West Berkshire District Council

Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report

Post-consultation Version

August 2026

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STRATFIELD MORTIMER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required under UK legislation for all plans which may have a significant effect on the environment.

The purpose of the SEA is to provide a high level of protection for the environment and to integrate considerations of the environment into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.

The SEA process sets out criteria for assessing the significance of the impact of a plan on the environment. For example, if a plan proposes a housing development it may have an impact on the wildlife of the area or have an impact on the landscape. If a significant effect is possible, the assessment requires the consideration of alternative options and for the evaluation of the potential effects on the environment.

To ascertain if a SEA is required, a screening exercise is undertaken which looks at the proposals and policies in a Neighbourhood Plan to see if a significant effect on the environment is likely. The criteria for making the screening assessment are set out in the relevant legislation.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a process which looks at the potential impact of proposals within a plan on what are termed as ‘Habitats Sites’. In relation to the West Berkshire area, the relevant Habitats Sites are a number of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). There are no Special Protection Areas within the district, however there is one within 5km of the district.

This initial screening stage of the HRA process involves consideration of the reasons for designation, and the conservation objectives of Habitats Sites within a reasonable distance of the Neighbourhood Plan area, and the potential impact of the proposals within a Neighbourhood Plan upon these.

Conclusions

This report details the assessment of the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan (NP) against the need for a SEA and / or HRA Appropriate Assessment to be produced to accompany the Neighbourhood Plan. West Berkshire District Council concludes that:

- An SEA is not required to accompany the NP; and
- The NP does not need to be subject to a HRA Appropriate Assessment.

Consultation with the three statutory consultees (Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England) took place between 16 July and 20 August 2026. Historic England and Natural England responded to confirm that they agreed with WBDC’s conclusions. No response was received from the Environment Agency.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE STRATFIELD MORTIMER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

1.1. West Berkshire District Council (WBDC) designated the whole of Stratfield Mortimer Parish as a Neighbourhood Area in December 2014. A Neighbourhood Development Plan was subsequently prepared and adopted in June 2017. Work on a new Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is currently underway, which will in due course supersede the 2017 NP.

1.2. The Parish boundary and the Neighbourhood Plan area boundary are coterminous, as shown in Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1: Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Area

a. Overview of the plan area:

1.3. Stratfield Mortimer is a predominantly rural parish located in the south-eastern part of the District of West Berkshire. The principal settlement within the parish is the village of Mortimer; however, the parish also includes the smaller settlement of Stratfield Mortimer.

1.4. Within the adopted West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041, the village of Mortimer is identified as a Rural Service Centre within the settlement hierarchy. This designation reflects the range of services and facilities available within the village and recognises opportunities to strengthen its role in meeting the needs of the surrounding community.

1.5. There are a number of natural and built environment designations within the Neighbourhood Area. These are set out below and are also illustrated in Figure 1.2.

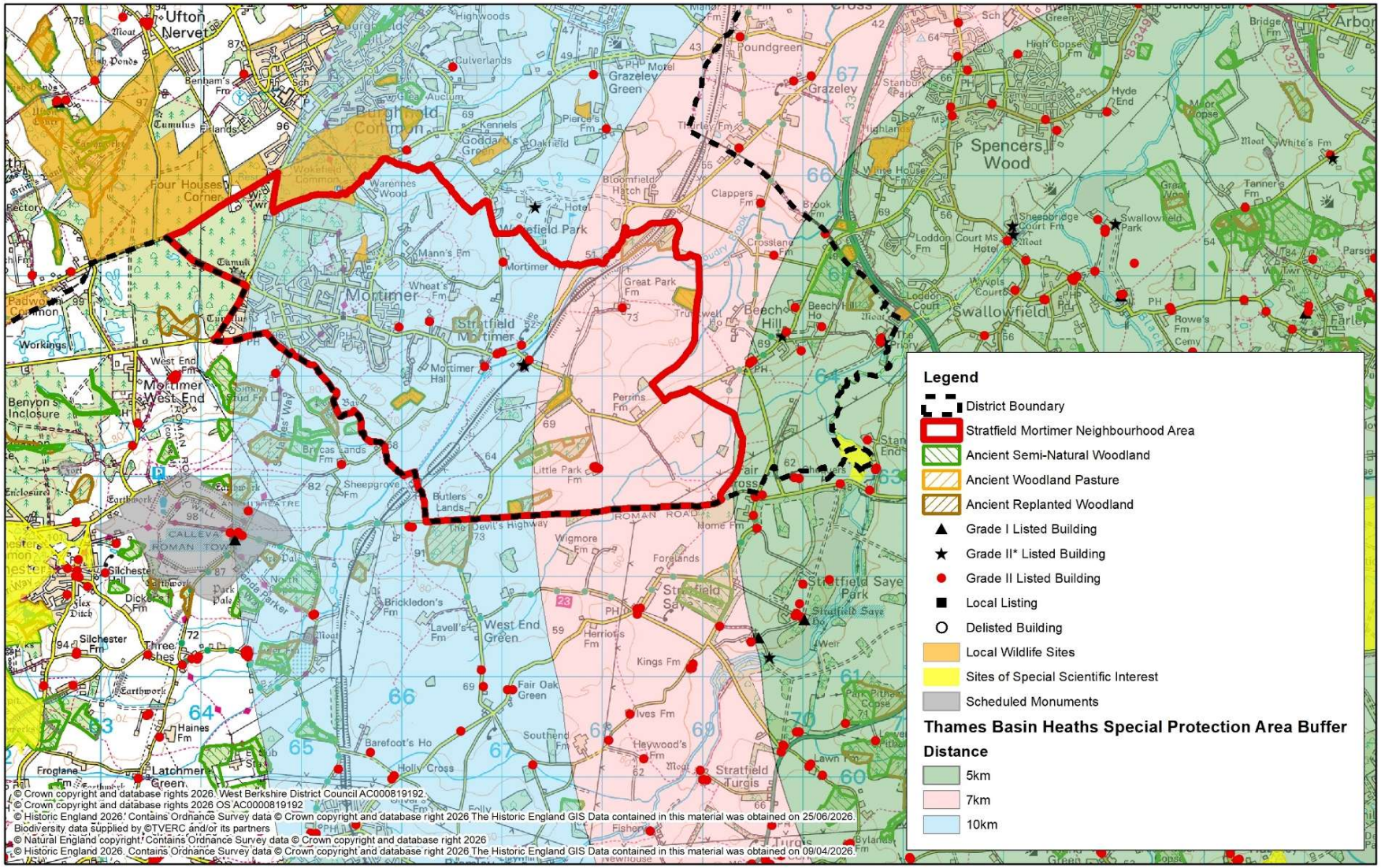
Natural environment:

