



Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening for Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders

Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan, November 2014

European Directive 2001/42/EC “on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment”

Introduction to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs) and Neighbourhood Plans have legal status as statutory development plan documents (DPDs). Since 2004, there has been a legal requirement for DPDs to be assessed against the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC; also known as the “Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive”. The objective for SEA is “*to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development*” (SEA Directive, Article 1).

The SEA Directive was incorporated into national law through [The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#) (SI 2004 No 1633).

National guidance regarding SEA

The government guidance document, “[A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive](#)” (ODPM, September 2005) explains the process of screening for SEA. Screening is the first stage in the SEA process; i.e. testing whether or not SEA is required in the case of a Neighbourhood Plan or NDO.

The guidance explains the types of plans etc which are covered by European Directive 2001/42/EC (the “SEA Directive”). It explains that Land use and spatial plans (including Neighbourhood Plans/ NDOs) would **normally** be subject to SEA. Critically, however, the guidance also states that: “*Plans and programmes...which determine the use of small areas at local level, or which are minor modifications to [existing] plans and programmes...only require SEA if they are judged likely to have **significant** environmental effects*” (Appendix 1). In many cases, Neighbourhood Plans/ NDOs will fall into this category. It is therefore essential that a robust screening exercise is undertaken for each Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO.

Local planning authority support to Town/ Parish Councils or Neighbourhood Forums in undertaking SEA

The [Neighbourhood Planning Protocol](#) (2013) explains the support that East Northamptonshire Council (ENC) can offer to the relevant Town Council(s), Parish Council(s) or Neighbourhood Forums in respect of SEA:

- Provide advice on any relevant European and National legislation (in this case, the SEA Directive);
- Carry out screening to identify any need for SEA (note: where consultants have been employed to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan they will be expected to undertake these);
- However, ENC will **not** be able to actually undertake the SEA if this is required following screening.

This toolkit is intended to be used by officers of ENC in undertaking SEA screening, or in checking SEA screening reports which have been prepared by consultants. Relevant Town Council(s), Parish Council(s) or Neighbourhood Forums may also use the toolkit to carry out their own SEA screening, if they so wish.

Undertaking SEA screening

The SEA guidance explains that for Neighbourhood Plans/ NDOs screening is a two stage process:

1. Generic application of the SEA directive
2. SEA Directive Article 3(5) Annex II – Application of criteria for determining the likely significance of effects

This toolkit contains two forms, in respect of stages 1 and 2 respectively:

1. For SEA Screening Stage 1, the form considers Neighbourhood Plans and NDOs generically against the SEA Assessment criteria specified in the national guidance ("[A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive](#)", Figure 2), to determine whether each would require full SEA.
2. Where it is determined that there is potential for a Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO to have a significant effect on the environment, then it is necessary to progress to Stage 2 in the SEA Screening process. This involves testing the relevant Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO against the relevant criteria for determining the likely significance of environmental effects, as specified in SEA Directive Article 3(5) Annex II.

SEA Screening Stage 1: Application of SEA Directive in the case of Neighbourhood Plans/ Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs)

SEA Assessment criteria	Commentary	N'hood Plan Outcome (Y/N)	NDO Outcome (Y/N)
1. Is a Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO 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?	<i>A local planning authority has a statutory obligation to adopt or "make" a Neighbourhood Plan or NDO once it has successfully gone through the relevant statutory preparation stages, culminating in a local referendum. At this stage, a Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the statutory development plan for the relevant local authority area. To this extent, the Neighbourhood Planning/ NDO process is directed by/ through a legislative procedure.</i>	Y	Y
2. Is a Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions?	<i>The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans/ NDOs is not mandatory; i.e. a Town/ Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum can chose whether or not to undertake either of these. However, if the relevant body decides to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO, that Town/ Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum is required to follow the set regulatory and administrative procedures.</i>	N	N
3. Is a Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO 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?	<i>A Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO must relate to town and country, spatial and/ or land use planning. Once made, it will form part of the statutory framework ("development plan") for the determination of planning applications. Neighbourhood Plans/ NDOs both, therefore, set specific frameworks for future development consents.</i>	Y	Y

