

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 Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Development Plan

24 JANUARY 2025

SUMMARY

Following consultation with the statutory bodies, South Oxfordshire District Council (the 'Council') determines that the Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

INTRODUCTION

1. An initial screening opinion was used to determine whether or not the contents of the emerging Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) required a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC (the Directive) and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations).
2. Any land use plan or programme 'which sets the framework for future development consent of projects' must be screened according to a set of criteria from Annex II of the Directive and Schedule 1 of the Regulations. These criteria include exceptions for plans 'which determine the use of a small area at local level' or which only propose 'minor modifications to a plan', if it is determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.
3. The initial screening opinion was subject to consultation with Historic England, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Oxfordshire County Council. The results of the screening process are detailed in this Screening Statement, made available to the public.

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 Eye and Dunsden NDP 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.

EYE AND DUNSDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

9. The Eye and Dunsden NDP will contain the following objectives and policies:

Objectives:

Environment, Flooding and Sustainability:

- a) Identify, encourage, and promote environmental sustainability by considering the current and future effects of climate change and the provisioning for energy efficiency and carbon offset in activities within the parish. Require the use and installation of renewable energy in any new/modified residential dwellings and commercial, leisure and community developments.
- b) Conserve, enhance and protect the existing wildlife sites/habitats including local nature reserves, sites of specific scientific interest and tree preservations.
- c) Understand and conserve biodiversity within the parish and enhance natural habitats where possible
- d) Ensure all new development including mineral extraction/restoration schemes maximises the enhancement of the capacity of the flood plain in the parish.
- e) Require all new developments (residential or commercial) to enhance biodiversity within the parish through measures such as additional planting, green infrastructure, and eco-friendly maintenance.

Character of the Built Environment:

- a) Identify, encourage, and promote environmental sustainability by considering the current and future effects of climate change and the provisioning for energy efficiency and carbon offset in activities within the parish. Require the use and installation of renewable energy in any new/modified residential dwellings and commercial, leisure and community developments.

- b) Conserve, enhance and protect the existing wildlife sites/habitats including local nature reserves, sites of specific scientific interest and tree preservations.
- c) Understand and conserve biodiversity within the parish and enhance natural habitats where possible
- d) Ensure all new development including mineral extraction/restoration schemes maximises the enhancement of the capacity of the flood plain in the parish.
- e) Require all new developments (residential or commercial) to enhance biodiversity within the parish through measures such as additional planting, green infrastructure, and eco-friendly maintenance.

Landscape Character:

- a) Sustain the sensitive landscape setting of the parish's settlements including preserving and enhancing the area of natural landscape and agricultural land existing between settlements, neighbouring parishes, and larger urban areas.
- b) Conserve and enhance the existing network of trees, hedgerows, wetlands, public spaces, and rights of way.
- c) Maintain the rural character of approaches to the parish.
- d) Ensure mineral extraction restoration schemes provide for new public realm and that the terms of historic restoration agreements are honoured.

Local Travel and Safety

- a) To preserve, enhance and where possible expand pedestrian/non-motorised vehicular modes of transport within the parish by promoting improvements to the existing foot and bridle path network including its links with the Chilterns AONB and the River Thames.
- b) Improve pedestrian/non-motorised vehicular accessibility between settlements in the parish.
- c) Encourage traffic calming measures where appropriate to reduce the speed of vehicles travelling through the parish and to reduce air and noise pollution.
- d) Preserve and enhance public transport services through the parish.
- e) Minimise the likelihood of flooding and surface water drainage overflows.
- f) Continue to remain engaged in working towards a sustainable solution to traffic congestion across the River Thames including the possibility of a further river crossing, provided it does not have a negative impact on the parish

Community Spirit

- a) To seek opportunities wherever possible to maintain and enhance the social and economic vitality of the parish by supporting and expanding the range of services and facilities it provides for the benefit of the community.
- b) Engage with the parish's communities at all stages of the development and implementation of the NP to ensure the Plan meets their different needs and expectations, thereby enhancing its sense of community.