- 7 Local Wildlife Sites
- Areas of Ancient Woodland
- Four areas of Common Land
- Tree Preservation Orders
- Part of the Neighbourhood Area is located within 7km of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), and a very small area is within 5km.

Historic Environment

- 15 Listed Buildings, including St Marys The Virgin Church (Grade II), Mortimer Station Bridge (Grade II), Mortimer Station (Grade II*) and a Brick Passenger Shelter opposite Mortimer Railway Station (Grade II*)
- Wokefield Park is a Grade II* building located in grounds adjacent to the Neighbourhood Area.
- The area has a number of archaeological areas, lines and points, notably the Devil's Highway, a Roman Road radiating from Roman Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum), which marks much of the southern boundary of the Parish. Silchester (the Roman town of Calleva Atrebatum) is located approximately 1.5km from the Neighbourhood Area.

Figure 1.2: Historic and natural environment designations within Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Area



1.6. Within the Neighbourhood Area, there are no known:

- International or national conservation designations (or adjacent to it), including Sites of Special Scientific Interest or other ecological or wildlife designations outside of those listed above;
- National landscape designations such as National Landscape;
- World or National Heritage Sites;
- Registered Historic Parks and Gardens;
- Conservation Areas; or
- Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) or Local Geological Sites.

b. Scope of the Stratfield Mortimer

1.7. This screening is based on the draft Stratfield Mortimer NP as at July 2026. The draft NP contains a vision, and to deliver the vision, there are five objectives related to the following themes:

- provide diverse housing options;
- deliver community-led zero carbon energy solutions;
- promote Mortimer-focused design standards;
- safeguard community values through long-term investment; and
- enhance biodiversity and environmental recovery.

1.8. The draft NP contains 16 policies which are categorised under the following headings:

- Design:
  - Policy DC1: General
  - Policy DC2: Design principles
  - Policy DC3: Physical rural design characteristics
- Housing:
  - Policy HN1: Types and mix of homes
  - Policy HN2: Reservation of properties for 55+
- Community energy:
  - Policy CE1: Individual and community energy projects
  - Policy CE2: Electric vehicle charging
- Climate change and resilience:
  - Policy CCR1: Surface water risk management
  - Policy CCR2: Sustainable Drainage Systems
  - Policy CCR3: Overheating and temperature resilience
- Natural environment:
  - Policy NE1: Public street lighting
  - Policy NE2: Private and commercial properties lighting
  - Policy NE3: Local Green Space designations
- Employment, facilities and services:
  - Policy EFS1: Loss or change of use of sites and premises
  - Policy EFS2: Proposals for new employment, facilities and services
  - Policy EFS3: Assets of Community Value

1.9. The draft NP does not include any site allocations.

c. Relationship with the West Berkshire Local Plan

1.10. The Stratfield Mortimer NP will sit alongside and complement the West Berkshire Local Plan Review (LPR, adopted June 2025)[1].

1.11. WBDC has commenced preparation of a new Local Plan. A Notice of Intention to Prepare the new West Berkshire Local Plan was published on 25 June 2026, alongside the first version of the Local Development Scheme (timetable). Upon adoption, the new Local Plan will supersede the Local Plan Review (LPR).