SEA Assessment criteria	Commentary	N'hood Plan Outcome (Y/N)	NDO Outcome (Y/N)
4. Will a Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive?	<p><i>The North Northamptonshire Neighbourhood Planning Toolkit (December 2012) explains that Neighbourhood Plans/ NDOs may also need to be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) if there might be an impact on the Nene Valley Special Protection Area (SPA)/ Ramsar site¹. This will depend upon the location and/ or scope of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO. Separate HRA screening will be required, although it must be assumed that in the event that a full HRA is deemed necessary, any Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO must also be subject to full SEA.</i></p>	N	N
5. Does a Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of an existing plan/ programme?	<p><i>In many cases a Neighbourhood Plan will set out detailed, localised policies to reflect local aspirations, concerns or issues. However, Neighbourhood Plans may seek to take on a more challenging role, through making site specific land use allocations.</i></p>	Y	N/a
	<p><i>An NDO involves the relaxation or extension of “permitted development rights” (“General Permitted Development Order”) for a small, localised area. Invariably it will involve minor changes to national legislation (the regulatory framework) in a local context, so would therefore represent a minor modification to an existing programme (i.e. national permitted development rights)</i></p>	N/a	N

¹ Full details of the extent of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/ Ramsar site are available through East Northamptonshire Council's [LocalView](#) mapping system (also known as “In My Area”)

SEA Assessment criteria	Commentary	N'hood Plan Outcome (Y/N)	NDO Outcome (Y/N)
6. Is a Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO likely to have a significant effect on the environment?	<i>The relevant criteria for determining whether Neighbourhood Plans/ NDOs are likely to have a significant environmental effect are set out in Article 3(5) Annex II of the SEA Directive.</i>		
	<i>Any potential environmental effects of a Neighbourhood Plan will largely depend upon two factors; location and/ or proposed scope. Stage 2 of this screening assessment will determine whether or not a Neighbourhood Plan will lead to any significant effects on the environment and, therefore, whether that Neighbourhood Plan will need to be accompanied by a full SEA.</i>	?	N/a
	<i>By definition, an NDO involves a limited relaxation of "permitted development rights for a small, localised area. Accordingly, it cannot reasonably be argued that an NDO would have a significant effect on the environment.</i>	N/a	N

SEA Screening Stage 1: Conclusions

Would a Neighbourhood Plan require SEA?

These assessment criteria reveal that as a starting point in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan there **must** be a presumption that SEA will be required, unless it can be satisfactorily and objectively demonstrated that the scope of the Plan will **not**:

- Require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive (**Q4**, above), whereby if a full HRA is deemed necessary, any Neighbourhood Plan/ NDO must also be subject to full SEA;
- Will only determine the use of small areas at local level – i.e. involves minor/ small scale land allocations/ designations, or detailed, locally distinctive design criteria (**Q5**, above);
- Have a significant effect on the environment (**Q6**, above).

Would an NDO require SEA?

It is not considered that an NDO would normally require SEA given that, by definition, this will function as a local modification to the [Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) Order 1995](#) (GPDO), as amended. The GPDO itself relates exclusively to minor/ small scale developments. Any local modification to the GPDO put forward through a NDO could, similarly, only relate to small/ minor developments. Accordingly, this would not require SEA unless, in exceptional circumstances, a full HRA was deemed necessary.

SEA Screening Stage 2: SEA Directive Article 3(5) Annex II – Application of Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects of a Neighbourhood Plan

The SEA Directive (Article 3(5)) requires the relevant body (i.e. East Northamptonshire Council; and/ or the relevant Town/ Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum) to: “ensure that plans and programmes [i.e. their Neighbourhood Plan] with likely significant effects on the environment are covered by this Directive”. In other words, the proposed scope and/ or range of themes, topics and/ or policies that a Neighbourhood Plan is intended to cover will form the basis for determining whether a full SEA will be required. Stage 2 of the SEA screening process will determine whether the emerging Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan would:

- Only determine the use of small areas at local level – i.e. involves minor/ small scale land allocations/ designations, or detailed, locally distinctive design criteria [whereby a full SEA would **not** be required]; or
- Be likely to have a significant effect on the environment [whereby a full SEA **would** be required]?

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
1	Characteristics of Neighbourhood Plan		
A	Degree to which this sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	<p><i>[How to assess if “significant” – Consider emerging vision/ scope – i.e. what policies/ proposals are intended to be included within the Neighbourhood Plan]</i></p> <p>The HFNP will set out the vision for development of Higham Ferrers Parish for the next 20 years. The ambitions for growth are modest and sit within the existing housing delivery targets of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) and the emerging replacement Joint Core Strategy (JCS) review. The plan allocates one development site which is located at the furthest point away from the SPA/ Ramsar site within the urban area as is possible to achieve. Future growth for further development linked to a sustainable urban extension for Rushden East is directed to the east of the A6 if a need can</p>	N