Policies:

POLICY ED-VL1 Landscape Character and Valued Landscapes

- *This policy looks to break the parish down into distinct Landscape Character areas, within which the landscape of the parish should be preserved and enhanced in line with the Landscape Character Assessment, Character Appraisal and Design Code.*

POLICY ED-VL2 Important Views

- *This policy establishes key views across the parish which require development to preserve or enhance the views through their design, height and massing.*

POLICY ED-VL3 Former Mineral Extraction Areas

- *This policy looks to manage former mineral extraction areas after they have completed their aftercare periods and are no longer excluded development.*

POLICY ED-VL4 Settlement Identity and Prevention of Coalescence

- *This policy sets out that development proposals should not, either individually or cumulatively, detract from the openness and the scale of the gap between settlements.*

POLICY ED-BGI1 Biodiversity

- *This policy sets out that development proposals should maintain and enhance the local biodiversity of the Plan area, including the maintenance and creation of wildlife corridors, designated or proposed local nature sites/reserves and Local Wildlife Sites.*

POLICY ED-BGI2 Trees and Hedgerows

- *This policy looks to manage the impact of new development on existing trees and hedgerows, as well as setting expectations for the inclusion of new trees in new and infill development.*

POLICY ED-BGI3 Use of the Lakes

- *This policy looks to manage the use of the many lakes within the parish.*

POLICY ED- BGI4 Local Green Spaces

- *This policy designates Local Green Spaces in line with the requirements set out in the NPPF.*

POLICY ED-FR1 Flooding and Drainage

- *This policy sets out that development will be supported where it is demonstrated that surface water drainage will not add to the existing site runoff or cause any adverse impact to neighbouring properties and*

surrounding environment. It also sets out that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) should be incorporated into schemes and be designed to contribute towards landscaping and biodiversity on-site.

POLICY ED-DH1 General Design Principles

- *This policy sets out that development should respect, maintain and enhance the character of the Plan Area, and supports proposals which comply with the Design Code.*

POLICY ED-DH2 Heritage

- *This policy establishes a list of non-designated heritage assets.*

POLICY ED-H1 Housing Development

- *The policy will define 'settlement boundaries' on the Policies Map where infill works as a matter of principle (although other policies will still need to be adhered to) and where the countryside begins.*

POLICY ED-CI1 Transport and Highways

- *This policy supports the development of sustainable modes of travel through the provision of secure cycle facilities, improved connectivity, and expansion of bridleways, footpaths and cycle network. The policy also sets out where the impact of development on the local highway network would be unacceptable and requires development to include sufficient parking.*

POLICY ED-CI2 Quiet Lanes

- *This policy identifies quiet lanes which new development must preserve and enhance the rural nature and character of.*

POLICY ED-CI3 Public Rights of Way

- *This policy sets out that as appropriate to their nature and scale, development proposals on land that lies within or adjoining the Green and Blue Infrastructure Network should incorporate landscaping schemes, layouts, public open space provision and other amenity requirements arising from the development.*

POLICY ED-CE1 Community Facilities and Services

- *This policy supports the extension, adaptation, and redevelopment of existing community facilities and sets out that proposals that would result in either the loss of or significant harm to a community facility will not be supported, unless it can clearly be demonstrated that the operation of the existing asset is no longer financially viable, or the existing asset is not valued by the community.*

POLICY ED-CE2 Rural Buildings and Commercial Development

- *This proposal supports proposals to develop new businesses and extend existing businesses, provided they are located at existing business sites, based in farms or other rural establishments with economic activity, are appropriate to the locality including the Conservation Area, AONB, Local Wildlife Sites and other special designations.*

10. The Eye and Dunsden NDP will contain policies to protect the distinct nature of the parish. The NDP seeks to protect locally important views and designate local green spaces which are important to the local community.

11. The Eye and Dunsden NDP is not seeking to allocate any sites for development; however, it does seek to introduce settlement boundaries. We have therefore considered whether focusing new development within the village boundaries (through infill), could result in the plan directing new development to sites that could potentially have significant effects on the landscape and historic environment including listed buildings and archaeological remains.
12. Careful consideration of the proposed boundaries in relation to how the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 guides the location and scale of development (mainly through policies H1, H16 and ENV8) indicates that the proposed boundaries merely add detail and aid the interpretation of existing policies.
13. Overall, we note that the plan does not allocate any sites for development and places great emphasis on conserving the character and appearance of the area.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

14. The Screening Opinion was sent to Natural England, the Environment Agency, Historic England and Oxfordshire County Council on 17 December 2024 for a four-week consultation period. The responses in full are presented in Appendix 4.
15. Natural England did not provide comments on the SEA Screening.
16. The Environment Agency did not provide comments on the SEA Screening.
17. Historic England confirmed that the plan is unlikely to result in significant effects within the historic environment and therefore agree that an SEA is not required.
18. Oxfordshire County Council confirmed that they have no comments on the Eye and Dunsden SEA and HRA Screening Opinion.