[1] West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023 to 2041: https://westberks.gov.uk/local-plan-review.

2. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING

a. Introduction

2.1. This section of the document sets out whether the contents of the Stratfield Mortimer NP require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

2.2. The purpose of the Stratfield Mortimer NP is to provide planning policies to guide development in the designated Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Area.

2.3. SEA is required for all plans which may have a significant effect on the environment. A SEA aims to protect the environment at a high level, and ensures the environment is considered during the preparation and adoption of plans. This promotes sustainable development.

2.4. Not all neighbourhood plans will require a SEA to be carried out. To decide if a SEA is required, a screening exercise is used to look at the proposals in a neighbourhood plan and see if a significant effect is likely.

2.5. The legislative background set out below outlines the regulations that require the need for this screening exercise. A screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Stratfield Mortimer NP and the need for a full SEA has been undertaken.

b. Legislative background

2.6. The requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) derives from European Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, which was transposed into domestic law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations). In October 2023, the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 received Royal Assent, introducing a range of reforms to the planning system. Among other changes, the Act provides for the replacement of the current SEA regime with a system of Environmental Outcomes Reports (EORs). The detailed requirements and transitional arrangements for EORs will be set out in subsequent regulations. Until those provisions are brought into force, the requirement to undertake SEA remains in accordance with the existing legislative framework.

2.7. Under the SEA Regulations, plans and programmes that set the framework for future development consent of projects may require environmental assessment where they are likely to have significant effects on the environment. The purpose of the assessment is to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the plan. In this case, consideration must be given to whether the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is likely to have significant environmental effects.

2.8. There are exceptions to this requirement for plans that determine the use of a small area at local level, and for minor modifications if it has been determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

2.9. In accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, WBDC is required to determine whether a plan is likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore requires SEA. Where the Council determines that SEA is not required, Regulation 9(3) requires it to

prepare a statement setting out the reasons for that determination. This Screening Report constitutes the Council's Regulation 9(3) statement.

c. The SEA screening process

2.10. Producing the Stratfield Mortimer NP requires the Council to look at whether a SEA is required; this is known as the screening process. The screening is based on the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and considers the likely significant environmental effects as a result of the NP.

d. SEA determination and reasons for determination

2.11. The Council has assessed the draft Stratfield Mortimer NP against the criteria set out within Annex II of European Directive 2001/42/EC and Schedule 1 of the Regulations (as summarised in Table 2.1 below).

Screening analysis

Design

2.12. The draft NP includes three design policies which collectively seek to maintain the rural setting and identity of the settlement by requiring development to respect local building character, scale and density; provide a sensitive transition to the surrounding countryside; protect dark skies, landscape features, green infrastructure and key views; incorporate climate resilience measures; and reflect the traditional pattern, layout and appearance of the village. They also seek to avoid suburbanisation by promoting soft settlement edges, landscaped streets, locally appropriate materials and building forms, and the retention of the visual and physical relationship between the village and its surrounding countryside.

2.13. It is unlikely that these policies will result in any likely adverse environmental effects, either alone or in combination with other plans in the area. It is likely that the policies will result in minor improvements to the local environment.

Housing

2.14. The NP is not seeking to include allocations for housing. The draft NP includes two policies which seek to meet identified local housing needs by promoting a mix of smaller and more affordable homes, including apartments and bungalows, while limiting the delivery of larger dwellings. The policies also support the provision and long-term retention of housing for older residents, helping to enable people to remain within the parish throughout different stages of their lives.

2.15. The policies would not result in additional development and therefore is not expected to result in any adverse environmental effects.

Community energy

2.16. There are two community energy policies within the draft NP. Policies CE1 and CE2 seek to support the transition to a low-carbon and sustainable energy future in Stratfield Mortimer by encouraging appropriately scaled renewable and low-carbon energy schemes, including community-led energy projects, while ensuring that impacts on the landscape, biodiversity and residential amenity are minimised. The policies also support the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure in new

non-residential developments and public car parks, helping to reduce carbon emissions, facilitate the uptake of cleaner transport and improve the parish's resilience to future energy and transport needs.

2.17. It is unlikely that the policies will result in any adverse environmental effects, either alone or in combination with other plans in the area. There is the potential for the policies to result in minor improvements to the local environment.

Climate change and resilience policies

2.18. There are three policies which have regard to climate change and resilience. Policies CCR1, CCR2 and CCR3 seek to ensure that new development is resilient to the impacts of climate change by reducing flood risk, promoting sustainable drainage and addressing the effects of rising temperatures. The policies require development to incorporate surface water management measures capable of accommodating extreme rainfall events, achieve reductions in runoff through Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), and include design and landscaping measures that minimise overheating, such as green infrastructure, tree planting, natural ventilation and climate-responsive building design. Together, the policies aim to improve flood resilience, support climate adaptation and enhance environmental quality within the parish.