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
		<p>be justified. This latter development would be required to demonstrate in its own right that an SEA was not required. Current work for the evidence base for the emerging JCS is being prepared and an interim SA is available. The level of development occurring within Higham Ferrers would be limited residential, commercial and community facilities which would not be considered to have a significant impact on the environment considering its location.</p>	
	<p>Development Site policies: Policy HF.H3 [Ferrers Site], HF.H4 [Higham East], HF.CD3 [Henry Chichele School expansion site]</p>	<p><i>Y with commentary</i> As stated above the growth ambitions and opportunities for Higham Ferrers are limited and fit within the existing and emerging Core Strategy targets. The Ferrers School site, previously allocated for industrial and commercial development in the 1996 District Local Plan, is allocated for up to 300 dwellings and is the last remaining development site available within the existing urban area which either hasn't been built on or has planning consent. Future growth over and above this, if justified, would be masterplanned and phased to come forward as part of Rushden East. This development could not proceed without a full assessment of the potential impacts on the SPA/Ramsar site. The Ferrers School site will be required to provide substantial open space in its own right which (HF.H4) will provide the opportunity to absorb some of the recreational needs generated by the new residents on-site. One of the main pressures from new development on the SPA/Ramsar site will be the additional use of the site for recreational and dog-walking. While some people will decide to walk through the town and use the bridge across the A45 to access Irthlingborough Lakes and Meadows this is a distance of 2.2 kms and would not represent a regular walking route. Alternative shorter circuits exist (see Appendix 1) which provides a circular route of about 2.4kms and includes some</p>	<p>N</p>

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
		<p>road and some pathway environments. Another route which takes in Riverside Park (Route 2) would provide a longer circular route (4.5 kms) without utilising the SPA and a much longer route 3 (8.1 kms) in the countryside, mostly on public rights of way, exists via Chelveston-cum-Coldecott and this would also provide alternative dog walking routes. There is access from the site via an existing right of way and pedestrian crossing points on the John Clark roundabout, however, once Rushden East is developed it is anticipated that a segregated pedestrian/cycle bridge will be constructed to make access easier and safer. It is therefore not considered that these developments will have significant environmental impacts given their location, scale and the fact that both relate to development sites that are already allocated, or are currently being promoted through the emerging JCS review. It should also be noted that the Ferrers School site while having an existing employment allocation within the Saved Policies of the Local Plan could come forward as a sole housing site under paragraph 22 of the NPPF with or without the Neighbourhood Plan or emerging 4 Towns Plan.</p>	
	<p>HF.DE1 The plan will support development that is of a high quality design subject to [Design policies/ standards/ codes]</p>	<p><i>Y with commentary</i> This policy seeks to promote high quality design for new development and specifically development which does not increase the risk of flooding or surface water flooding. Design should also adopt guidance within the Character Assessment and perform well against Building for Life/ Lifetime Homes criteria. Given that this policy relates to development management issues at the level of individual site proposals, it is concluded that none of this policy will have significant impacts on the environment or implications for the SPA/ Ramsar site.</p>	<p>N</p>

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
	HF.DE3 Protection of open space designations [Protected land designations]	<i>Y with commentary</i> Important open spaces, playing fields, local sites of landscape importance have been designated for protection. This policy is not considered to have a negative impact on the SPA/ Ramsar site and by protecting open space it is likely to have a small positive impact by retaining alternative areas for people to use for recreation. It is not considered that there will be any other significant environmental impacts.	N
	HF.DE2 New development will be expected to contribute towards Green Infrastructure ... [Linkages/ green infrastructure proposals]	<i>Y with commentary</i> This policy aims to enhance green infrastructure and to prevent significant harm to the SPA/ Ramsar Site, provide for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), minimise loss of hedgerows and trees, and improve access links. The provision of additional green infrastructure should help to offset any impacts that may occur through improved access to the countryside. Higham Ferrers has two existing bridge links across the A45 to the River Nene Floodplain and Irthlingborough Lakes and Meadows. The plan does not propose further access in this direction, although it will promote the inter-urban pedestrian and cycleway connections and extension of the greenway from Rushden into the town centre. It also promotes a strategic pedestrian/cycleway bridge across the A6 to link into new green infrastructure within Higham/ Rushden East. This creation of green infrastructure and enhancement of connections to the Countryside will primarily be to the East of the Town and would not enhance the access to the SPA it is therefore not considered that this additional recreational use would cause a significant impact.	N
	HF.CD1 New development will be supported by the timely delivery of infrastructure and facilities to provide for a	<i>Y with commentary</i> This policy seeks to provide for financial contributions towards essential community infrastructure such as education,	N