CONCLUSION

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

Authorised by: Tim Oruye

Signed:

Date: 24/01/2025

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

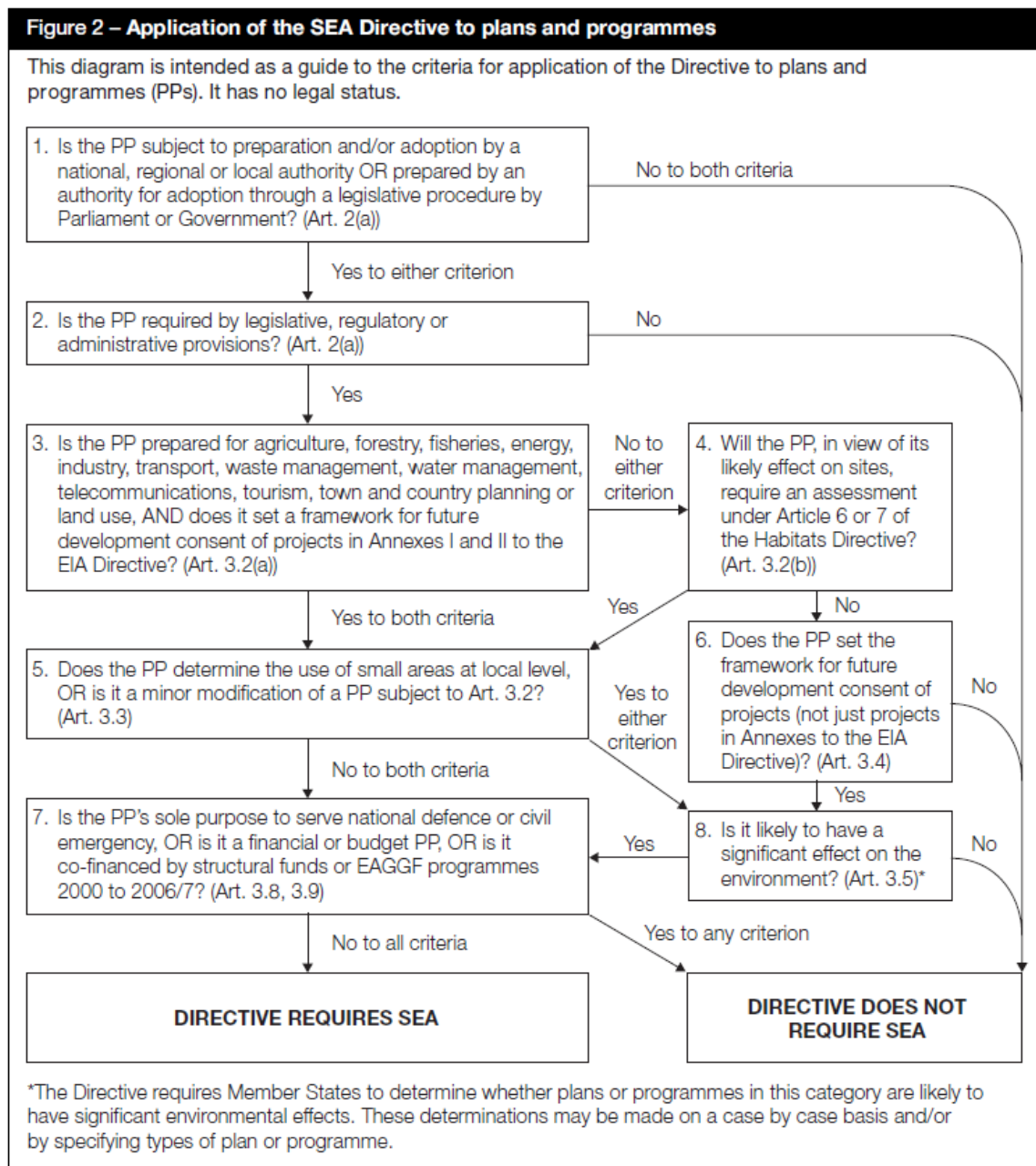


Table 1: Application of SEA Directive as shown in Appendix 1

Stage	Y/N	Explanation
<p>1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>The preparation of and adoption of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is allowed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by the Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, a working group who report to the Eye and Dunsden 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>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Whilst the Neighbourhood Development Plan is not a requirement and is optional under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, it will, if “made”, form part of the Development Plan for the District. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive.</p>

