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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic and comprehensive process for evaluating the environmental effects of a plan or programme to ensure that the environmental implications of decisions are taken into account before any such decisions are made. The need for the environmental assessment of plans and programmes is set out in the EU Directive 2001/42/EC, known as the SEA Directive.
- 1.2 Under this Directive, Neighbourhood Plans may require SEA, but this is very much dependent upon the content of the Plan. For plans which "determine the use of small areas at local level" or are "minor modifications" to existing plans, the Directive only requires SEA where they are likely to have significant environmental effects. The expressions "small area" and "local level" are not defined in the Directive and must be interpreted in relation to the nature and scope of a particular plan. Screening is needed to determine whether such plans are likely to have significant environmental effects.
- 1.3 Annex II of the Directive lists criteria for determining the likely significance of the environmental effects of plans and to be used in a screening exercise. The findings of the exercise must be subject to consultation with Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England. The results of the screening process must be detailed in a Screening Statement, made available to the public.
- 1.4 This Screening Report is an assessment as to whether the contents of the Regulation 14 Draft Polesworth Neighbourhood Plan published alongside this Screening Report in 2023 requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment in accordance with the Directive. It also determines whether the Neighbourhood Plan requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Article 6(3) and (4) of the EU Habitats Directive and with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). An HRA is required when it is deemed likely that there will be significant adverse effects on protected European Sites (Natura 2000 sites) as a result of the implementation of a plan/project.
- 1.5 A recent European Court judgment has been handed down Case C-232/17 *People Over Wind and Peter Sweetman versus Coillte Teoranta*, henceforth "People Over Wind". This concerns how

screenings such as this take into account any impact on protected European sites.

- 1.6 This judgment has ruled that “it is not appropriate, at the screening stage, to take account of the measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the plan or project on the site”.
- 1.7 The Polesworth Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to be in general conformity with the strategic planning policies in the North Warwickshire Local Plan (NWLP). The NWLP was subject to its own Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment (https://www.northwarks.gov.uk/downloads/file/8847/strategic_environment_assessment_adoption_statement).

2.0 Legislative Background

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 2.1 The SEA Directive was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations)¹. Detailed guidance on these regulations can be found in the Government publication, A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (ODPM 2005)².
- 2.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local authorities to produce Sustainability Appraisals (SAs) for all Development Plan Documents in order to meet the requirement of the SEA Directive and it is considered best practice to incorporate the requirements of this Directive into a Sustainability Appraisal (National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 165). As a neighbourhood plan is not a Development Plan Document, it does not legally require a Sustainability Appraisal. However, there are instances where a SEA would need to be undertaken in order to meet the requirements of the SEA Regulations.
- 2.3 Consequently, to establish whether the neighbourhood plan might give rise to significant environmental effects, it is necessary to screen the plan (see Section 5).

Habitats Regulations Assessment.

- 2.4 Schedule 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 makes provision in relation to the Habitats Directive. The Directive requires that any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a European site must be subject to an Appropriate Assessment. In relation to this, paragraph 1 sets out a basic condition that the making of a neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site. Paragraph 4 indicates that a qualifying body which submits a proposal for a neighbourhood plan must provide such information as the competent authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment or to enable them to determine whether an assessment is required.
- 2.5 The legislation requires that, where there is a risk of a significant effect on a European site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects then the plan should progress from HRA screening to an Appropriate Assessment.
- 2.6 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further basic condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This basic condition covers the implications of

¹ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/pdfs/ukxi_20041633_en.pdf

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf

neighbourhood plans for designated European sites. This matter is addressed in this SEA/HRA screening.

3.0 Polesworth Neighbourhood Development Plan

3.1 The purpose of the Polesworth Neighbourhood Development Plan is to provide a set of statutory planning policies to guide development within the neighbourhood area (Figure 1) over the period to 2033 and has been prepared by a Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (NPWG) on behalf of the qualifying body, Polesworth Parish Council.

