

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 Baldons Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

5 NOVEMBER 2024

SUMMARY

Following consultation with the statutory bodies, South Oxfordshire District Council (the 'Council') determines that the Baldons Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Review 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 Baldons Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Review requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2011/42/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

4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Table 1 in Appendix 1 sets out the criteria from the Practical Guide, along with an assessment of the Baldons NDP Review against each criterion to ascertain whether a SEA is required.

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

THE BALDONS NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW

9. The Baldons NDP Review will contain the following vision, objectives and policies:

Vision and Objectives

The salient characteristics of The Baldons are identified as a small but cohesive community in a rural setting, rich in its heritage and landscape quality and with active social institutions including pub, church and school. The Baldons is already an outstanding place to live. Our collective vision is that its character should be conserved and even improved for the present and future generations of its inhabitants by means of the following positive actions by the community:

- Conserve and enhance our heritage and the rural character of the villages.
- Enable the sustainable growth of our population through the modest growth of housing numbers in the villages.
- Encourage a mix of size, tenure and style of housing to enable diversity in the population.
- Improve and support the provision of community facilities, infrastructure and small-scale business.
- Maintain, nurture and enhance our environmental assets particularly the Green and the intimate setting of the villages in the surrounding countryside.

Policies

Policy 1 – General Principles

Policy 2- New Houses

Site 15MB is the only remaining potential development site, identified in the made 2018 NDP. This is an infill site on the Green in Marsh Baldon suitable for a single dwelling. Sites 02TB, 08TB and 16TB have an approved planning application and are waiting to be developed. Should, for any reason, these projects fail, and development does not take place, the policy defines the number of houses that would be appropriate for any subsequent application as follows:

- Site 02TB – Under this revised policy this site is appropriate for 3 houses. Permission was granted for 6 single storey retirement properties, in exceptional circumstances.
- Site 08TB – Permission was granted for 2 small houses which was appropriate for this site. Any new planning application should not exceed this number of dwellings.
- Site 16MB – Permission was granted for 5 houses which the PC considers was contrary to Policy 2. Under this revised policy, the site, which has direct frontage onto the Green is an infill site for a maximum of 2 houses.

Policy 3 – Local Gaps

Policy 4 – Housing Mix

Policy 5 – Design Code

Policy 6 – Marsh Baldon Green (Local Green Space)

Policy 7 – Community Facilities

Policy 8 – Infrastructure

Policy 9 – Business

10. The Baldons NDP was adopted as part of the district councils development plan on 11 October 2018. The plan was tested against the now superseded Core Strategy and Saved policies from the Local Plan, however it was prepared considering the emerging Local Plan, particularly the emerging policy direction and its reasoning and evidence. The Baldons NDP Review will contain most of the policies from the previous NDP which aim to protect the built up area of the village, through protecting its design and character whilst also accommodating the identified housing and community needs.
11. This plan does include the inclusion of a design code and policy. There is also reference to this document within the policies throughout the document. There are some changes to other existing policies within the plan. The plan has updated Policy 2 -New housing as Site 15MB is the only remaining potential development site, identified in the made 2018 NDP. This is an infill site on the Green in Marsh Baldon suitable for a single dwelling. Sites 02TB, 08TB and 16TB have an approved planning application and are waiting to be developed. Should, for any reason, these projects fail, and development does not take place, the policy defines the number of houses that would be appropriate for any subsequent application. The revised NDP does not include any more development than the made 2018 NDP and therefore would not result in further likely significant effects on the environment or need for a further SEA.
12. Given most of the sites have gained planning permission and the level of development proposed in the NDP Review is minor, it is concluded that the implementation of the Baldons NDP Review would not result in likely significant effects on the environment.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

13. The screening opinion was sent to Natural England, The Environment Agency, Oxfordshire County Council and Historic England on 5 September 2024 for a four-week consultation period. The responses in full are presented in Appendix 4.
14. The Environment Agency did not provide comments on this SEA Screening.
15. Historic England confirmed their agreement that the Baldons NDP Review does not need an SEA.
16. Natural England confirmed their agreement that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan and also agreed that the Baldons Plan Review does not require further HRA assessment. They did not have any specific comments on the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review.