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
	more balanced and sustainable community. [Community facilities] etc	highways and waste services while setting out what contributions will be prioritised for community facilities. This will assist the overall sustainability of development and will help to mitigate the impact of the development. With updated information and evidence from the <i>Visitor Access Study of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA</i> if mitigation measures were required to limit any potential harm and manage access issues then this could be addressed through developer contributions. This requirement has been highlighted in policy HF.CD1 as a possible prioritised area for funding. It is therefore not considered that this policy will have a significant negative impact on the environment however it may produce a positive impact.	
	HF.CD2 Loss of existing community facilities will be resisted. [Community facilities] etc	<i>Y with commentary</i> This policy aims to protect existing community facilities and Assets of Community Value. Buildings and facilities will already be present or new community facilities will be appropriate in size and scale to the location and neighbouring uses. Therefore it is not anticipated that this policy will have significant environmental impacts.	N
B	Degree to which this influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	<i>Neighbourhood Plans are locally driven and will, inevitably, cover a small, defined locality/ neighbourhood. In practice, Neighbourhood Plans will provide detailed policy, land-use or development management direction at the smallest defined (“neighbourhood”) level. These are “bottom up” development plan documents/ policy tools; so by definition must have regard to, and be in general conformity with, “higher level” policies/ programmes, but will not, by themselves, influence other more strategic policies/ programmes.</i>	N
C	Relevance for the integration of	<i>The “basic conditions” require that Neighbourhood Plans must</i>	N

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
	environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	<i>“have regard” to sustainable development. For a Plan to be deemed sound, an Examiner must be satisfied that the effective implementation of a Neighbourhood Plan would give rise to sustainable developments.</i>	
D	Environmental problems relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan	<i>[Consider what net environmental impacts would arise from the effective implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan]</i>	
	[Is it proposed that the emerging Neighbourhood Plan will allocate land for development?]	<p>Y with commentary</p> <p>The HFNP seeks to allocate a housing site with up to 300 dwellings. It will also provide a direction of growth for future development associated with Rushden East. The cumulative impacts of this may be that the additional residents created by these developments could utilise the SPA/ Ramsar site for recreation and put protected characteristics under threat. The Golden Plover Survey undertaken for the JCS HRA assessment (March 2014) for Rushden East indicates that the Ferrers site (HF.H4) would represent unsuitable habitat for these protected characteristics and therefore it can be assumed that the likely populations are much lower than for Rushden East or nil as recorded at Nene Valley Farm. This would indicate that the loss of this habitat would not be important as concluded in the report. However, mitigation through planning obligations would still be appropriate. In respect of Higham East (HF.H3) the Rushden East recorded numbers of Golden Plover which were relatively small – 43 birds maximum or 0.74% of the five year peak mean (between 1999/2000 and 2003/2004) wintering population of the SPA. Although the development of Rushden East would result in the loss of some suitable habitat for Golden Plover the report concludes that there are other suitable habitats located closer to SPA and Ramsar site than Rushden East SUE. For this reason, the loss of habitat at Rushden East SUE is considered not important. However, it does recommend that appropriate</p>	N

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
		<p>contributions towards measures in habitat management plans and implementation of these for sites regularly used by Golden Plover are secured through planning obligations and S106 monies from developments. These measures should include restricted access to screen people and their dogs from areas that support golden plover.</p> <p>A further possible environmental impact may be the loss of habitat on the sites which are allocated for development. Additional vehicle movements may marginally increase the amount of CO₂ within the air however it is not considered that this would lead to a significant impact. Where congestion is greatest, i.e. Chowns Mill roundabout A6/A45 junction, the plan promotes a longer term solution for the junction and requires a new development to provide mitigation. Therefore it is unlikely that any impact will significantly differ from the baseline situation.</p>	
	<p>[Is it proposed that the emerging Neighbourhood Plan contain detailed design policies/ standards?] HF.DE1 The plan will support development that is of a high quality design subject to</p>	<p><i>Y with commentary</i> The net impact of design policies within the Neighbourhood plan are likely to be positive and therefore they should not be considered to cause negative impacts.</p>	N
	<p>[Is it proposed that the emerging Plan will identify “high quality” green/ open spaces/ green infrastructure which may require protection by way of a Neighbourhood Plan policy?]</p>	<p><i>Y with commentary</i> The Plan proposes the designation of Local Green Space which will protect these areas from future development, so will therefore have a net positive environmental effect. Further green infrastructure is proposed in association with Rushden East however it will be for the 4 Towns Plan and Rushden East masterplan to determine the nature and extent of this environmental asset.</p>	N