3.2 The objectives of the Polesworth Neighbourhood Plan are:

OBJECTIVE 1 – To protect and enhance green spaces.

The PNP will protect and enhance green spaces. These high-quality spaces will provide good opportunities for formal and informal sport and recreation activities.

OBJECTIVE 2 – To ensure new development creates a high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places that reinforce the identity of Polesworth, Warton, Birchmoor and the surrounding countryside.

OBJECTIVE 3 – To protect and enhance the built and natural heritage assets of the area.

OBJECTIVE 4 – To support vibrant village centres and protect and enhance local services and facilities.

OBJECTIVE 5 – To ensure new development integrates as seamlessly as possible within its surroundings and minimises impact on existing communities.

OBJECTIVE 6 – To preserve the distinctive nature of our communities through preserving gaps / areas of separation between our existing communities and especially the neighbouring communities of Tamworth and Atherstone.

3.3 In order to deliver these objectives, the Plan sets out 9 planning policies. These cover the following:

Policy PNP1 – Protecting Local Green Space

Policy PNP2 - Protecting Other Green Spaces

Policy PNP3 – Sustainable Design and Construction

Policy PNP4 - Conserving and Enhancing the Landscape

Policy PNP5 – Non-designated Heritage Assets

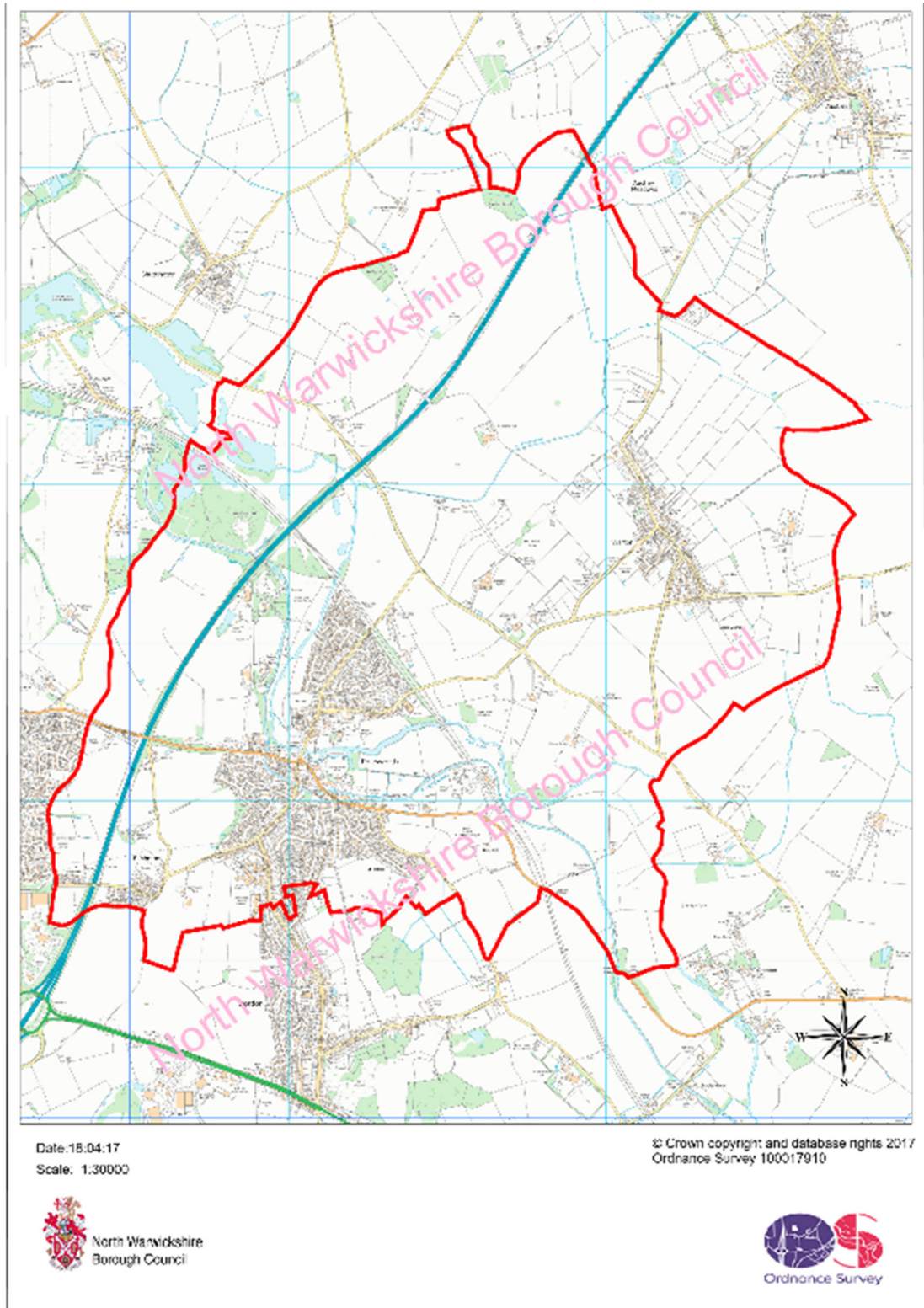
Policy PNP6 – Protection of Existing Services and Facilities