CONCLUSION

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

Authorised by: Tim Oruye – Head of Policy and Programmes

Signed: 

Dated: 5 November 2024

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

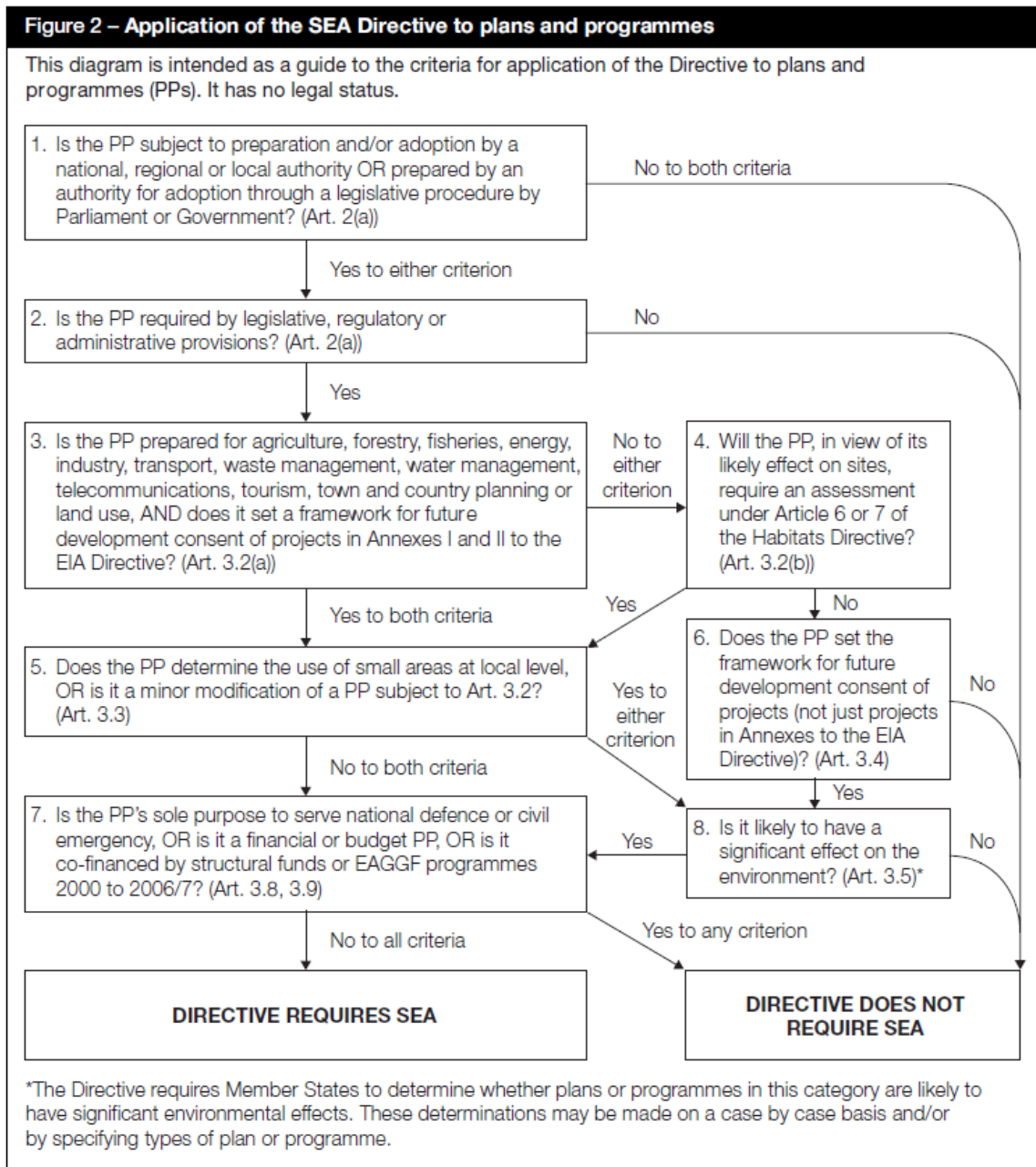


Table 1: Application of SEA Directive as shown in Appendix 1

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>	Y	<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 Baldons NDP Steering Group, a working group who report to the Baldons Parish Council (as the “relevant body”) and will be “made” by South Oxfordshire 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>	Y	<p>Whilst the Neighbourhood Development Plan is not a requirement and is optional under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, it will, if “made”, form part of the Development Plan for the District. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive.</p>

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

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

Appendix 2 - Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Baldons Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

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 South Oxfordshire District Council’s Local Plan³ as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Baldons Neighbourhood Development Plan Review 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:

“105.—(1) Where a land use plan—

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

² The South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (December 2020)

³ South Oxfordshire Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment Report (March 2019)

- (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."

EUROPEAN SITES

5. The HRA of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 used a screening distance of 17km to identify European sites which could be affected by development from the plan. This distance has been subject to consultation with Natural England and reflects the average travel to work distance in the district. As such, the same distance has been applied in this HRA Screening.
6. The following European sites lie wholly or partly within 17km of The Baldons and have been taken into consideration:
 1. Little Wittenham SAC – approximately 6.9km (South Oxfordshire District Council)
7. 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.
8. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of public access and disturbance, and invasive fish species upon great crested newt. With regard to the types of development that may be brought forward in the Local Plan, visitor disturbance could impact the site.
 2. Aston Rowant SAC – approximately 16.5km (South Oxfordshire District Council)
