

**Strategic Environmental  
Assessment  
Screening Report**

**Great Denham  
Neighbourhood Plan**

June 2022

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This screening report is used to determine whether or not the content of the Great Denham Neighbourhood Plan (NP) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These require an SEA to be undertaken for:
  - i. Plans which are prepared for town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive; or
  - ii. Plans which have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive.
- 1.2 Plans which determine 'the use of a small area at local level' or which only propose 'minor modification to a plan' might be exempt if they are unlikely to have significant environmental effects. NPs containing land allocations for development that are not included in the local authority's plan, are more likely to require an SEA. The main determining factor as to whether SEA is required on a NP is if it is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.
- 1.3 Section 2 of this report outlines the regulations that set the need for this screening exercise. Process and criteria of the assessment are set out in Section 3. A brief summary of the draft Great Denham NP is provided in Section 4.
- 1.4 The screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the NP is set out in Section 5 and the decision on the screening is provided in Section 6.

## 2. Legislative Background

- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Regulation 9 sets out the process as follows:

“Determinations of the responsible authority

9. (1) The responsible authority shall determine whether or not a plan, programme or modification of a description referred to in –

- (a) paragraph (4) (a) and (b) of regulation 5;
- (b) paragraph (6)(a) of that regulation; or
- (c) paragraph (6) (b) of that regulation, is likely to have significant environmental effects.

(2) Before making a determination under paragraph (1) the responsible authority shall –

- (a) take into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 to these Regulations; and
- (b) consult the consultation bodies

(3) Where the responsible authority determines that the plan, programme or modification is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), it shall prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.

The regulations define that a responsible authority as:

- (a) the authority by which or on whose behalf it is prepared; and
- (b) where, at any particular time, that authority ceases to be responsible, or solely responsible, for taking steps in relation to the plan or programme, the person who, at that time, is responsible (solely or jointly with the authority) for taking those steps;”

- 2.2 The Government has stated that Sustainability Appraisals are not needed for Neighbourhood Plans (NPPG). It must however be demonstrated how the NP contributes to achievement of sustainable development in the area.



1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to
  - the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
  - the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
  - the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
  - environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
  - the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to
  - the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
  - the cumulative nature of the effects,
  - the transboundary nature of the effects,
  - the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
  - the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
  - the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
    - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
    - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
    - intensive land-use,
    - the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

Source: Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC

- 3.4 The three statutory consultation bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England) are to be consulted to determine whether they agree with the findings and conclusions of this screening opinion, in establishing whether the Great Denham NP requires an SEA and whether it may have a significant environmental effect. The statutory bodies were consulted in June/July 2022 and their responses to the consultation are included in Appendix 1.

## 4. Summary of Neighbourhood Plan

4.1 Great Denham Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure the sustainable future of the village and wider Parish by setting out a series of policies which will ensure that new development will be of high quality and retain and enhance the character of the area. The document is split into chapters which introduce the context of neighbourhood planning, the description of the Parish, the consultation that has taken place with the village, the Vision, Aims and Objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan, planning policies, arrangements for implementation, monitoring and review and parish aspirations.

4.2 Great Denham Neighbourhood Plan allocates Local Green Spaces to protect the most important green spaces in the Parish. The location of the Local Green Spaces can be seen on the Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map at Annexe A. The Plan seeks to retain and reinforce the character of the Parish as well as protecting and enhancing its natural and built assets.

4.3 There are 14 Policies as described below.

- Policy D1: The Design of New Development sets out a series of criteria to ensure good quality new development which respects the character and built form of the village and functions well within the village context.
- Policy D2: Maintaining Separation seek to protect the gap between the village and the neighbouring settlement of Biddenham to maintain the separate identities of the two settlements.
- Policy D3: Archaeology seeks to identify and assess the significance of archaeological remains in the Parish.
- Policy D4: Provision of sustainable buildings sets out criteria to ensure that new buildings are constructed and designed to be energy and water efficient and to encourage retrofitting of existing buildings.
- Policy D5: Housing requires that new housing development must include a mix of house types to meet the local housing need and embrace Building for a Healthy Life principles.
- Policy F1: Community facilities identifies local community facilities and sets out criteria against which any applications for their loss should be assessed.
- Policy F2: Supporting Local Businesses seeks to retain core local centre uses in the village centre, allows for the appropriate expansion and diversification of businesses subject to certain criteria and encourages proposals for flexible and home working.
- Policy G1: Open space as part of new development should support the Green infrastructure Plan, develop green corridors and include appropriate planting as well as providing for future maintenance.

- Policy G2: Local Green Spaces identifies the green space that qualify as Local Green Spaces and protects them.
- Policy G3: Great Denham Country Park policy expects that the function and appearance of the Country Park is preserved and enhanced.
- Policy G4: Nature Conservation requires new development to provide 10% biodiversity uplift, green infrastructure and protect and enhance habitats and wildlife, including the use of sustainable drainage solutions designed for nature conservation.
- Policy G5: Provision for pedestrians and cyclists seeks to improve provisions for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Policy T1: The traffic impact of new development seeks to encourage sustainable transport, mitigate traffic impacts and build traffic management features.
- Policy T2: Car Parking requires parking within new developments to conform to the Design Guide, BBC's standards, provide electric vehicle charging points and public parking spaces should be retained and increased.

## 5. Assessment

5.1 The first part of the assessment is to establish the need for the SEA. The table below shows the assessment determining whether the NP falls into a category of plans requiring SEA. The references to Articles are from Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Council on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
1. Is the NP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Article. 2(a))	Y	The Local Authority has a statutory obligation to make a Neighbourhood Plan once it has successfully passed the stages as set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Article. 2(a))	Y	While it is not mandatory for a neighbourhood plan to be prepared, however once made, it is part of the development plan for assessing planning applications.