Policy PNP7 – Sport, Recreation and Leisure Facilities

Policy PNP8 – Transport

Policy PNP9 – Preserving the Separate Identity of Polesworth’s Villages

Figure 1. Polesworth Designated Neighbourhood Area (source: North Warwickshire Borough Council
https://www.northwarks.gov.uk/downloads/file/6826/polesworth_parish_council_-_approved_area_designation)



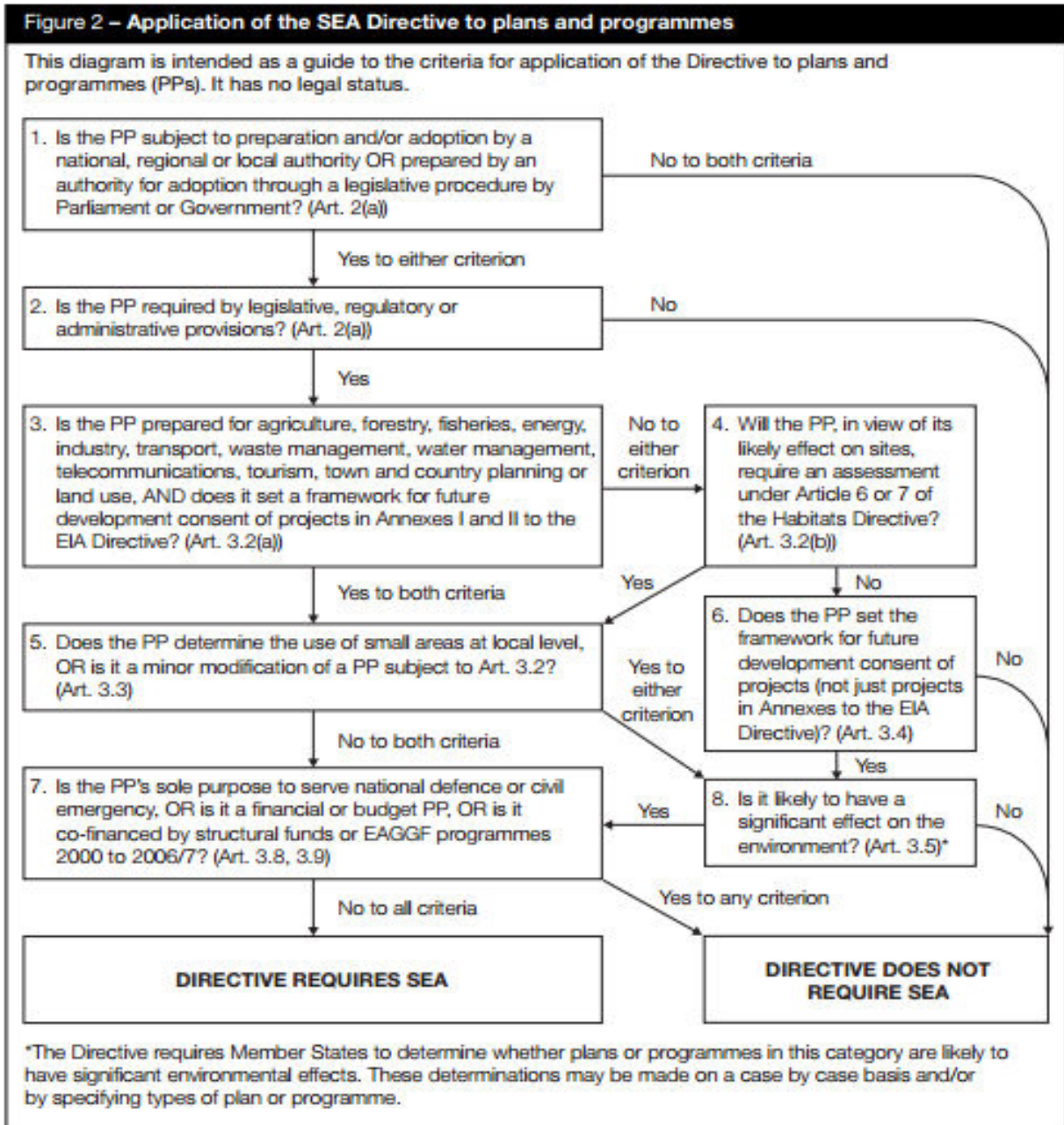
- 3.4 It is a requirement of the Town and Country Planning Act that neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. Polesworth is situated within North Warwickshire Borough and must, therefore, be in general conformity with the strategic planning policies in the North Warwickshire Local Plan (NWLP). The NWLP was subject to its own Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment (https://www.northwarks.gov.uk/downloads/file/8847/strategic_environment_assessment_adoption_statement).

