



Aylesbury Vale District Council

**Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening
Report**

**of the Weston Turville Neighbourhood Plan –
Draft Version**

**FINAL Screening Outcome
Following engagement with Statutory Consultees**

May 2017

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This screening statement considers whether the contents of the Weston Turville Neighbourhood Plan – Referendum version including the Examiner’s recommended changes 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.
- 1.2 The screening process is based upon consideration of standard criteria to determine whether the plan is likely to have “significant environmental effects”. The result of AVDC’s screening process is detailed in this Screening Statement.
- 1.3 The legislative background set out below outlines the regulations that require the need for this screening exercise. Section 4, provides a screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the policies in the Weston Turville Neighbourhood Plan Draft Version and the need for a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

2. Legislative Background

- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal 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. Detailed Guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication ‘A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’¹.
- 2.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 required Sustainability Appraisals (SA) to be produced for all Local Development Documents to meet the requirement of the EU Directive on SEA. It is considered best practice to incorporate requirements of the SEA Directive into an SA.
- 2.3 Although a Sustainability Appraisal is not a requirement for a Neighbourhood Development Plan, part of meeting the ‘Basic Conditions’ which the plan is examined on, is to show how the plan achieves sustainable development. The Sustainability Appraisal process is an established method and a well recognised ‘best practice’ method for doing this. It is therefore advised, where an SEA is identified as a requirement, an SA should be incorporated with SEA, at a level of detail that is appropriate to the content of the Neighbourhood Plan.

3. Criteria for Assessing the Effects of Neighbourhood Development Plans

¹‘A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-directive-guidance> (ODPM 2005)

3.1 Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below²:

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).

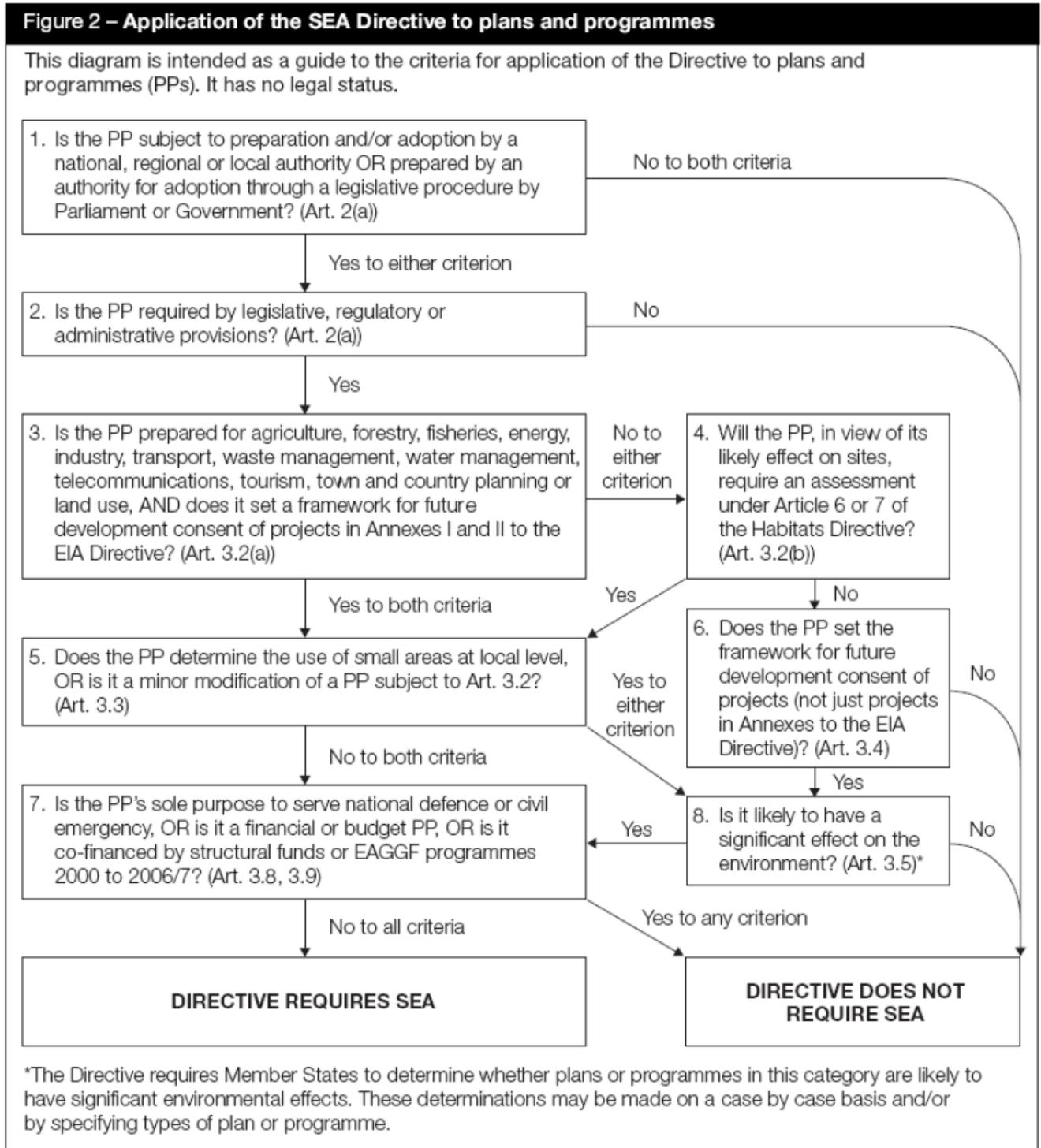
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