2.19. It is unlikely that these policies will result in any likely adverse environmental effects, either alone or in combination with other plans in the area. It is likely that these policies will result in minor improvements to the local environment.

Natural Environment

2.20. The draft NP includes three policies in relation to the natural environment. Policies NE1, NE2 and NE3 seek to protect and enhance the natural environment and rural character of Stratfield Mortimer by maintaining its dark skies, minimising the harmful effects of artificial lighting and safeguarding important green spaces. The policies restrict new public lighting to situations where it is necessary for public safety, require private and commercial lighting to avoid adverse impacts on residential amenity, landscape character and wildlife, and designate a number of locally significant areas as Local Green Spaces for their recreational, ecological, landscape and community value. Together, the policies seek to conserve the parish's environmental quality, biodiversity, tranquillity and green infrastructure.

2.21. It is unlikely that these policies will result in any adverse environmental effects, either alone or in combination with other plans in the area. It is likely that the policies will result in minor improvements to the local environment.

Employment, facilities and services

2.22. Policies EFS1, EFS2 and EFS3 seek to support and strengthen the local economy, community facilities and services within Stratfield Mortimer. The policies seek to safeguard existing employment sites and premises from unjustified loss, direct new employment, commercial and service-related development towards the village commercial centre and other sustainable locations and promote the vitality and viability of the centre as the focus for local services and employment. They also seek to protect valued community facilities and Assets of Community Value from loss unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer viable or suitable replacement provision is made. Together, the policies aim to maintain local employment

opportunities, support sustainable economic development and safeguard important community assets and services for the benefit of residents.

2.23. It is unlikely that these policies will result in any likely adverse environmental effects, either alone or in combination with other plans in the area.

2.24. The Council has assessed the draft Stratfield Mortimer NP against the criteria set out within Annex II of European Directive 2001/42/EC and Schedule 1 of the Regulations (as summarised in Table 2.1 below).

Table 2.1: Assessment of likely significant effects (screening)

Criterion (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of Regulations)	**West Berkshire District Council's Response**
1. Characteristics of plans or programmes, having regard, in particular, 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 NP, if 'made' (adopted), will become part of the statutory development plan for the district. It will not set a framework for other plans or policies outside of the Stratfield Mortimer NP area. It will help inform decisions within the parish relating to development up to 2041. It sets out a local policy framework for development proposals and does not allocate sites for development. It supports the implementation of policies in the adopted West Berkshire LPR which have been subject to SEA and assessed as having no significant effects. **Overall, there would be no significant effect.**
(b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The NP does not influence other plans or programmes in the LPR; instead it supplements them. The NP will form part of the statutory Development Plan for West Berkshire and will only apply to the designated Neighbourhood Area, the parish of Stratfield Mortimer. Neighbourhood Plans by their nature are locally driven and focused, providing detailed guidance to local development. **Overall, there would be no significant effect.**
(c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	The NP contributes to the achievement of sustainable development at the neighbourhood level. A number of policies seek to promote sustainable development that can be considered to be in conformity with the NPPF. This is a 'basic condition'/requirement

Criterion (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of Regulations)	West Berkshire District Council's Response
	of the Neighbourhood Plan making process. The draft plan includes policies that seek to protect and enhance the natural environment and rural character of the parish, support the transition to a low-carbon and sustainable energy future, and improve the resilience of new development to climate change. **Overall, there would be no significant effect, and it is likely that the draft policies proposed will result in minor improvements to the local environment.**
(d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	The draft Stratfield Mortimer NP seeks to minimise existing environmental problems in the area. The plan does not propose development that would give rise to environmental problems. **Overall, there would be no significant effect, and it is likely that the draft policies proposed will result in improvements to the local environment.**
(e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of [European] Community legislation on the environment (eg. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	Strategies relating to waste disposal or water protection, and other environmental legislation, are dealt with in higher tier plans which have already been tested in full. The NP will not affect the implementation of environmental legislation. **Overall, there would be no significant effect.**
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected [by the plan or programme], having regard, in particular, to:	
(a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	The NP will provide a context and framework to guide future development within the Neighbourhood Area and will supplement adopted planning policy. It will guide development up to 2041. It includes policies that seek to protect and improve the environment, and to minimise the effects of development on its immediate surroundings and ensure development is delivered to high levels of sustainability. No significant effects are envisaged due to the scope and duration of the NP.
(b) The cumulative nature of the effects	As above. **No significant effects are envisaged.**