4.0 Screening Process

4.1 It is the purpose of this report to assess whether the policies and proposals in the Regulation 14 Draft Polesworth Neighbourhood Development Plan are likely to have 'significant environmental effects'. This screening assessment has been undertaken in two parts:

- The first part assesses whether the neighbourhood plan requires SEA in accordance with the flow chart set out below
- The second part considers whether the neighbourhood plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, using criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the EU SEA Directive and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programme Regulations 2004 (see section 2)

4.2 Government guidance, as set out in 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive', identifies the following approach to be taken in determining whether SEA is required:



4.3 This process has been followed and the findings are set out in the table below:

Table 1: Establishing the Need for Strategic Environmental Assessment

Stage	Y/N/?	Reason
<p>1. Is the plan or programme (PP) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Neighbourhood plans may be prepared under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Localism Act 2011. They are drawn up by a qualifying body, which, in the case of Polesworth, is the Parish Council. The neighbourhood plan is subject to independent examination and referendum. If the Plan receives 50% or more 'yes' votes at referendum, it will be 'made' by the local planning authority (North Warwickshire Borough Council).</p>
<p>2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) is discretionary. However, once 'made', it will form part of the statutory development plan for the area and will be used in the determination of planning applications. It is therefore considered necessary to answer the following questions to determine further if a SEA is required.</p>
<p>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? (Article 3.2(a))</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>The Polesworth Neighbourhood Development Plan (PNP) has been prepared for town and country planning and land use purposes. The PNP sets out a framework for future development in Polesworth. Once 'made', it will form part of the statutory development plan for the</p>