- 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.

² Source: Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC

4. Assessment

4.1 The diagram below illustrates the process for screening a planning document to ascertain whether a full SEA is required.



4.2 The table below shows the assessment of whether the Weston Turville Neighbourhood Plan will require a full SEA. The questions below are drawn from the diagram above which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied. The middle column is Yes (Y) or No (N) to the questions to the left and the reason as to why is in the right hand column.

Stage	Y/ N	Reason
1. Is the plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Y	The Neighbourhood Plan will be adopted by a Local Planning Authority, Aylesbury Vale District Council.
2. Is the plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	N	The Neighbourhood Plan is an optional plan produced by Weston Turville Parish Council.
3. Is the plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	N	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is prepared for town and country planning purposes, but it does not set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive (Art 3.2(a)).</p> <p>The plan only affects development that would be smaller scale beneath the relevant EIA thresholds.</p>
4. Will the 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	<p>The neighbourhood plan area does not include and is not close to any Natura 2000 sites (Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas). The Reservoir was designated a SSSI in 1986 (as notified under section 28 of the wildlife and countryside act 1981) but it is not a Natura 2000 site.</p> <p>However there are several recorded sightings of Pipistrelle species, bat species, and a polecat within the neighbourhood area. These are European designate protected species under the Habitats Regulations schedule 2/2010.</p> <p>Policy H2 of the draft neighbourhood plan seeks to ensure that any new development has minimal impact on species and biodiversity by requiring new developments to actively aim to retain existing natural boundaries and open spaces. Policy E1 further designates a number of local green spaces across the neighbourhood area to protect and enhance the natural environmental characteristics of the neighbourhood plan area.</p>

<p>5. Does the plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a plan subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan does not make allocations to determine the use of land. However, the plan through policies H1 & H2, does allow for small scale developments of infill housing to be built within the designated settlement boundary.</p> <p>Development outside of the settlement boundary is supported where it forms part of the wider Aylesbury Vale local plan growth or meets the circumstances set out in para 55 of the NPPF which allows for the development or redevelopment of single unit dwellings for rural purposes.</p> <p>Local green space designation are identified, however these do not change the current use of the land.</p>
<p>6. Does the plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan does not set a framework for future development consent of projects as it does not make allocations.</p> <p>The plan through Policy H1 does allow for the development of small scale infill development within the settlement boundary.</p> <p>Therefore it is considered the plan does go in part towards affecting development projects (specifically new homes) that are likely to come forward.</p>
<p>7. Is the plans 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)</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is not for any of the projects listed in Art 3.8, 3.9.</p>
<p>8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The Plan is not proposing allocating land for housing development. Policy H1 does however allow small scale development to come forward over the plan period within the settlement boundary. Therefore it is considered that through Policies H2,3,4 the plan goes in part towards affecting development projects, (specifically new homes) that are likely to come forward over the plan period.</p> <p>The plan through policy H1 does allow for single dwellings to be built for rural purposes outside the settlement boundary in line with the NPPF.</p> <p>There are no employment or other development sites proposed through the plan.</p>