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
	[Is it proposed that the emerging Plan will identify other zonal safeguarding/ protection policies; e.g. retail frontages, employment areas or community hubs?]	<i>Y with commentary</i> Policy HF.TCE1 identifies the town centre commercial area which allows for appropriate retail, service and other town centre uses to locate within the area and potentially change the use of existing premises. As part of this policy the Primary Shopping Frontages established by Saved Policy S5 and S6 of the Local Plan will be cross referenced and used to support a retail focus in these areas. The policy requires the consideration of the Character Assessment and Shop Front Design SPD as well as protecting the amenity of neighbouring uses and therefore it is considered that this will have no net negative environmental impacts.	N
	[Are there any other environmental issues that may arise from the adoption and implementation of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan?]	<i>N with commentary</i> There are no other significant environmental issues arising from the emerging Neighbourhood Plan	N
E	Relevance for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection)	<i>Strategies relating to waste disposal or water protection are mostly dealt with by Northamptonshire County Council. East Northamptonshire Council itself has a number of strategies in place, relating to waste collection and environmental protection. Community Plans may identify specific local environmental concerns or issues, but these are generally not issues which could be addressed through a Neighbourhood Plan.</i>	N

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
2	Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected		
F	Probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of any effects	<i>A Neighbourhood Plan will relate to specific, small scale issues of either ensuring that any development coming forward will deliver the maximum local benefits. Likewise, in most cases a Neighbourhood Plan will address specific local development management issues, complementing the higher level strategic policy framework already established through the adopted Local Plan and national policies (NPPF). Neighbourhood Plans are intended to have a specifically “local” focus, and are not intended to replace the requirement for Local Planning Authorities (individual, or working in partnership with neighbouring, Local Planning Authorities) to produce a Local Plan. As such, any development policies/ proposals likely to have significant environmental effects would, by definition, need to be addressed through the Local Plan.</i>	N
G	Cumulative nature of any effects	<i>Development of such a magnitude/ quantum to cumulatively lead to effects of such significance that SEA would be required would, by definition, be of a “strategic” nature. Therefore, such development could not be appropriate to be brought forward through a Neighbourhood Plan. In respect of cumulative impacts associated with other Neighbourhood Plans in the local vicinity there are 2 plans which are currently in production. The Chelveston-Cum-Caldecott Neighbourhood Plan is at a similar stage to the Higham Ferrers plan however as a small settlement the plan does not propose significant development allowing only limited in-fill development. The Rushden Neighbourhood Plan is at an earlier stage of development where draft policies are yet to be formulated. The development of Rushden East which may create up to 2,500 new dwellings will not be a part of the plan and will be allocated through the 4 Towns Plan process. This</i>	N

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
		<p><i>will require its own SEA and HRA process. Limited sites will be available for the Neighbourhood Plan to identify and promote and it is therefore considered that the cumulative effects of these together with the Ferrers School site will be restricted in their scope. However, the in-combination effects of smaller developments across East Northamptonshire, Wellingborough and Northampton are considered to be potential threats to the SPA/Ramsar site and its special characteristics. This is particularly true of the build-up of pressure and disturbance from increased recreational use. The Visitor Access Study of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA undertaken by Footprint on behalf of the Nature Improvement Area Partnership provides an up to date picture of how residents and visitors access and use the SPA. The busiest area is between Higham Ferrers and Irthlingborough, running north to the main Stanwick Lakes area and towards Raunds. It is therefore important that any proposed development does not compound this issue and cause further disturbance. The report suggests that strategic management of the SPA is the way to address this and the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust is putting in place strategic land management arrangements in place to help deliver this. The report sets out a range of management options which can be put in place however finding is necessary to deliver these and contributions from development where appropriate should be prioritised to deliver suitable mitigation and protection for the SPA.</i></p>	
H	Transboundary nature of any effects	<p><i>Neighbourhood Plans are required to relate to discrete administrative areas. By definition, “transboundary” issues are “strategic” matters; therefore beyond the scope of a Neighbourhood Plan. Instead, the Local Plan is the correct forum for addressing any “trans-boundary” issues relating to spatial planning.</i></p>	N

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
I	Risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	<i>Strategies relating to waste disposal or water protection are mostly dealt with by Northamptonshire County Council. East Northamptonshire Council itself has a number of strategies in place, relating to waste collection and environmental protection. Community Plans may identify specific local environmental concerns or issues, but these are almost certainly not issues which could be addressed through a Neighbourhood Plan.</i>	N
J	Magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	<i>Neighbourhood Plans, by definition, will cover small geographical areas. The NPPF (paragraphs 184-185) requires that these should set out specific non-strategic development plan policies to address specific local issues. Therefore, development of a sufficient scale and extent to fall within the requirements of the SEA directive would, by definition, not be appropriate to be included within a Neighbourhood Plan.</i>	N
K	Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected	<i>[e.g. due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; intensive land-use]</i>	
	[What statutory natural or built environment designations are situated within designated Neighbourhood Area?]	<p><i>[List statutory natural/ built environment designations; i.e. Scheduled Ancient Monuments, SSSIs, Special Protection Areas/ Ramsar sites, listed buildings, conservation areas]</i></p> <p><u>6 x Scheduled Ancient Monuments</u> Saffron Moat Chichele College Castle Motte&Bailey (with ponds, warren and dovecote) Market Cross Churchyard Cross Nene River Bridge (part)</p> <p><u>Special Protection Area (SPA)/ Ramsar site/ SSSI</u> Riverside Park – The only remaining part of the SPA/Ramsar</p>	