Stage	Y/N/?	Reason
		area, and will be used when making decisions on planning applications which could include development which may fall under Annex I and II of the EIA directive.
4. Will the Plan, in view of its likely effects on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Article 3.2(b))	?	The PNP could potentially have impacts on sites covered by the Habitats Directive. However, this requires individual assessment of a Plan (see section 6).
5. Does the Plan determine the use of small areas at local OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Article 3.2? (Article 3.3)	Y	The PNP determines the use of development sites at the local (neighbourhood) level through the implementation of the plan's criterion-based development management policies.
6. Does the Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? Article 3.4)	Y	A NDP forms part of the development plan and will be used in the assessment of planning applications. It, therefore, helps to set, alongside other development plan documents, the framework of policies for helping to determine future development at a local level.
7. Is the Plan's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Article 3.8, 3.9)	N	Not applicable
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Article 3.5)	?	A NDP could potentially have an effect on the environment. However, whether this is significant depends on the proposals in the Plan. An individual screening assessment of the

Stage	Y/N/?	Reason
		PNP is required (see section 5)

5.0 Screening Assessment

- 5.1 The results of the preceding assessment indicate that, depending upon the content of a neighbourhood plan, a Strategic Environmental Assessment may be required. For this reason, neighbourhood plans should be assessed, individually, in order to determine their likely significant effects on the environment.
- 5.2 The criteria for determining the likely significant effects referred to in Article 3 (5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the Regulations. The proposals within individual neighbourhood plans will need to be assessed against these criteria:
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 trans-boundary 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 national 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.

5.3 The policies set out in the Regulation 14 Draft Polesworth Neighbourhood Development Plan (2023) have been used to undertake this screening assessment. If the conclusion of the screening exercise is that a SEA is not required, any major changes to the existing policies or introduction of new ones should be subject to a further screening assessment to ensure that significant effects are not likely.

5.4 The table below sets out the assessment of policies in the Polesworth Neighbourhood Development Plan in relation to the criteria outlined earlier:

Table 2: Assessment of the Likelihood of Significant Effects on the Environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Is the Polesworth NDP likely to have a significant environmental effect?	Justification for Screening Assessment
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.	No	The PNP sets a local policy framework for development proposals. It supports the implementation of policies in the adopted NWLP which have already been subject to SEA as part of the Sustainability Appraisal.
The degree to which the plan or programme	No	The PNP must be in general conformity with the policies in the

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Is the Polesworth NDP likely to have a significant environmental effect?	Justification for Screening Assessment
influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.		development plan – NWLP. The PNP supports the implementation of higher tier policies by setting more detailed policy, in line with these higher-level policies, at the neighbourhood level and, as such, is not considered to have a significant influence on these higher-level plans and programmes.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	No	The PNP contributes to the achievement of sustainable development at the neighbourhood level. Policies set out in the PNP protect assets of local environmental value, including landscapes, non-designated heritage assets, local green spaces and open spaces and provide locally distinct planning policies to protect these environmental assets. The likelihood of significant effects on the environment is, therefore, minimised and will be managed, alongside other development plan policies.
Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	No	The PNP does NOT allocate sites for development.
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).	No	The PNP must be in general conformity with higher level plans that comprise the development plan for the area. These have had regard to European Community legislation on the environment. Consequently, the policies of the neighbourhood plan are not considered to be relevant to the implementation of EC legislation.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Is the Polesworth NDP likely to have a significant environmental effect?	Justification for Screening Assessment
		Waste Management is not a matter for neighbourhood plans.
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	No	Development is likely over the plan period meaning that some environmental change will take place. However, the PNP policies are designed to ensure that any new development proposed by others will be sustainable and any environmental impacts minimised.
The cumulative nature of the effects.	No	The PNP's policies are unlikely to have significant cumulative impacts on the local environment. The PNP does not allocate sites for development and includes criteria based policies to help manage future development.
The trans-boundary nature of the effects	No	The policies in the PNP are unlikely to have significant environmental impacts on neighbouring areas.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	No	No significant risks to human health or the environment as a result of the Plan's policies have been identified. In fact, the Plan is likely to improve human health by improving access to green infrastructure; by protecting open spaces; and by protecting sport and recreation facilities.
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	No	The PNP is concerned with development within the neighbourhood area. The geographical area covered by the Plan is 1,662 hectares and the neighbourhood area had a population of 8,423 in 2011 (2011 Census). The potential for environmental impacts is likely to be limited and minimal.
The value and vulnerability of the area	No	The neighbourhood plan area is urban/rural in character and its

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Is the Polesworth NDP likely to have a significant environmental effect?	Justification for Screening Assessment
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.		natural heritage assets includes a Local Nature Reserves (Abbey Green) and parts of 2 SSSIs (Alvecote Pools and Birches Barn Meadows). There are 25 entries on the National Heritage List for England. These have been taken into account when preparing the PNP.