Stage	Y/N	Reasons
3. Is the NP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Article. 3.2(b))	N	The NP is prepared for town and country planning and land use purposes but does not explicitly set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I or II of the EIA Directive.
4. Will the NP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	N	An appropriate Assessment screening will be carried out to ensure that an assessment is not required.
5. Does the NP determine the use of small areas at local level OR is it a minor modification of a plan/programme (Article 3.3	Y If yes, go to Q8	Yes, the Neighbourhood Plan relates to the local area of the designated Neighbourhood Area.
6. Does the NP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Article. 3.4)		N/A
7. Is the NP's sole purpose to serve national defence or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Article. 3.8 & Article. 3.9)		N/A

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
8. Is the NP likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Article. 3.5)	N	See the following table.

5.2 The next step in the screening assessment is to establish whether the NP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The criteria for determining the likely significance of effects are drawn from the Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC and is also set out in Schedule 1 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to—		
1a 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 Plan provides for guiding policies for new development that may arise over the period of the NP	N
1b The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The plan will be complementary to the Bedford Borough Local Plan which has been subject to SEA.	N
1c The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view	The achievement of sustainable development is one of the basic conditions that a Neighbourhood Plan must meet.	N

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
to promoting sustainable development		
1d Environmental problems relevant to the plan.	There are no environmental problems relevant to the plan in this parish	N
1e The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection or renewable energy generation)	The plan does not relate to waste management or water protection.	N
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to—		
2a The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	The plan includes policies to influence planning application decisions and requirements for new developments in the Parish	N
2b The cumulative nature of the effects	The plan covers a small area and considering that the plan covers a period up to 2030, the cumulative effects impacts are considered to be minimal.	N
2c The transboundary nature of the effects	It is not considered that the effects will have any impact outside the parish. Any effects will be mitigated within the area.	N
2d The risks to human health or environment (e.g. due to accidents)	The allocations are only for green space and it is not considered that this will cause a risk to human health or the environment due to accidents.	N

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
2e The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The population as measured from the 2011 census was 1553, however there will be a marked increase in the 2021 census figures. There will be around 1750 dwellings when the development is complete.	N
2f The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;</li> <li>• Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or</li> <li>• Intensive land use</li> </ul>	The plan includes policies to ensure that heritage is either preserved or enhanced. There are no other special natural characteristics that are within the Parish boundary.	N
2g The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	There are no national or internationally recognised areas or landscapes within the parish.	N

## 6. Screening Outcome

- 6.1 The screening assessment undertaken in Section 5 concludes that it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Great Denham Neighbourhood Plan.

## 7. Determination

- 7.1 Based on the above information, the 'Responsible Body' being Great Denham Parish Council, conclude that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

### Useful references:

Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030

<https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Planning%20and%20Building/local-plan-2030/Local%20plan%202030.pdf>

BBC Local Plan SEA

<http://edrms.bedford.gov.uk/OpenDocument.aspx?id=RKoAzFnTUaJP9GurwCiGQw%3d%3d&name=25a%20-%20Sustainability%20Appraisal%20Report%20September%202018.pdf>

BBC Local Plan SEA Appendices

<http://edrms.bedford.gov.uk/OpenDocument.aspx?id=uMkRaEuAy6gM%2bnuri5pusg%3d%3d&ame=24b%20-%20Sustainability%20Appraisal%20Report%20Appendices%20January%202018.pdf>

## 8. Appendix 1: Responses to Screening Opinion

8.1 A copy of the SEA screening opinion was sent to the following 3 statutory consultees on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022; all consultees were given 1 month to respond (by 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022).

- Historic England
- Environment agency
- Natural England

At 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022, 2 of the 3 consultees had tendered a response; these are copied below.

### Response from Historic England (received 11<sup>th</sup> July 2022)

8.2 The following response was received from Historic England.

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. Therefore we welcome this opportunity to review the Screening Report for this plan. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Great Denham Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied with the Screening Opinion.

The Screening Report indicates that the Council considers that the plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We note that the plan does not propose to allocate any sites for development.

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

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

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.

For future reference, please use 'eastplanningpolicy@historicengland.org.uk' for consultations of this type, as this is the inbox that goes directly to the team responsible for logging all of our casework responses.

Please do contact me, either via email or the number below, if you have any queries.

Kind regards,

### **Response from Environment Agency (received 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022)**

8.3 The following response was received from Environment Agency

Acknowledgement of receipt was provided.

Thank you for your email.

I work part-time; my usual hours are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 09:00 - 15:00.

We currently have a large volume of work and due to resourcing issues this may lead to delay in responding to you.

Please be assured that we will endeavour to respond to your consultations as soon as possible, however, it may take some time for us to catch up.

Apologies and thank you for your patience.

Kind regards

No further communication has been received.

### **Response from Natural England (received 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022)**

8.4 The following response was received from Natural England.

Date: 28 June 2022

Our ref: 396958

Your ref: Great Denham Neighbourhood Plan

## **Great Denham Neighbourhood Development Plan - SEA Screening Opinion**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 15 June 2022

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 for the Great Denham Neighbourhood Plan**

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils) are concerned, that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in light of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), is contained within the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#). The guidance highlights three triggers that may require the production of an SEA, for instance where:

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

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that in our view the proposals contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies / proposals within the plan. It remains the case, however, that the responsible authority should provide information supporting this screening decision, sufficient to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected.

Notwithstanding this advice, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all potential environmental assets. As a result the responsible authority should raise environmental issues that we have not identified on local or national biodiversity action plan species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites or local landscape character, with its own ecological and/or landscape advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local landscape and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by this plan, before determining whether an SEA is necessary.

Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA screening stage, should the responsible authority seek our views on the scoping or environmental report stages. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make.

For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

Yours