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]																														
		<p>Site and SSSI which remains in the Parish of Higham Ferrers following the boundary change is Riverside Park. There are extensive areas of the SPA/ Ramsar site adjacent to the Parish and NP Boundary to the north and west across the A45.</p> <p><u>Listed buildings</u> There are a total of 56 listed buildings or structures within the Parish.</p> <table data-bbox="835 609 1533 1144"> <tr><td>Bede House</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Manor House</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Parish Church</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Chantry Chapel</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Chichele College foundations</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Town Hall</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>War Memorial</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Stone built town houses, cottages, shops and attached outbuildings</td><td>31</td></tr> <tr><td>Green Dragon Hotel</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>The Griffin PH</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>High St shops behind Hind Stile Row</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>Barn, Westfields Terr.</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Type K6 Telephone Box, High St</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Boot, Shoe & Leatherwork Factories</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Total</td><td>56</td></tr> </table> <p>There is 1 Conservation Area in the Parish covering the main town centre area and the majority of the historic buildings.</p>	Bede House	1	Manor House	1	Parish Church	1	Chantry Chapel	1	Chichele College foundations	4	Town Hall	1	War Memorial	1	Stone built town houses, cottages, shops and attached outbuildings	31	Green Dragon Hotel	1	The Griffin PH	1	High St shops behind Hind Stile Row	8	Barn, Westfields Terr.	1	Type K6 Telephone Box, High St	1	Boot, Shoe & Leatherwork Factories	3	Total	56	
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Total	56																																
	[What other (non-statutory) natural or built environment designations are situated within designated Neighbourhood Area?]	<p><i>[List other (non-statutory) designations, e.g. Wildlife Trust sites, priority sites/ locations identified through the Biodiversity Action Plan, locally listed buildings]</i></p> <p>The Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area is designated and</p>																															

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]																		
		<p>partially located within the Higham Ferrers Parish. <u>The Higham Ferrers Pits and Irthlingborough Lakes and Meadows Wildlife Trust sites</u> are now wholly outside of the Parish Boundary following the boundary change in 2014. There are however directly on the boundary across the A45 and should therefore be noted.</p> <p><u>Emerging Local Listing for buildings</u></p> <table data-bbox="835 609 1575 906"> <tr><td>Cemetery Gatehouse, Vine Hill Drive</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>The Carriage House, Wood St</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Public Library (formally Parish Rooms), Midland Rd</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Charles Parker Factory Offices, Midland Rd</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Frank Thomas Building, Midland Rd</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Alms Houses, John White Close</td><td>9</td></tr> <tr><td>Alms Houses, 54-64 College St</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>Methodist Church, High St</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Total</td><td>21</td></tr> </table>	Cemetery Gatehouse, Vine Hill Drive	1	The Carriage House, Wood St	1	Public Library (formally Parish Rooms), Midland Rd	1	Charles Parker Factory Offices, Midland Rd	1	Frank Thomas Building, Midland Rd	1	Alms Houses, John White Close	9	Alms Houses, 54-64 College St	6	Methodist Church, High St	1	Total	21	
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L	Effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status	<p><i>The presence of a statutory natural or built environmental designation (e.g. SSSI, Scheduled Ancient Monument) in close proximity to a potential Neighbourhood Plan site/ area specific designation may be argued to act as a trigger for a “significant effect”; therefore a requirement for a full SEA to be undertaken. Natural England direction regarding Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) “buffer zones” provide an appropriate specification for where full SEA will be required; i.e. if HRA is deemed necessary, then full SEA will also be required. Potential development proposals which should be subject to</i></p>	N																		