5.5 Based on the SEA Screening Assessment set out in Table 2 above, the conclusion is that the Polesworth Neighbourhood Development Plan will not have significant adverse effects in relation to any of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations, and therefore does not need to be subject to SEA.

5.6 The main reasons for this conclusion are:

- The PNP supports the implementation of policies in the adopted North Warwickshire Local Plan which have already been subject to SEA through the Sustainability Appraisal and assessed as having no significant environmental effects.
- The PNP is a lower tier plan in the hierarchy of planning documents for the area, and therefore has limited influence on other plans or programmes.
- The PNP is concerned with development at the neighbourhood level. Its impacts are therefore unlikely to be strategic.
- Through its policies, the PNP seeks to avoid or minimise negative environmental effects on natural and built heritage assets.

6.0 HRA Screening

- 6.1 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) refers to the assessment required for any plan or project to assess the potential impacts against the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 wildlife sites. This assessment must determine whether a plan would adversely affect, or is likely to affect, the integrity of a site(s) in terms of its nature conservation objectives.
- 6.2 Under Criterion 4 of Table 1: Assessing the Need for SEA, it was concluded that the PNP would not have an impact upon internationally designated sites.
- 6.3 The HRA process is generally divided into three stages. The initial stage of the process is the screening stage and determines if there are any likely significant effects or risk of significant effects possible as a result of the implementation of the plan. If there are significant effects the plan will need to undertake an Appropriate Assessment. The screening process should provide a description of the plan (see earlier) and an identification of the Natura 2000 sites which may be affected by the plan and assess the significance of any possible effects on the identified sites.
- 6.4 Polesworth itself does not contain a *Natura 2000* site. Four Special Protection Areas lie outside the neighbourhood plan area:
- River Mease approx. 12 miles distant
 - Ensor's pool approx. 13 miles distant
 - Cannock Extension Canal approx. 17 miles distant
 - Cannock Chase approx. 20 miles distant
- 6.5 The PNP policies and proposals are in conformity with those in the NWLP which has been subject to Appropriate Assessment. The screening assessment of the NWLP concluded that the Local Plan would have no likely significant effects upon the majority of European sites identified during the assessment, including the River Mease SAC, Ensor's Pool SAC, and Cannock Chase SAC. However, likely significant effects of air pollution on the Cannock Extension Canal SAC could not be excluded on the basis of the available information, therefore these effects were subject to an Appropriate Assessment. The Appropriate Assessment of those likely significant effects concluded that the Local Plan would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Cannock Extension Canal SAC as a result

of increasing air pollution either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. The PNP as a lower tier plan that does not propose development lies within the scope of this conclusion. It is therefore concluded that no adverse effects on integrity will occur at any European sites as a result of the PNP, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

7.0 Consultation

- 6.1 The three statutory bodies (Environment Agency, Heritage England and Natural England) were consulted on the SEA/HRA screening in early 2023.
- 6.2 The consultation responses are included at Appendix 1. In summary the responses:

Environment Agency

“We have reviewed the Screening Assessment prepared in support of the Polesworth Neighbourhood Plan. Having reviewed the proposals we do not consider there to be significant environmental impacts as a result of this plan, therefore we concur with the conclusions of the report and do not require a SEA to be undertaken in support of the plan.”

Heritage England

“For the purposes of consultations on SEA Screening Opinions, Historic England confines its advice to the question, “Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?” in respect of our area of concern, cultural heritage.

Our comments are based on the information supplied with the screening request. 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 the ‘SEA’ Directive], Historic England concurs with your view that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

Regarding HRA Historic England does not disagree with your conclusions but would defer to the opinions of the other statutory consultees.”