9. Aston Rowant is classified as a SAC because it supports one of the largest remaining populations of juniper in lowland Britain. It is selected

as an example of juniper formations on the chalk in the south east of England. At this site juniper is present as part of a mixed scrub community but also occurs as isolated bushes in chalk grassland. In common with most lowland populations of juniper, successful reproduction and survival of new generations of bushes is extremely rare and conservation is currently dependent upon significant levels of management intervention. The low level of reproductive success is the main threat to the feature at this site. Aston Rowant also supports Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests although this is not a primary reason for classification as a SAC.

10. The main pressures and threats to this site include an unsustainable on-site population, changes in species distribution, disease of juniper as well as the impacts of air pollution and the risks of atmospheric nitrogen deposition upon juniper. Additionally, conflicting conservation objectives threaten beech.

3. Cothill Fen SAC – Approximately 9.2km (Vale of White Horse District Council)

11. Cothill Fen is designated as a SAC for its calcium-rich, spring fed fens and alder woodlands on floodplains. Cothill Fen is an exceptionally important site with an outstanding range of nationally rare habitats which support a large number of rare invertebrates and plants. The habitats consist of calcareous fen, calcareous grassland, woodland and scrub of varying degrees of wetness. The habitat supports over 330 species of vascular plant and over 120 nationally scarce or rare 13 invertebrates, including the nationally rare Southern Damselfly (*Coenagrion mercuriale*).

12. 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 waterfed fens.

13. With regard to the types of development that may be brought forward in the Local Plan, air pollution, and water quality and quantity could impact the site.

4. Oxford Meadow SAC – approximately 16.4km (Oxford City)

14. Oxford Meadow is designated as a SAC for its lowland hay meadows and creeping marshworts.

15. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of hydrological changes and the invasive species of *Crassula* upon creeping marshwort.

ASSESSMENT

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

Physical loss of/damage to habitat:

17. Any development resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan will be located within the neighbourhood area. There are no European sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area, therefore loss of habitat from within the boundaries of a European site can be ruled out in relation to all sites.