		<p>Therefore it is considered the plan does in part go towards affecting development projects (specifically new homes) that are likely to come forward.</p> <p>Any adverse impact on the environment from development would be offset by the positive impacts of policies H1, 2, 3 & 4 which aim to mitigate the impacts of development on the landscape, environment, heritage and conservation. Along side policies E1, the designation of Local Green spaces and Policy E2 the protection of key views and vistas</p> <p>The Draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan has assessed through Sustainability Appraisal the impact of housing growth at Weston Turville. Weston Turville is identified as a 'Large Village' in the settlement hierarchy and it was proposed that it would receive 230 homes over the plan period. Based on the level of commitments already made this leaves a residual housing requirement of 155. It has been agreed in the Draft Local plan that this would be added to Aylesbury's housing requirement and that no further sites would be allocated in Weston Turville. The assessment concluded that this level of growth (or range with that level within) would be sustainable.</p>	
	<p>1 (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</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The WTNP will sets out a spatial vision for the designated Neighbourhood Area and provides a framework for proposals for development regarding housing, employment and the protection of valued open space.</p> <p>The WTNP is considered to be in general conformity with the saved policies from the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (AVDLP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).</p>
	<p>1 (b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The WTNP, where possible, will respond to rather than influence other plans or programmes. A Neighbourhood Plan can only provide policies for the area it covers while the policies at the District and National level provide a strategic context for the WTNP to be in general conformity with.</p>

		None of the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan have a direct impact on other plans in neighbouring areas.
1 (c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	N	<p>Proposals set out in the WTNP are planned to balance environmental, social and economic considerations of sustainable development. However the WTNP recognises that for rural communities such as Weston Turville, the importance of the surrounding environment is particularly acute.</p> <p>It is considered that the WTNP will have a positive impact on local environmental assets and places valued by local people in the Neighbourhood Area. This is reflected in the vision of the plan and is achieved through the positive impacts of policies E1, the protection of Local Green Spaces and, E2 protection of key views and vistas.</p> <p>The WTNP aims to mitigate any adverse impacts from any potential development through housing policies H2 & 3. H2 mitigates and encourages sustainability through the design of development including the need to retain existing natural boundaries, preserve and enhance ecological value and retains the distinctive qualities of the special and attractive areas of open space. The policy further insists that development must preserve and enhance the setting of any heritage assets and not affect not impact on the amenities of nearby properties. Policy H3 seeks to conserve and enhance the conservation area and encourages any development proposals within the conservation area to adhere to the conservation development guidelines set out in the local plan.</p>
1(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan	N	The village is not somewhere AVDC considers to be beset by significant existing environmental problems (air quality, pollution, traffic, flood risk, contamination). There may be significant traffic levels on the A41 in the future as a result of the planned development of Aylesbury, however this will be addressed through the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan and the Aylesbury Vale Garden Town Master Planning.

		<p>It is unlikely that the plan will contribute towards any significant environmental problems. However the Plan does seek to address and mitigate any potential transport problems that may come from development through policies T1 to facilitate road improvements and ease congestion. Additionally, policy T2 aims to ensure that new developments are given access to safe and suitable pedestrian and cycle network links to reduce the number of vehicle journeys and subsequently emissions and secondly increase access for those who do not have vehicle access. Policy T3 further encourages developers to ensure there is adequate access to the public transport system.</p> <p>The nearest Air Quality management area is Approximately 3.3 miles from the neighbourhood plan area - Aylesbury Walton Street 2. This has a Low pollution band index and the effects from the neighbourhood plan are considered to be low. The plan should further mitigate any potential impacts through policies T1 (Traffic mitigation, T2 (Cycle and pedestrian improvements) and T3 access to public transport services.</p>
1 (e) 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)	N	The WTNP is being produced to be in general conformity with the AVDLP and national policy. The plan has no relevance to the implementation of community legislation.
2 (a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	N	<p>It is highly unlikely there will be any irreversible damaging environmental impacts associated with the WTNP, it is intended to have a positive effect on sustainability.</p> <p>The plan further seeks to facilitate sustainable development through the following policies T1 (sustainable traffic mitigation) T2 (encouraging improvements to walking and cycling provisions) T3 increasing access to public transport services. Furthermore the policies intend to positively enhance the environment through policy E1 the designation of Local Green Spaces, E2 the protection of Key Views and Vistas as well as encouraging Housing</p>