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
		<i>EIA screening should be regarded as having a significant environmental impact and, therefore, would require SEA.</i>	
		<i>A statutory designation covering any site, area or landscape would effectively preclude most development. The exception to this may be development within the curtilage of, or likely to affect the setting of listed buildings (“designated heritage assets”) and/ or conservation areas. In this case potential Neighbourhood Plan policies may require full SEA.</i>	N
	[Potential site allocations for development] Policy HF.H3 [Ferrers Site], HF.H4 [Higham East], HF.CD3 [Henry Chichele School expansion site]	<i>[Which could relate to, or may affect the setting of, a listed building/ conservation area] The allocation of the Ferrers site for up to 300 dwellings is not considered to affect the setting of the conservation area, SAMs or listed buildings within Higham Ferrers. The location of the site is some distance from the main historic core of the settlement where the historic assets are sited. The site is also bounded by industrial buildings to the north and south and a secondary school to the West. There are potential archaeological remains on the site and policy HF.H3 recognises this and requires extensive investigation prior to any development which will mitigate any impact in this respect. Higham East is not an allocated site but provides for a direction of future growth should this be required and justified. This area is further away from historic assets and would not pose a threat to the setting of the conservation area, listing buildings or valued landscape. The expansion site for Henry Chichele school (HF.CD3) is limited in size and is located within the 1990s/ 2000s King’s Meadow development, well away from the central historic core of Higham Ferrers. It is not therefore considered that this site will have an adverse impact on the setting of listing buildings or the conservation area.</i>	N
	[Potential design policies/ standards/ codes]	<i>[Which could relate to, or may affect the setting of, a listed</i>	N

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
	HF.DE1 The plan will support development that is of a high quality design subject to	<p><i>building/ conservation area]</i> <i>It is considered that Policy HF.DE1 within the Plan which covers design standards will help to reinforce and protect the setting and context of historic assets within Higham Ferrers ; i.e. delivering a positive impact in this regard. The Policy requires consideration of the Character Assessment which identifies key design attributes for each area of the town and how new development should complement and integrate existing design features.</i></p>	
	<p>[Linkages/ green infrastructure proposals] HF.DE2 New development will be expected to contribute towards Green Infrastructure ... HF.TC3 new developments should have layouts that provide safe and convenient routes for walking, cycling and for disabled users that connect to other developments and to key destinations like the town centre</p> <p>HF.TCE2 Support will be given to proposals that assist the delivery of public realm improvements and enhanced pedestrianisation around the Market Square</p>	<p><i>[Which could relate to, or may affect the setting of, a listed building/ conservation area]</i> <i>Policy HF.DE2 will require new green infrastructure and promote the inter-urban pedestrian and cycleway connections and extension of the greenway from Rushden into the town centre. It also promotes a strategic pedestrian/cycleway bridge across the A6 to link into new green infrastructure within Higham/ Rushden East. This creation of green infrastructure and enhancement of connections while providing greater access to the conservation area and central part of the town is intended to enhance conservation assets through providing improved access to and understanding of these. The additional green infrastructure proposed to the East of the town as part of Rushden East will ultimately also alleviate much of the pressure of recreational use on the SPA.</i></p> <p><i>Policy HF.TC3 also promotes greater accessibility from new developments to key destinations additional infrastructure is likely to be needed for secure cycle facilities. However, it is not considered that this will have a significant impact on historic assets. Specific proposals would be managed in accordance with policy HF.DE1 and sympathetically incorporated into any future design.</i></p>	N

	SEA Directive (Annex II)	Commentary	Conclusion – significant environmental impact? [Y/N]
		<p><i>Policy HF.TCE2 proposes support for enhanced pedestrianisation and public realm improvements within the town centre. It is considered that this will assist and enhance the overall setting and context of historic assets and therefore deliver positive impacts.</i></p>	
	<p>[Community facilities] etc HF.CD1 New development will be supported by the timely delivery of infrastructure and facilities to provide for a more balanced and sustainable community.</p>	<p><i>[Which could relate to, or may affect the setting of, a listed building/ conservation area]</i> New community facilities are promoted through Policy HF.CD1 through developer contributions. Some facilities, such as the community centre, may be located within the centre and conservation area. However, in accordance with policy HF.DE1 and other development management policies in the adopted and emerging Local Plan, such development would need to be of an acceptable standard and not to have a detrimental impact on the existing heritage of the town. Contributions could also be prioritised for mitigation for the SPA/Ramsar site should this be necessary and justified from the impact of any proposed development.</p>	N

SEA Screening conclusion – Will a full Strategic Environmental Assessment be required, in accordance with the SEA Directive; i.e. is the proposed Neighbourhood Plan likely to have a significant effect on the environment?

The need to ensure compliance with statutory legislation, including European Union Directives, is one of the major challenges associated with Neighbourhood Planning. The requirements of the SEA Directive are potentially far-reaching, but many aspects of this may not be applicable in the case of Neighbourhood Plans, given their “non-strategic”/ locally based context.