18. Loss of habitat from outside of the boundaries of a European site could still affect the integrity of that site if it occurs in an area used by the qualifying species of the site (e.g. for off-site breeding, foraging or roosting). One of the European sites included in this assessment have mobile species amongst their qualifying features that could travel outside of the site to make use of other areas of habitat:

- Little Wittenham SAC; great crested newt.

19. The HRA (March 2019) produced alongside the Local Plan 2035 states that great crested newts will travel away from their breeding ponds, during the terrestrial phase of their lifecycle, but not large distance. 500 metres is considered an appropriate buffer distance inside which great crested newts might be found, from their breeding location. The site listing for Little Wittenham SAC states that great crested newts have been found to range several hundred metres into the site's woodland blocks. Research has found that great crested newts at Little Wittenham SAC migrate within woodland and do not over-winter in the arable farmland. All of the woodland within 500 metres of the ponds at Little Wittenham SAC is within the SAC boundary. Therefore potential loss of or damage to off-site habitats associated with Little Wittenham SAC can be screened out of further assessment.

Non-physical disturbance e.g. noise/vibration or light pollution:

20. The most recent HRA of the South Oxford Local Plan (March 2019) states:

'Using a precautionary approach, we have assumed that the effect of noise, vibration and light are most likely to be significant if development takes place within 500 metres of a European site with qualifying features sensitive to these disturbances, or known off-site breeding, foraging or roosting areas.'

21. None of the European sites are within 500 metres of the designated area. Therefore, effects in relation to noise, vibration and light pollution can be screened out of further assessment.

Air pollution;

22. Air pollution is most likely to affect European sites where plant, soil and water habitats are the qualifying feature, but some qualifying animal species may also be affected, either directly or indirectly, by any deterioration in habitat as a result of air pollution. Deposition of pollutants to the ground and vegetation can alter the characteristics of the soil, affecting the pH and nitrogen availability that can then affect plant health, productivity and species composition.

23. Based on the Highways Agency Design for Road and Bridges (DMRB) Manual Volume 11, Section 3, Part 120 (which was produced to provide advice regarding the design, assessment and operation of trunk roads (including motorways)), it is assumed that air pollution from roads is unlikely to be significant beyond 200m from the road itself.

24. The European sites within 17km of The Baldons that are within 200m of strategic roads are Aston Rowant SAC (M40). As highlighted above The Baldons are approximately 16.5km from the Aston Rowant.

25. In relation to the Aston Rowant SAC the HRA (March 2019) states:

'In light of the above analysis, it is concluded that the ecological effects of the predicted increase in NO_x concentrations and nutrient nitrogen deposition would either be negligible, or that any small effects would be highly unlikely to result in a deterioration in the condition of the qualifying features, and as such it is concluded that the in-combination effects of planned growth would not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the Aston Rowant SAC.'

26. Therefore, given the modest scale of proposed development in the Baldons Neighbourhood Plan Review and distance of the SACs from the proposed development, effects in relation to air quality can be screened out and do not need to be considered further.

Increased recreation pressure; and

27. The most recent HRA of the South Oxford Local Plan (March 2019) states:

'Natural England's Site Improvement Plans record the threats and pressures relevant to each European site. Public access or disturbance are not identified as current threats or pressures at the following sites, despite their lying close to large settlements:

Aston Rowant SAC, Hartslock Wood SAC, Cothill Fen SAC, and Oxford Meadow SAC.'

28. The HRA of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan sets out that the potential for effects depends upon the scale of development proposed and the features for which the site is designated. However, as a conservative estimate, it is assumed that any development within 7 km of a sensitive site could have impacts due to recreation. Where site specific information indicates that development beyond 7 km could produce recreation impacts, this will be taken into account; for example at Little Wittenham SAC, where development in the eastern fringes of the Vale of White Horse District could be relevant.
29. The Baldons are approximately 6.9km from Little Wittenham SAC, which is part of a larger site managed by the Earth Trust as a nature reserve. The areas which are most important to the population of great crested newts (GCN) have restricted access which is designed to prevent conflicts between the visiting public, the newts and their habitat.
30. The increased visitor levels which are likely to occur as a result of the modest increase in population in the Baldons may result in increased pressure on the habitats on the reserve as a whole. However, due to restricted access to the areas where newts are primarily found, the increased visitor numbers will be concentrated onto other habitats on the reserve. These habitats are not related to the primary reasons for the selection of the SAC.
31. Great crested newts are not believed to be particularly sensitive to human disturbance provided their breeding ponds are not affected and their primary terrestrial habitat and hibernacula are not adversely affected. Provided controls on access to the most sensitive areas are maintained (i.e. ponds and hibernacula are not disturbed) there is no reason to believe that there would be any significant effect on the integrity of the site or the primary reason for the selection of the site.