Criterion (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of Regulations)	West Berkshire District Council's Response
(c) The transboundary* nature of the effects ** Transboundary effects are understood to be in other Member States*	Effects will be local with limited effects on neighbouring areas. No transboundary effects are expected. The NP will supplement adopted policy and **is not envisaged, in itself, to have a significant effect.**
(e) The risks to human health or the environment (eg. due to accidents)	No risks to human health have been identified as a result of the proposed policies in the NP. In fact, the plan is likely to improve human health as it includes Local Green Space designations. Policies relating to environmental nuisance, pollution control and noise pollution are included in higher tier planning documents. **Overall, there would be no significant effect.**
(f) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The Neighbourhood Area is 1,250 hectares in size. At the time of the 2021 Census, the population was 3,997. Neighbourhood Plans cover small geographical areas. They contain non-strategic development plan policies to address specific local issues The NP will provide a context and framework to guide future sustainable development in the area. The majority of effects would be focused within Stratfield Mortimer Parish. **Overall, there would be no significant effect.**
(g) 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 And The effects on areas or landscapes which have a	Stratfield Mortimer Parish has the following: • 15 Listed Buildings, including St Marys The Virgin Church (Grade II), Mortimer Station Bridge (Grade II), Mortimer Station (Grade II*) and a Brick Passenger Shelter opposite Mortimer Railway Station (Grade II*) • Wokefield Park is a Grade II* building located in grounds adjacent to the NP area • 7 Local Wildlife Sites, including Mortimer Fairground and part of Wokefield Common • Biodiversity Opportunity Area • Four areas of Common Land • Areas of Ancient Woodland

Criterion (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of Regulations)	West Berkshire District Council's Response
recognised national, Community or international protection status	• Tree Preservation Orders • Four Scheduled Monuments (burial mounds) • The area has a number of archaeological areas, lines and points, notably the Devil's Highway, a Roman Road radiating from Roman Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum), which marks much of the southern boundary of the Parish. Silchester (the Roman town of Calleva Atrebatum) is located approximately 1.5km from the NP area • Part of the NP is located within 7km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, and a very small area is within 5km • Conifer plantations dominate the landscape to the northwest of the Parish Within the NP area there are no known: • International or national conservation designations (or adjacent to it), including SSSIs or other ecological or wildlife designations outside of those listed above; • National landscape designations such as National Landscape; • World or National Heritage Sites; • Registered Historic Parks and Gardens; • Conservation Areas; • Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) or Local Geological Sites The draft plan policies include support for: • respecting local character and maintaining the rural nature of the parish; • ensuring a mix of housing types and tenures; • encouraging community-led renewable energy projects; • ensuring resilience to climate change; • reducing flood risk; • maintaining the dark landscape character of the parish; • enhancing the vitality and viability of Mortimer's commercial centre; • and enhancing the vitality and viability of the parish for employment, facilities, and services.

Criterion (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of Regulations)	West Berkshire District Council's Response
	It is not considered that the NP is likely to have any significant effects on local heritage assets or nature conservation interests and it is likely that the draft policies proposed will result in minor improvements to the local environment. As such, an SEA of the plan is not considered necessary.

2.25. Based on these findings, WBDC's conclusion is that a **SEA of the Stratfield Mortimer NP is not necessary** under the SEA Regulations because it has been demonstrated that there will be no significant environmental effects as a result of the NP.

3. HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT SCREENING

a. Introduction

3.1. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017[2] requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of development plans (including Neighbourhood Plans).

3.2. HRA is a process which determines whether a plan or project would adversely affect the integrity of Habitats Sites either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

b. Legislative background

3.3. Under the provisions of European Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (the Habitats Directive)[3], transposed into British law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/579)[4] a HRA is required to assess the potential effects of a land-use plan against the conservation objectives of any European sites designated for their importance to nature conservation. The Regulations ensure that the habitat and species protection and standards derived from EU law will continue to apply after Brexit. Where previously sites were referred to as European or Natura 2000, the sites now make up the UK 'national site network'. For the purposes of this screening report the term 'Habitats Sites' is used to represent the network.

3.4. Habitats Sites provide valuable ecological infrastructure for the protection of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species of exceptional importance within the UK. These sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated under the Habitats Directive and, Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated under European Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive)[5]. Designation of SACs also has regard to the threats of degradation or destruction to which the sites are exposed and to the coherence of the national site network now the UK has exited from the EU. Additionally, the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) at paragraph 181 requires that sites designated under the Ramsar Convention (The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat) are treated likewise for the purpose of considering development proposals that may affect them.

c. Purpose of HRA

3.5. The overall purpose of the HRA is to conclude whether or not a proposal or policy, or whole plan, would adversely affect the integrity of the Habitats Site in question either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. This is judged in terms of the implications of the plan for the 'qualifying features' for which the Habitats Site was designated, those being:

- SACs: Annex I habitat types and Annex II species of the Habitats Directive;

[2] Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made
[3] EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:1992L0043:20070101:EN:PDF
[4] The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2019/579/regulation/35/made
[5]

- SPAs: Annex I birds and regularly occurring migratory species not listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive and;
- Ramsar sites: the reasons for listing the site under the Convention.

3.6. This includes screening for potential impacts on Habitats Sites. If there is a probability or a risk that there will be significant effects on site integrity having regard to the site's conservation objectives, then the plan or project must be subject to an Appropriate Assessment of its implications on the site.