		National Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 051 Reference ID: 41-051-20150209) sets out that draft neighbourhood plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This assessment should be undertaken in accordance with the requirements set out in 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 Eye and Dunsden NDP is prepared for town and country planning and land use and will not set out a framework for future development of projects that would require an EIA.
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 Eye and Dunsden NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Eye and Dunsden NDP in Appendix 2.
5. Does the Neighbourhood Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Y	The Eye and Dunsden NDP will determine the use of sites/small areas at a local level.
6. Does the Neighbourhood Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Y	When made, the Eye and Dunsden NDP will include a series of policies to guide development within the parish. 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 Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Development Plan

INTRODUCTION

1. The Local Authority is the “competent authority” under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and needs to ensure that Neighbourhood Plans have been assessed through the Habitats Regulations process. This looks at the potential for significant impacts on nature conservation sites that are of European importance¹, also referred to as Natura 2000.
2. This Screening Assessment relates to a Neighbourhood Development Plan that will be in general conformity with the strategic policies within the development plan² (the higher level plan for town and country planning and land use). This Screening Assessment uses the Habitats Regulations Assessment of South Oxfordshire District Council’s Local Plan³ as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Development Plan is likely to result in significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites either alone or in combination with other plans and policies and, therefore, whether an ‘Appropriate Assessment’ is required.

LEGISLATIVE BASIS

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

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

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

“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 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 Eye and Dunsden and have been taken into consideration:
 1. Hartslock Wood SAC – approximately 9.7km
7. This site hosts the priority habitat type "orchid rich sites". The steep slopes of this site on the chalk of the Chilterns comprise a mosaic of chalk grassland, chalk scrub and broadleaved woodland. The chalk grassland mostly consists of a mosaic of shorter-turf NVC type CG2 *Festuca ovina–Avenula pratensis* grassland and taller CG3 *Bromus erectus* grassland. The site supports one of only three UK populations of monkey orchid *Orchis simia*, a nationally rare Red Data Book species.
8. The bulk of this site lies on a steep slope above the River Thames. Recent storms and landslips have resulted in a diverse age-structure for the yew population. Open patches show a rich flora including local species such as southern wood-rush *Luzula forsteri*, wood barley *Hordelymus europaeus* and narrow-lipped helleborine *Epipactis leptochila*.
9. The main threat to the site is air pollution. Nitrogen deposition exceeds the site-relevant critical load for ecosystem protection and hence there is a risk of harmful effects, but the sensitive features are considered to be in favourable condition.

2. Chilterns Beechwoods SAC – approximately 12.8km

10. The Chilterns Beechwoods represent a very extensive tract of *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests in the centre of the habitat's UK range. The woodland is an important part of a grassland-scrub-woodland mosaic. A distinctive feature in the woodland flora is the occurrence of the rare coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera*.
11. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of forestry and woodland management, disease, deer and the invasive species of grey squirrel upon beech. Additionally, the changes in species distribution of stag beetle as well as the impact of public access and disturbance upon stag beetle. Air pollution and the impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition also threaten the dry grasslands, beech and stag beetle.

