural Land Classification, Ancient Woodland, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Local Nature Reserves, National Parks (England), National Trails, Priority Habitat Inventory, public rights of way (on the Ordnance Survey base map) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (including their impact risk zones)**. Local environmental record centres may hold a range of additional information on the natural environment. A list of local record centres is available [here](#)<sup>2</sup>.

**Priority habitats** are those habitats of particular importance for nature conservation, and the list of them can be found [here](#)<sup>3</sup>. Most of these will be mapped either as **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**, on the Magic website or as **Local Wildlife Sites**. Your local planning authority should be able to supply you with the locations of Local Wildlife Sites.

**National Character Areas** (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each character area is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. NCA profiles contain descriptions of the area and statements of environmental opportunity, which may be useful to inform proposals in your plan. NCA information can be found [here](#)<sup>4</sup>.

There may also be a local **landscape character assessment** covering your area. This is a tool to help understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify the features that give it a sense of place. It can help to inform, plan and manage change in the area. Your local planning authority should be able to help you access these if you can't find them online.

If your neighbourhood planning area is within or adjacent to a **National Park** or **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (AONB), the relevant National Park/AONB Management Plan for the area will set out useful information about the protected landscape. You can access the plans on from the relevant National Park Authority or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty website.

General mapped information on **soil types** and **Agricultural Land Classification** is available (under 'landscape') on the [Magic](#)<sup>5</sup> website and also from the [LandIS website](#)<sup>6</sup>, which contains more information about obtaining soil data.

## Natural environment issues to consider

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#)<sup>7</sup> sets out national planning policy on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. [Planning Practice Guidance](#)<sup>8</sup> sets out supporting guidance.

**Your local planning authority should be able to provide you with further advice on the potential impacts of your plan or order on the natural environment and the need for any environmental assessments.**

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nbn-nfbr.org.uk/nfbr.php>

<sup>3</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making>

<sup>5</sup> <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.landis.org.uk/index.cfm>

<sup>7</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/807247/NPPF\\_Feb\\_2019\\_revised.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807247/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/>

## Landscape

Your plans or orders may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes. You may want to consider identifying distinctive local landscape features or characteristics such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls and think about how any new development proposals can respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness.

If you are proposing development within or close to a protected landscape (National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or other sensitive location, we recommend that you carry out a landscape assessment of the proposal. Landscape assessments can help you to choose the most appropriate sites for development and help to avoid or minimise impacts of development on the landscape through careful siting, design and landscaping.

## Wildlife habitats

Some proposals can have adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites or other priority habitats (listed [here](#)<sup>9</sup>), such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or [Ancient woodland](#)<sup>10</sup>. If there are likely to be any adverse impacts you'll need to think about how such impacts can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

## Priority and protected species

You'll also want to consider whether any proposals might affect priority species (listed [here](#)<sup>11</sup>) or protected species. To help you do this, Natural England has produced advice [here](#)<sup>12</sup> to help understand the impact of particular developments on protected species.

## Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services for society. It is a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution. If you are proposing development, you should seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of a higher quality in line with National Planning Policy Framework para 171. For more information, see our publication [Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land](#)<sup>13</sup>.

# Improving your natural environment

Your plan or order can offer exciting opportunities to enhance your local environment. If you are setting out policies on new development or proposing sites for development, you may wish to consider identifying what environmental features you want to be retained or enhanced or new features you would like to see created as part of any new development. Examples might include:

- Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.
- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Think about how lighting can be best managed to encourage wildlife.
- Adding a green roof to new buildings.

---

<sup>9</sup><http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>

<sup>11</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

<sup>13</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35012>

You may also want to consider enhancing your local area in other ways, for example by:

- Setting out in your plan how you would like to implement elements of a wider Green Infrastructure Strategy (if one exists) in your community.
- Assessing needs for accessible greenspace and setting out proposals to address any deficiencies or enhance provision.
- Identifying green areas of particular importance for special protection through Local Green Space designation (see [Planning Practice Guidance on this](#) <sup>14</sup>).
- Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).
- Planting additional street trees.
- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition, or clearing away an eyesore).

---

<sup>14</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/local-green-space-designation/>