Changes to hydrological regimes.

32. European sites at which aquatic or wetland environments support qualifying features have the potential to be affected by changes in water quantity or quality. The European sites close to the Baldons are:
 - Little Wittenham SAC: its ponds support great crested newts, but changes to water quality or quantity have not been identified as an issue at this site – the site has therefore been screened out.
 - Oxford Meadow SAC: lowland hay meadow, identified as sensitive to hydrological changes.

- Cothill Fen SAC: has calcium rich springwater-fed fens that have been identified as sensitive to water pollution and hydrological changes.
33. The types of development that have the potential to affect water quality / quantity or flow regimes at sensitive European sites are residential or employment development that would involve significant increase in demand for water supply and treatment, and infrastructure development that requires significant excavation in proximity to watercourses or groundwater.
 34. The scale of development proposed in the Baldons Neighbourhood Plan Review is modest; therefore, likely significant effects in relation to water quality and quantity can be screened out and does not need to be considered further.
 35. The Council has considered the HRA of the Local Plan (March 2019) in respect of the potential in combination effects of the proposals in the Baldons Neighbourhood Plan Review. Notably the Baldons NDP Review does not propose additional development. There are some changes to other existing policies within the plan. The plan has updated Policy 2 - New housing as Site 15MB is the only remaining potential development site, identified in the original NDP. This is an infill site on the Green in Marsh Baldon suitable for a single dwelling. Sites 02TB, 08TB and 16TB have an approved planning application and are waiting to be developed. Should, for any reason, these projects fail, and development does not take place, the policy defines the number of houses that would be appropriate for any subsequent application but are not of a scale considered to cause any further likely significant effects than identified in the previous plan.
 36. The South Oxfordshire Local Plan covers the period from 2011 to 2035, the quantum of development proposed in the Local Plan includes some completed and committed development (Committed development includes sites under construction, with planning permission, made neighbourhood plan allocations and allocations carried forward from the Local Plan 2011 and Core Strategy). The policies that enabled those developments to be permitted have already been subject to HRA as part of the Core Strategy, Local Plan 2011 or as part of the HRA for the relevant NDP. Paragraph 5 to 37 of this assessment has considered how the development proposed in the Baldons Neighbourhood Plan Review is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. The Local Plan HRA (March 2019) has a section on neighbourhood plans in Appendix 2 page 89 which considered the in-combination effects of the housing allocations in neighbourhood plans and the Local Plan. This assessment considered the delivery of 15 dwellings allocated in the Baldons NDP. As the Baldons NDP Review is not allocating additional development than the 15 dwellings considered by the Local Plan HRA (March 2019) it is therefore not likely to give rise to significant in-combination effects.

CONCLUSION

37. The Baldons NDP Review 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 Baldons NDP Review 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 Baldons NDP Review 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 South Oxfordshire the Local Plan 2035.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	A Neighbourhood Development Plan must be in conformity with the Local Plan for the District. It does not influence other plans. The Baldons Neighbourhood Plan Review is unlikely to influence other Plans or Programmes within the statutory Development Plan.
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	National policy requires a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread through plan-making, including the Baldons NDP Review. A basic condition of the Baldons NDP Review is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The plan review includes a design code which defines Baldons character areas. It looks at the form and layout of the Baldons, it's rural character, materials and details, green features, sustainable features and rural hinterland which is aimed at development to meet the needs of residents now and in the future.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and	The environmental impact of the proposals within the Baldons NDP Review is likely to