3.7. Depending on the outcome of HRA, a plan may need to be amended to eliminate or reduce potentially damaging effects on Habitats Sites. If adverse effects on the integrity of the site cannot be ruled out, the plan can only be adopted where there are no alternative solutions that would have a lesser effect and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest sufficient to justify adopting the plan despite its effects on the Habitats Sites.

3.8. It should be noted that HRA is based on the precautionary principle meaning that where uncertainty or doubt remains, a likely significant effect should be assumed. This requirement to adhere to the precautionary approach is established by case law and clarified by domestic Government guidance.

d. HRA process

3.9. There are four stages to HRA as outlined in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1: HRA stages

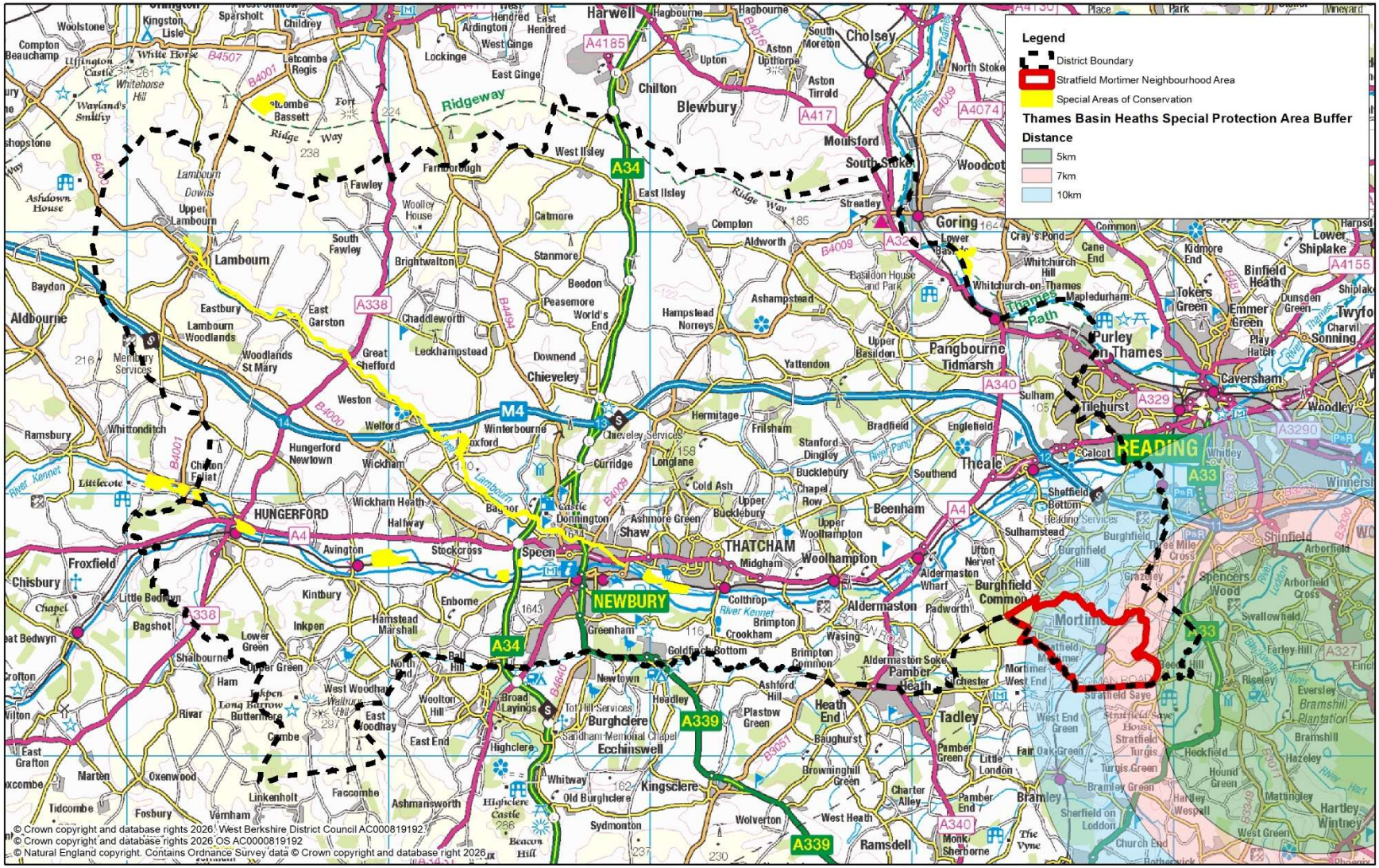
HRA stage	Purpose
1. Screening (this document)	Process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Habitats Site(s), either alone or in combination with other projects or plans and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant. Where there is no significant effect, the report concludes at this stage. It is important to note that following the judgement from the Court of Justice in April 2018 for the European Union in the *People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta* case, Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive should be interpreted as meaning that mitigation measures should be assessed as part of an Appropriate Assessment, and should not be taken into account at the screening stage.
2. Appropriate Assessment	Consideration of the impact on the integrity of the site(s), either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Where adverse impacts cannot be avoided by means of alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan or project, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts should be provided to include the necessary measures and timescales. If effects remain after all alternatives and mitigation measures have been applied, then the next stage applies.
3. Compensatory measures	Assessment of the compensatory measures where, in light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest, it is deemed that the plan should proceed. This is