3. Thames Basin Heaths SPA – approximately 14.8km

12. The Thames Basin Heaths SPA is a composite site that is located across the counties of Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire in southern England. It encompasses all or parts of Ash to Brookwood Heaths Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Bourley and Long Valley SSSI, Bramshill SSSI, Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI, Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons SSSI, Chobham Common SSSI, Colony Bog and Bagshot Heaths SSSI, Eelmoor Marsh SSSI, Hazeley Heath SSSI, Horsell Common SSSI, Ockham and Wisley Commons SSSI, Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths SSSI and Whitmoor Common SSSI.
13. The open heathland habitats overlie sand and gravel sediments which give rise to sandy or peaty acidic soils, supporting dry heathy vegetation on well-drained slopes, wet heath on low-lying shallow slopes and bogs in valleys. The site consists of tracts of heathland, scrub and woodland, once almost continuous, but now fragmented into separate blocks by roads, urban development and farmland. Less open habitats of scrub, acidic woodland and conifer plantations dominate, within which are scattered areas of open heath and mire. The site supports important breeding populations of a number of birds of lowland heathland, especially nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and woodlark *Lullula arborea*, both of which nest on the ground, often at the woodland/heathland edge, and Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*, which often nests in gorse *Ulex* sp. Scattered trees and scrub are used for roosting.
14. Together with the nearby Ashdown Forest and Wealden Heaths SPAs, the Thames Basin Heaths form part of a complex of heathlands in southern England that support important breeding bird populations.
15. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of public access and disturbance, undergrazing, and forestry and woodland management on of qualifying features. Additionally,

hydrological changes and the military are a threat to the site and inappropriate scrub control, invasive species, wildfire/arson and air pollution all place pressure on the site. Habitat fragmentation and gaps in knowledge over the location, extent and condition of the qualifying features are also pressures on the site.

4. Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC – approximately 15.1km

16. Windsor represents old acidophilous oak woods in the south-eastern part of its UK range. It has the largest number of veteran oaks *Quercus* spp. in Britain (and probably in Europe), a consequence of its management as wood-pasture. It is of importance for its range and diversity of saproxylic invertebrates, including many rare species (e.g. the beetle *Lacon querceus*), some known in the UK only from this site, and has recently been recognised as having rich fungal assemblages. Windsor Forest and Great Park has been identified as of potential international importance for its saproxylic invertebrate fauna by the Council of Europe (Speight 1989).
17. Violet click beetle *Limoniscus violaceus* was first recorded at Windsor Forest in 1937. The site is thought to support the largest of the known populations of this species in the UK. There is a large population of ancient trees on the site, which, combined with the historical continuity of woodland cover, has resulted in Windsor Forest being listed as the most important site in the UK for fauna associated with decaying timber on ancient trees (Fowles, Alexander & Key 1999). The site was also identified as of potential international importance for its saproxylic invertebrate fauna by the Council of Europe (Speight 1989).
18. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of forestry and woodland management on beech forests on acidic soils, dry oak-dominated woodland, and the violet click beetle. The violet click beetle and the dry oak-dominated woodland are also under threat from the oak processionary moth, with the dry oak-dominated woodland also under threat of disease. Air pollution also places pressure on the beech forests on acidic soils and the dry oak-dominated woodland.

ASSESSMENT

19. As required under Regulation 106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'), the qualifying body (Eye and Dunsden 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;

20. 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.
21. 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:
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA; European nightjar (Breeding)
 - Thames Basin Heaths SPA; Woodlark (Breeding)
 - Thames Basin Heaths SPA; Dartford warbler (Breeding)
22. The national legislation that underpins the SPA seeks to ensure that any proposed development scheme or plan will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA. Natural England have advised that any new housing within 5km of the SPA may harm the rare bird populations and that particular harm may occur from additional new development that lies within 400m of the SPA. Where development will lead to an increase of 50 dwellings within the 5 to 7km zone, this is also considered likely to contribute to significant effects on the designated features of the SPA. Eye and Dunsden is over 7km away from the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Therefore potential loss of or damage to off-site habitats associated with the Thames Basin Heaths SPA can be screened out of further assessment.

Air pollution:

23. 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. In terms of vehicle traffic, nitrogen oxides (NO_x, i.e. NO and NO₂) are considered to be the key pollutants. Deposition of nitrogen compounds may lead to both soil and freshwater acidification, and NO_x can cause eutrophication of soils and water.
24. 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.

25. The European sites within 17km of Eye and Dunsden that are within 200m of strategic roads are:
1. **Chiltern Beechwoods SAC (A404)** – as highlighted above Eye and Dunsden is approximately 12.8km from the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC.
 2. **Thames Basin Heaths SPA (M3/M25/A3)** - as highlighted above Eye and Dunsden is approximately 14.8km from the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.
26. Given the modest scale of the proposed development in the NDP, distance between the European Sites and Eye and Dunsden, the potential air pollution impact associated with the European Sites can be screened out of further assessment.