Already, it must be recognised that, in all but exceptional circumstances, a Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO) would **not** require the preparation and submission of a formal SEA. Instead, completion of this Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening pro-forma would be sufficient to comply with the requirements of the SEA Directive.

In the case of a Neighbourhood Plan, it will be necessary for the relevant “responsible body” (i.e. local planning authority, Town Council, Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum/ Parish Meeting) to complete questions **A, D, K and L** within Part 2 of this pro-forma. Following this, the person(s) preparing this SEA screening assessment will need to briefly summarise these findings and come to a conclusion as to whether the emerging Neighbourhood Plan would have a **significant** environmental impact so, therefore, whether a full SEA would be needed to accompany the Neighbourhood Plan.

SEA SCREENING CONCLUSION – WILL A FULL STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT BE REQUIRED?

Summary conclusion

The Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan sets out policies for the future development of the town, protection of social and environmental assets and support of the economic vitality of the Parish. As a result of the stage 2 screening (above), it is anticipated that there will be localised positive environmental impacts. It is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Plan that are not covered in the Sustainability Appraisal of the adopted Core Strategy or the emerging JCS review. Mitigation and offsetting measures have been proposed within the plan to neutralise any potential impact to the SPA/Ramsar site from proposed future development. The Plan does not promote growth or development which is above or beyond that anticipated within these higher level plans and as such, it is concluded that the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.

Will a full SEA be required [N]?

The following changes have been proposed to the Neighbourhood Plan which will further strengthen its protection and conservation of environmental assets within the local vicinity and minimise environmental impacts.

These changes are as follows;

- **Addition to Policy HF.H3 Higham East (Future Growth)**
- 'Opportunities to protect and enhance existing sensitive habitats'
- Any potential impacts must be assessed to the satisfaction of Natural England prior to development being consented. In the event that any possible adverse impacts are identified, appropriate mitigation measures must be agreed with Natural England prior to commencement of development'
- Financial contribution to access management measures at the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA and Ramsar site and/or the delivery of additional strategic greenspace to ensure no likely significant effects to this important site as a result of increased recreational pressure from development.

- **Addition to HF.H4 - Land East of Ferrers School**
- 'safe-guarding and enhancement to the Public Right of Way (UK2) linking John Clark Way Roundabout to Queensway and contribute to the extension of the Greenway through to William Steele Way and the Town Centre and providing additional alternative walking and jogging routes for new residents.'
- 'Provision of formal and informal open space, Sustainable Urban Drainage systems and landscape buffer and screening between the development and Higham Business Park and the Ferrers School; with any measures to reduce potential impact on the SPA/Ramsar site;
- Financial contribution to access management measures at the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA and Ramsar and/or the delivery of additional strategic greenspace to ensure no likely significant effects to this important site as a result of increased recreational pressure from development.

- **Addition to CD1**
- 'Environmental improvements towards enhancing open space and delivering the required measures to mitigate impacts on the SPA'

- **Addition to HF.DE1**
- 'Protecting natural assets and enhancing the natural environment and biodiversity, particularly the SPA/Ramsar site.'

- **Additional text to 4.3.2 Natural Environment - second paragraph has been amended**

The town also sits alongside the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits which was approved as a Special Protection Area (SPA) in April 2011 because of the range of habitat and topography which provides valuable resting and feeding conditions for major concentrations of wintering water birds, especially ducks and waders. Some species also spend time feeding and roosting on surrounding agricultural land outside the SPA. In addition, the site has also been listed as a Wetland with international status under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Wildfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention). This is because it regularly supports 20,000 or more water birds and regularly supports 1% of the bird individuals of Mute Swan and Gadwall. New development must protect the conservation objectives of the SPA.

The next stages

If it is concluded that the emerging Neighbourhood Plan will **not** require a full SEA, then it will be necessary to publish the completed pro-forma, using the relevant Neighbourhood Planning forum (e.g. local website, East Northamptonshire Council website). Following this, no further action will be required.

If it is concluded that the emerging Neighbourhood Plan **is** likely to have a significant effect on the environment, it will be necessary to follow the various stages in the process. These are explained in full detail in the government guidance, "[A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive](#)" (ODPM, September 2005). While this guidance pre-dates Neighbourhood Plans, it remains a relevant and useful document and is provides the definitive government guidance.

In the event that a full SEA is deemed necessary, it is advised that the responsible body should contact East Northamptonshire and/ or their appointed consultant (in the event that a consultant has been employed to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan). It is likely that a specialist consultant would be needed to prepare the necessary SEA documentation.

Appendix 1

Alternative Recreational Walking Routes to Using the SPA

Route 1 – 2.35km



Route 2 – 4.5kms



Route 3 – 8.1kms