HRA stage	Purpose
	not a standard part of the process and will only be carried out in exceptional circumstances and is likely to result in onerous requirements.

e. HRA screening

3.10. Within West Berkshire, there are three SACs (River Lambourn, Kennet and Lambourn floodplain and Kennet Valley Alderwoods), and no Ramsar sites or SPAs. However, a very small area of the district around Beech Hill (see Figure 3.1 below) falls within the 5km buffer area of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA which Natural England has determined as being needed to regulate development near the SPA.

Figure 3.1: Location of SACs and Thames Basin Heaths SPA buffer within West Berkshire District


Legend
District Boundary
Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Area
Special Areas of Conservation
Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Buffer
Distance
5km
7km
10km
NEWBURY
READING
THATCHAM
HUNGERFORD
Harwell
Chilton
Blewbury
Cholsey
Goring
Lambourn
Aldbourne
Purley on Thames
Pangbourne
Tidmarsh
Theale
Tadley
Ecchinswell
Kingsclere
Ramsdell
Burghclere
Woolhampton
Aldermaston
Beenham
Speen
Shaw
Chieveley
Compton
Streatley
Moulsford
Woodcote
Caversham
Tilehurst
Calcot
Whitchurch-on-Thames
Basildon House and Park
Ashampstead
Hampstead Norreys
Yattendon
Upper Basildon
Aldworth
Farnborough
West Ilsley
East Ilsley
Fawley
Brightwalton
Catmore
Stanmore
Beedon
Peasemore
World's End
Downend
Chaddleworth
Leckhampstead
Great Shefford
Eastbury
Lambourn Woodlands
Woodlands St Mary
East Garston
South Fawley
Lambourn Downs
Upper Lambourn
Woolley House
Ridgeway
Ridge Way
Whitehorse Hill
Wayland's Smithy
Uffington Castle
White Horse
Letcombe Regis
Letcombe Bassett
Childrey
Sparsholt
Kingston Lisle
Woolstone
Compton Beauchamp
Ardington
West Ginge
East Hendred
Lockinge
East Ginge
Upton
Aston Upthorpe
Aston Tirrold
South Moreton
North Stoke
Streatley
Goring
Cray's Pond
Lower Basildon
Whitchurch Hill
Cane End
Common
Kidmore End
Binfield Heath
Lower Shiplake
Tokers Green
Emmer Green
Dunsden Green
Twyford
Charvil
Sonning
Play Hatch
Mapledurham
Thames Path
Sulham
Englefield
Bradfield
Stanford Dingley
Bucklebury
Southend
Chapel Row
Upper Bucklebury
Ashmore Green
Curridge
Longlane
Cold Ash
Hermitage
Frilsham
Winterbourne
Chieveley Services
Welford
Wickham
Wickham Heath
Hungerford Newtown
Weston
Great Shefford
Woodlands St Mary
Membury Services
Whittonditch
Ramsbury
Littlecote
Chilton Foliat
Kennet
Lambourn
Baydon
Aldbourne
Ashbury
Uffington
Faringdon
Shrivenham
Wantage
Didcot
Wallingford
Henley-on-Thames
Maidenhead
Windsor
Ascot
Bracknell
Wokingham
Basingstoke
Newbury
Hungerford
Marlborough
Swindon
Oxford
Abingdon
Reading
Slough
Aldermaston Wharf
Aldermaston Soke
Padworth
Colthrop
Brimpton
Brimpton Common
Crookham
Greenham
Wasing
Midgham
Ufton Nervet
Sulhamstead
Burghfield
Burghfield Common
Mortimer
Mortimer West End
Pamber Heath
Pamber End
Pamber Green
Heath End
Baughurst
Tadley
Plastow Green
Headley
Newtown
Ashford Hill
Goldfield Bottom
Broad Layings
Tot Hill Services
Sandham Memorial Chapel
Highclere
East End
Woolton Hill
North End
Ball Hill
West Woodhay
Walbury Hill
Long Barrow
Buttermere
Combe
East Woodhay
Inkpen
Ham
Shalbourne
Upper Green
Lower Green
Bagshot
Little Bedwyn
Froxfield
Chisbury
Chapel
Avington
Stockcross
Halfway
Enborne
Hamstead Marshall
Kintbury
Inkpen
Bagnor
Castle Donnington
Lower Woolhampton
Upper Woolhampton
Beenham
Sheffield Bottom
Reading Services
Burghfield Hill
Three Mile Cross
Shinfield
Arborfield
Spencers Wood
Swallowfield
Farley Hill
Riseley
Eversley
Bramshill
Hazeley
Hartley Wintney
Hartley Wespall
Mattingley
Hound Green
Heckfield
Turgis Green
Stratfield Saye
Stratfield Turgis
Bramley
Bramley Green
Sherfield on Loddon
Church End
West Green
Fair Oak Green
Little London
Browninghill Green
Charter Alley
Pamber End
Monk Sherborne
The Vyne
Wolverton
West Heath
Old Burghclere
Whitway
Highclere Castle
Beacon Hill
Sydmonton
Ashmansworth
Faccombe
Linkenholt
Vernham
Fosbury
Tidcombe
Marten
Oxenwood
East Grafton
Crofton
Wilton
Rivar
Combe
Tot Hill
Sandham
Ridgeway
Ridge Way
Lambourn Downs
Whitehorse Hill
Wayland's Smithy
Uffington Castle
Fort
Ridge Way
Thames
Kennet
Loddon
Blackwater
Hart
A34
A4
M4
A339
A340
A329
A33
A327
A3290
A4155
A4074
A417
A4185
A338
B4494
B4009
B4640
B3051
B4507
B4001
B4000
B4016
B4526
B3349
B3270
B3030
B3031
B3011
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B3016