	<p>be minimal due to the scale of the development proposed.</p> <p>The Baldons NDP Review area contains the following environmental designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BAP priority habitats - Ancient Woodland - Archaeological constraints - Protected species buffer - Tree Preservation Orders - Flood Zones 2 and 3 - Conservation Areas - Local Heritage Assets - Local Wildlife sites - Scheduled Ancient Monuments <p>There are the following SACs within 17km of the Baldons NDP Review. These are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Little Wittenham SAC – 6.9km - Aston Rowant SAC – 16.5km - Cothill Fen SAC- 9.2km - Oxford Meadow SAC 8.9km <p>There are also the following SSSI's located within the following distances of the Baldons NDP Review area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Little Wittenham SSSI -7.1km - Culham Brake SSSI- 6.4km - Sugworth SSSI 4.3km - Littlemore Railway Cutting SSSI 3.4km - Iffley Meadows SSSI- 4.3km - Brasenose Wood and Shotover Hill SSSI – 4.2km - Littleworth Brick Pit SSSI- 5.1km <p>Given the NDP is not allocating further development of dwellings than the previous plan, the amount of potential infill sites within the village and their relationship to the designations within the NDP area, the proposals in the plan are unlikely to harm these designations. Therefore, the effects are not likely to be significant.</p>
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of	The proposed development in the Baldons NDP Review has been judged not to have an impact on Community legislation.

Community legislation on the environment (for example, 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:	
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	<p>The Baldons NDP Review is likely to have modest but enduring positive environmental effects. The effects are not likely to be reversible, as they relate to development. However, the proposals are minor and will be of a local scale.</p> <p>The NDP Review proposes to introduce slight changes to existing policy wording and the inclusion of a Design Code.</p> <p>The effects will be of a local scale and the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan add detail to existing development plan policies offering protection to the natural environment, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and designated heritage assets to sustain and enhance their significance and setting. No new/additional development other than that allocated in the original NDP is proposed that would cause likely significant effects. Given the scale of what is proposed, the effects are not likely to be significant.</p>
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	It is intended that the positive social effects of providing residential development will have positive cumulative benefits for the area.
(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 NDP Review relates to the parish of the Baldons. The potential for environmental effects is likely to be small and localised.
(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:	The Baldons NDP Review area contains the following special natural characteristics and cultural heritage elements:

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

<p>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;</p> <p>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or</p> <p>(iii) intensive land-use; and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BAP priority habitats - Ancient Woodland - Archaeological constraints - Protected species buffer - Tree Preservation Orders - Flood Zones 2 and 3 - Conservation Areas - Local Heritage Assets - Local Wildlife sites - Scheduled Ancient Monuments <p>There are the following SACs within 17km of the Baldons NDP Review. These are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Little Wittenham SAC – 6.9km - Aston Rowant SAC – 16.5km - Cothill Fen SAC- 9.2km - Oxford Meadow SAC 8.9km <p>There are also the following SSSI's located within the following distances of the Baldons NDP Review area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Little Wittenham SSSI -7.1km - Culham Brake SSSI- 6.4km - Sugworth SSSI 4.3km - Littlemore Railway Cutting SSSI 3.4km - Iffley Meadows SSSI- 4.3km - Brasenose Wood and Shotover Hill SSSI – 4.2km - Littleworth Brick Pit SSSI- 5.1km <p>The Baldons NDP Review offers an opportunity to enhance the natural environment and the cultural heritage of the area through the proposals being considered.</p> <p>The adopted 2018 NDP already included policies ensuring development would maintain, restore or enhance the local landscape character. Taking into consideration the proposals in the plan Review, they are not considered to cause</p>
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	<p>likely significant effects to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.</p> <p>The HRA Screening Assessment in Appendix 2 concluded that the Baldons NDP Review is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects; therefore, an Appropriate Assessment of the Baldons NDP Review is not required.</p> <p>The objectives of the Baldons NDP Review continue to set out how the plan will honour the historic and rural character of the parish and its setting, as well as maintain and enhance the natural environment and green spaces. The plan is considered to have a neutral effect on cultural heritage because there is no indication given in the plan Review and appendices that the plan would go beyond national and local policy and therefore, it is considered that the effects of the proposals in the plan Review are not likely to be significant.</p> <p>Environmental quality standards or limit values are not considered likely to be significantly affected by the Baldons NDP Review.</p> <p>In light of the minor proposals in the Baldons NDP Review, the plan is also not likely to cause significant effects in relation to intensive land use.</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

THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

From: [Planning_THM](#)
To: [Planning Policy S&V](#)
Subject: Thank you for your email
Date: 05 September 2024 16:08:09
Attachments: [image006.png](#)

****EXTERNAL****

Notice Update: June 2024

If your email relates to:

- obtaining information and data (including flood risk and other environmental data)
- Freedom of Information
- the role of the Environment Agency

Please contact our Thames Area Customers and Engagement team: enquiries_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk

Please be aware that many of our datasets are now available online. Simply visit environment.data.gov.uk

For detailed guidance and advice on environmental permits please visit [Environmental management : Environmental permits - detailed information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING NOTICE

This notice only applies to Thames Area and relates only to planning advice.

Thank you for your email.

Planning application consultations and enquiries

Due to current operational challenges, there may be some delays in our response to planning consultations. We are working to address these challenges and ensure that we handle each case with the utmost care and attention. Please be assured that we are doing all we can to process consultations as efficiently as possible. We appreciate your understanding and patience during this time.

Pre-planning enquiries

If your enquiry relates to pre-planning advice from us, please email us at planning_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk

Please ensure you complete an enquiry form which can be obtained at: [Pre-planning application enquiry form \(preliminary opinion\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

We will be able to provide you with a free preliminary opinion if the proposed development is within our remit to comment.

Details of proposals we may be able to advise on can be found at: [Developers: get environmental advice on your planning proposals - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Requests for environmental data should be sent to enquiries_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk

Kind regards,

Thames Sustainable Places Team
Environment Agency

HISTORIC ENGLAND

Our ref: PL00796862

Your ref: Baldons Neighbourhood Plan Review SEA

Main: 020 7973 3700

e-seast@historicengland.org.uk

 @historicengland.org.uk

Date: 09/10/2024

To whom it may concern

Baldons Neighbourhood Plan Review 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 Review) 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 any significant effects on the historic environment.

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.

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

[REDACTED]
Historic Places Adviser

NATURAL ENGLAND

Date: 11 October 2024
Our ref: 487213
Your ref: Baldons Neighbourhood Plan

[REDACTED]
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

BY EMAIL ONLY
planning.policy@southandvale.gov.uk



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

T 0300 060 3900

Dear [REDACTED]

Baldons Neighbourhood Plan Review - SEA/HRA Screening Opinion Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 5 September 2024.

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 sites¹, 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 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



Consultations Team

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

From: [REDACTED] Oxfordshire County Council on behalf of Minerals & Waste Plan - E&E
To: [Planning Policy S&V](#)
Cc: [REDACTED] Oxfordshire County Council
Subject: RE: The Baldons Neighbourhood Plan Review SEA/HRA Screening Opinion – please reply by 3/10
Date: 01 October 2024 14:47:14

****EXTERNAL****

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for the below regarding the SEA/HRA Screening Opinion for the Baldons Neighbourhood Plan.

I can confirm that the Minerals and Waste Policy team have no comments but we would be pleased to be kept informed of the review of the Plan.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Planning Officer
Minerals & Waste | Economy & Place

E: [REDACTED]@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

T:

Oxfordshire County Council, County Hall, New Road, Oxford, OX1 1ND
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

My working days are Monday to Thursday.