		<p>development proposals to retain of natural barriers and open spaces, through policy H2. And additionally B1 (Revitalisation of the village centre) and B2 (expansion and development of small businesses)</p> <p>Furthermore the plan aims to deliver social improvements through C1 – the protection and enhancement of Community Facilities, C2 - the replacement of community facilities, HE1 the improvement and expansion of health facilities and HE2 the improvement and expansion of the local combined school.</p> <p>Overall the plan seeks to deliver a positive increase in the social, economic and environmental capacity of the neighbourhood area.</p>
2 (b) the cumulative nature of the effects	N	It is highly unlikely there will be any negative cumulative effects of the policies, rather it is likely it will have moderate positive effects. Any impact will be local in nature.
2 (c) the trans boundary nature of the effects	N	<p>Effects will be local with no expected impacts on neighbouring areas.</p> <p>In fact it is expected that the plan will have a long term beneficial impact on reducing the potential effects of development with adjoining settlements through policy H7 which seeks to prevent any further coalescence between the village and the surrounding parishes.</p>
2 (d) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	N	No risks have been identified.
2 (e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	N	The Neighbourhood Area covers an area which is 820.07 ha and contains a population is of 3,127 residents (2011 census).
2 (f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards (iii) intensive land-use	N	The Reservoir was designated a SSSI in 1986 (as notified under section 28 of the wildlife and countryside act 1981) however, the plan concentrates on supporting development within the proposed settlement boundary which is over 1000Km away from the SSSI. Furthermore WTNP is not allocating any housing sites or employment sites for development. The plan sets out a development and design policy for infill and redevelopment proposals if such opportunities become available over the plan period, it is therefore considered that the plan is unlikely to have any significant environmental impact on the SSSI.

		<p>The Neighbourhood Area hosts two Scheduled Ancient Monuments and 48 listed buildings (Grade II & II*). Based on the proposals contained within the WTNP it is considered that the plan unlikely to have any negative impact on heritage or culture and is likely to have some positive impacts through policy H2 which encourages sympathetic design which pays regard to any nearby heritage asset. The conservation area covers the majority of the Settlement Boundary and as such through policy H3 ensures development seeks to preserve and enhance the architectural and historic interest of the Weston Turville Conservation Area by adhering to the Conservation policies of the local development plan.</p> <p>Therefore the plan should have a positive impact on the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and the areas heritage assets.</p> <p>The plan should additionally reduce environmental vulnerability through the designation of local green spaces (policy E3) and the retention of Natural Barriers and Open Spaces (H2).</p> <p>In addition it is not likely that anything in the plan would be capable of overriding Local Plan policy and or national planning policy which provide protective policies to control the granting of consent for development proposals which are likely to have significant environmental effects. By their nature any proposals which are likely to come forward within the framework of this neighbourhood plan are of such a small scale that they would be unlikely to have a significant environmental impact.</p> <p>The designations of Local Green Spaces will have a positive effect environmentally and help protect the rural character of Weston Turville preventing over-urbanisation and land-use intensification. The neighbourhood plan is in conformity with the local development plan in the belief that Weston Turville is currently not requiring housing allocations to meet assessed housing need, the fact that both plans have declined to allocate in this area</p>
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		indicates that there will be a low likelihood of intensive land uses.
	2 (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status	N There are no such designations within the Neighbourhood area or close enough to be impacted.

5.0 Screening Outcome

- 5.1 Whilst the Weston Turville Neighbourhood Plan Draft Version provides for a modest amount of sustainable development, it also contains a number of policies to control environmental effects and mitigate the impacts of small scale development within the settlement boundary. When taken together (as is required by law) with relevant policies from the Local Plan³ policy and national planning policy, it is not considered that the plan would be likely to give rise to significant environmental effects. On this basis a Sustainability Appraisal to meet the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment is not considered to be needed .

³ Adopted Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan 2004 and Draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2016

APPENDIX – Responses from Statutory Consultees

What follows are the responses received from the three statutory consultees – Natural England, The Environment Agency and Historic England. A 28 day consultation period took place 19 April 2017 to 16 May 2017. The three statutory consultees were in agreement with the screening opinion outcome that a strategic Environmental Assessment would not be required. Historic England and the Environment agency has no further comments to make, however Natural England did suggest some potential policy wording changes to the neighbourhood plan in order to strengthen the conservation of biodiversity, these suggestions have been forwarded onto the Parish Council separately.