Increased recreation pressure

27. Natural England's Site Improvement Plans record the threats and pressures relevant to each European site. Public access or disturbance are identified as current threats or pressures at the following sites:
- a. Chilterns Beechwoods SAC
 - b. Thames Basin Heaths SPA
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 7km of a sensitive site could have impacts due to recreation. Where site specific information indicates that development beyond 7km could produce recreation impacts, this will be taken into account.
29. Eye and Dunsden is more than 7 km from any European Sites. The NDP does not allocate any housing sites and the proposals in the plan, whilst they may create capacity for some additional use, would be of a limited, minor impact; therefore, likely significant effects in relation to visitor pressure and the impact of recreation can be ruled out and do not need to be considered further.

Changes to hydrological regimes

30. 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 which could be affected by hydrological changes that are close to Eye and Dunsden are:
- Thames Basin Heaths - Part of Thursley, Ash Pirbright & Chobham SAC (Elstead Common) has evidence of damaging impacts due to drainage. Drains are also present on Thursley and Ockley Commons but it is not clear whether

these are having adverse impacts - more research is needed here. This is becoming more urgent in the face of changing weather patterns and prolonged droughts but it is not clear at present what intervention, if any, should be put in place.

31. 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.
32. The Eye and Dunsden NDP does not allocate any sites. The scale of development proposed in the Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan is limited; therefore, likely significant effects in relation to water quality and quantity can be screened out and do not need to be considered further.

In combination effects

33. The Council has considered the HRA of the Local Plan 2035 (March 2019) in respect of the potential in combination effects of the proposals in the Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan. As 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 28 of this assessment has considered how the development proposed in the Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. Given the modest scale of development proposed and having regard to conclusions of paragraphs 5 to 28, it is considered that the development proposed in the Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to give rise to significant in combination effects.

CONCLUSION

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

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

1. Characteristics of the Plan, having regard to:	
(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	The Eye and Dunsden NDP would, if adopted, form part of the Statutory Development Plan and as such does contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects. However, the Plan will sit within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework and the strategic policies of the South Oxfordshire 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 Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan 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. A basic condition of the Eye and Dunsden NDP is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Within this wider context, the Eye and Dunsden NDP itself is unlikely to have a significant positive or negative effect.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and	<p>The environmental impact of the proposals within the Eye and Dunsden NDP is unlikely to be significant due to the scale of development proposed.</p> <p>The Eye and Dunsden NDP area contains the following environmental designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ancient Woodland - Archaeological Constraints - Chilterns National Landscape - BAP Priority Habitats - Priority Species for CS Targeting - Flood Zones 2 and 3 - Listed Buildings - Tree Preservation Orders <p>There are the following SACs within 17km of the Eye and Dunsden NDP. These are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hartslock Wood SAC - 9.7km - Chilterns Beechwoods SAC – 12.8km - Thames Basin Heaths SPA – 14.8km

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC – 15.1km <p>There are also the following SSSI located within less than 7km of the Eye and Dunsden NDP area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harpsden Wood – 2.4km - Highlands Farm Pit – 2.7km - Bear, Oveys & Great Bottom Woods – 3.5km - Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill – 3.7km - Lambridge Wood – 4.9km - Temple Island Meadows – 6.5km - Rodbed Wood – 7km <p>Given the NDP is not allocating sites, the amount of potential infill sites within the parish 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 Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The proposed development in the Eye and Dunsden NDP has been judged not to have an impact on Community legislation.
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 Neighbourhood Plan 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 main influence will be on developments such as householder and small scale infill development. The Plan does not allocate sites for development. It seeks to influence infill and redevelopment within the parish in line with policies in the existing development plan.</p> <p>The effects will be of a local scale and the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will add detail to existing development plan policies. No</p>