Natural England

“Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment

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.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

Natural England agrees with the report's conclusions that the Polesworth Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European Site, either alone or in combination and therefore no further assessment work would be required."

8.0 Conclusions and Recommendations of the Screening Assessments

8.1 This report sets out the assessment of the need for the PNP to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment as required by the SEA Directive and Appropriate Assessment as required by the Habitats Directive.

8.2 The assessment of both of these requirements has been undertaken on the Regulation 16 Submission Draft. As such if the content of the Neighbourhood Plan is significantly changed before the plan is made there may be the need for a further screening exercise to be undertaken on any revised version of the PNP.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

8.3 In relation to the requirement for the PNP to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment, it is concluded in the assessment undertaken in Section 5 of this report that the Plan in its current form is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and therefore SEA will not be required.

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

8.4 In terms of the requirement for the PNP to be subject to Habitat Regulations Assessment, the appraisal set out in Section 6 of this report concludes that no further work will be required in order to comply with the Habitat Regulations.

People Over Wind

8.5 The European Court has ruled in People Over Wind that “it is not appropriate, at the screening stage, to take account of the measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the plan or project on the site.”

Consultation

8.6 The three statutory bodies were consulted in early 2023 on the screenings. They all agree with the conclusions in this report that no further work is required in relation to these matters with regard to the plan as drafted (section 7.0 of this report).

Appendix 1. Statutory body consultation responses

From: @environment-agency.gov.uk>

Sent: Monday, June 5, 2023 12:00 PM

To:

Subject: RE: Polesworth Strategic Environmental Assessment Consultation

Good afternoon Michael,

We have reviewed the Screening Assessment prepared in support of the Polesworth Neighbourhood Plan. Having reviewed the proposals we do not consider there to be significant environmental impacts as a result of this plan, therefore we concur with the conclusions of the report and do not require a SEA to be undertaken in support of the plan. We advise however the consultation is undertaken with Natural England amongst other statutory bodies prior to making any final decision.

Kind regards,

Environment Agency | Sentinel House, 9 Wellington Crescent, Fradley Park,
Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 8RR

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

Dear Mr Wellock

POLESWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN- SEA AND HRA SCREENING

Thank you for your consultation and the invitation to comment on the SEA and HRA Screening Document for the above Neighbourhood Plan.

For the purposes of consultations on SEA Screening Opinions, Historic England confines its advice to the question, “Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?” in respect of our area of concern, cultural heritage.

Our comments are based on the information supplied with the screening request. 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 the ‘SEA’ Directive], Historic England concurs with your view that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

Regarding HRA Historic England does not disagree with your conclusions but would defer to the opinions of the other statutory consultees.

The views of the other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for a SEA is made. If a decision is made to undertake a SEA, please note that Historic England has published guidance on Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Historic Environment that is relevant to both local and neighbourhood planning and available at: [<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>](https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/)

I trust the above comments will be of help in taking forward the Neighbourhood Plan.

Yours sincerely,

P. Boland.

Peter Boland
Historic Places Advisor

cc:

Date: 27 April 2023
Our ref: 426787
Your ref: Polesworth Neighbourhood Plan



Mr Michael Wellock
Kirkwells

Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 8GJ

T 0300 060 3900

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Mr Wellock

Polesworth Neighbourhood Plan – SEA & HRA Screening Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 14 March 2023.

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

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 SA/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/SA 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.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

Natural England agrees with the report's conclusions that the Polesworth Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European Site, either alone or in combination and therefore no further assessment work would be required.

For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle
Consultations Team

List of Abbreviations

PNP - Polesworth Neighbourhood Plan

HRA - Habitats Regulations Assessment

NWLP – North Warwickshire Local Plan

NPWG – Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

SA - Sustainability Appraisal

SAC - Special Area of Conservation

SEA - Strategic Environment Assessment

SPA - Special Protection Area

SSSI - Special Site of Scientific Interest

Kirkwells

The Planning People

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