3.11. A very small area of the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Area falls within the 5km buffer area of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, and part of the area is within the 7km buffer area (see Figure 3.1 above). The neighbourhood area is not in close proximity to any of the three SACs.

3.12. The 5km boundary for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA has been determined by Natural England as a buffer area to regulate development near the SPA. It is possible that certain types of development up to 7km from the boundary of the SPA could have an impact on the SPA. Proposals for new residential development of one or more net additional dwellings up to 5km from the boundary of the SPA, and residential development of over 50 dwellings located between 5 and 7km of the boundary of the SPA, will therefore require screening to assess whether they will have a likely significant effect on the SPA. Where a significant effect exists or cannot be excluded, an Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 would need to be undertaken.

3.13. The scope of the NP has been explained above. The NP does not propose to allocate any sites. It is therefore considered unnecessary to carry out an Appropriate Assessment of the NP. The Council has concluded, applying the precautionary approach, that the Stratfield Mortimer NP in itself will have no significant adverse impact on the integrity of Habitats Sites. Individual planning applications will continue to be screened for HRA where required.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1. Based on the findings in Sections 2 and 3 above, WBDC's conclusion is that a SEA of the Stratfield Mortimer NP is not required under the SEA Directive and Regulations.

4.2. It is also WBDC's conclusion that a HRA appropriate assessment is not required.

4.3. The three statutory consultation bodies were consulted between 16 July 2026 and 20 August 2026. Historic England and Natural England responded to confirm that they agreed with WBDC's conclusion. Their responses are included in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

4.4. No response was received from the Environment Agency.

4.5. Following consultation with the statutory consultation bodies, this report confirms WBDC's final determination.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. This screening report assesses whether the Stratfield Mortimer NP is required to be subject to a SEA in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. It also considers whether the NP requires an Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations).

5.2. On the basis of the screening process detailed in this report, it is the Council's opinion that the Stratfield Mortimer NP is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects. Consequently, the Plan does not require a SEA under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. In addition, it is not considered likely to have a significant effect on any Habitats Site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects and therefore does not require Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

5.3. This determination has been made on 21 August 2026.

Appendix 1: Consultation response from Historic England

Historic England

By email only to [redacted]

Our ref: PL00802407
Your ref: Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan SEA

Main: [redacted]

Date: 21/08/2026

To whom it may concern

Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Opinion

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on this consultation. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied.

The information supplied indicates that the plan will not have significant effects on the historic environment. We also note there are no sites allocated for development.

On the basis of the information supplied, and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with the Council that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

The views of the other two statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for an SEA is made.

Positive About Disabled People
Stonewall DIVERSITY CHAMPION

Historic England

I should be pleased if you can send a copy of the determination as required by REG 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

We should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by you with your correspondence. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the SEA process and, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan) where we consider that, despite the SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the relevant local authorities are closely involved throughout the preparation of the plan and its assessment. They are best placed to advise on; local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the Historic Environment Record (HER), how the allocation, policy or proposal can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets.

Please do contact me, via email if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Louise Dandy
Historic Places Adviser

Appendix 2: Consultation response from Natural England

Date: 19 August 2026
Our ref: 553688
Your ref: Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan

Ms Laila Bassett
West Berkshire Council

BY EMAIL ONLY
PlanningPolicy@westberks.gov.uk

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

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Bassett

Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan - SEA/HRA Screening Opinion

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 16 July 2026.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:

- **significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,**
- **significant effects on Habitats sites[1], either alone or in combination, are unlikely.**

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the Planning Practice Guidance. This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

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

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent

[1] Habitats sites are those referred to in the National Planning Policy Framework (Annex 2 - glossary) as "any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites".

as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's standing advice on protected species.

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission standing advice.

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle
Consultations Team