	development is proposed near sensitive locations that would cause likely significant effects.
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	It is intended that the positive social effects of supporting sustainable development will have positive cumulative effects for the area. However, given the nature and scale of the proposals in the plan these are not likely to be significant.
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects;	The effects of the Plan are unlikely to have transboundary ³ impacts.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	The policies in the plan are unlikely to present risks to human health or the environment.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	The Eye and Dunsden NDP relates to the parish of Eye and Dunsden. The parish is focused around the settlements of Sonning Eye, Dunsden Green and Playhatch. The Eye and Dunsden NDP does not seek to allocate development sites and therefore the magnitude and spatial extent of the plan is likely to be limited.
(f) the value and vulnerability of the area to be affected due to: (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use; and	<p>The Eye and Dunsden NDP area contains the following natural characteristics and cultural heritage elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ancient Woodland - Archaeological Constraints - Chilterns National Landscape - BAP Priority Habitats - Priority Species for CS Targeting - Flood Zones 2 and 3 - Listed Buildings - Tree Preservation Orders <p>There are the following SACs within 17km of the Eye and Dunsden NDP. These are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hartslock Wood SAC - 9.7km - Chilterns Beechwoods SAC – 12.8km - Thames Basin Heaths SPA – 14.8km - Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC – 15.1km <p>There is also the following SSSI located within 7km of the Eye and Dunsden NDP area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harpsden Wood – 2.4km - Highlands Farm Pit – 2.7km

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bear, Oveys & Great Bottom Woods – 3.5km - Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill – 3.7km - Lambridge Wood – 4.9km - Temple Island Meadows – 6.5km - Rodbed Wood – 7km <p>Given the NDP is not allocating sites, and the amount of potential infill sites within the settlements, the proposals in the plan are unlikely to harm these designations. Therefore, the effects are not likely to be significant.</p> <p>The Plan seeks to influence infill and redevelopment within the settlements in line with policies in the existing development plan. Any effects will be of a local scale and not likely to be significant. The policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will add detail to existing development plan policies offering protection to special features.</p> <p>The plan is considered to have a neutral effect on cultural heritage because there is no indication given in the plan 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 are not likely to be significant. Environmental quality standards or limit values are not considered likely to be significantly affected by the Eye and Dunsden NDP.</p> <p>In light of the minor proposals in the Eye and Dunsden NDP, the plan is also not likely to cause significant effects in relation to intensive land use.</p>
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	<p>The Eye and Dunsden NDP areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chilterns National Landscape <p>The Eye and Dunsden NDP does not seek to allocate development sites and therefore the magnitude and spatial extent of the plan on this landscape is likely to be limited.</p>

Appendix 4 – Statutory Consultation Responses

Historic England



Our ref: PL00797742

To: [REDACTED]
Planning Policy Officer (Neighbourhood)
Policy and Programmes
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

By email only:
planning.policy@southandvale.gov.uk

[REDACTED]

09 January 2025

Dear [REDACTED]

Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan: Screening Opinion for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on this Screening Opinion.

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 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?".

The information supplied indicates that the plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We note that the plan does not intend to allocate land for housing or other development types. On the basis of the information supplied, Historic England concurs that the preparation of an SEA is not required.

The views of the other 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 (via e-seast@historicengland.org.uk) as required by Regulation 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.



4TH FLOOR, CANNON BRIDGE HOUSE, 25 DOWGATE HILL, LONDON EC4R 2YA

Telephone 020 7973 3700
HistoricEngland.org.uk

Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.



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 Council's conservation team and archaeological advisers 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 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 Environment Planning Adviser
Development Advice – London and the South East Region
[Redacted] [@historicengland.org.uk](mailto:[Redacted]@historicengland.org.uk)

Oxfordshire County Council

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 January 2025 08:48
To: Planning Policy S&V
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA Screening Opinion
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

****EXTERNAL****

Hi [REDACTED]

I hope you are well.

Oxfordshire County Council has no comments to make on the Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA Screening Opinion.

However, I did receive the following comments from our Minerals and Waste team and would be grateful if you could pass them on to the Parish Council.

'Whilst we have no comments to make on the Screening Opinion, we did note that under section 6, the objectives for the Eye and Dunsden NDP include reference to Mineral Extraction, which is excluded development.

Policy ED-VL3 Former Mineral Extraction Areas seeks to manage former extraction areas once they have completed aftercare and are no longer excluded development.

We will seek to raise these points at the next NDP consultation stage, however we believe it would be helpful for the Parish Council to be aware of this issue.'

Best wishes,

[REDACTED]

Strategic Planner
Strategic Planning & Infrastructure

E: [REDACTED]@Oxfordshire.gov.uk
T: Tel: 07860354629

Oxfordshire County Council, County Hall, New Road, Oxford, OX1 1ND
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