

**Strategic Environmental Assessment  
(SEA) and Habitats Regulations  
Assessment Screening Statement for the  
Norton St Philip Neighbourhood Plan**

**February 2019**

**Screening Statement on the determination of the need for a Strategic  
Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the Environmental  
Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and European  
Directive 2001/42/EC for the Norton St Philip Neighbourhood Plan**

## **Introduction**

This screening report is used to determine whether or not the contents of the Norton St Philip Neighbourhood Plan require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These require an SEA to be undertaken on any land use plan or programme 'which sets the framework for future development consent of projects'.

However, there are exceptions to this requirement for plans 'which determine the use of a small area at local level' or which only propose 'minor modifications to a plan', if it is determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

To assess whether an SEA is required a screening process must be undertaken based on a standard set of criteria. This must be subject to consultation with English Heritage, the Environment Agency and Natural England. The results of the screening process must be detailed in a Screening Statement, available to the public.

## **Norton St Philip Neighbourhood Plan**

The Norton St Philip Neighbourhood Plan aims to "maintain the special character and built heritage of the Parish of Norton St Philip while promoting it's development as a compact and sustainable community" The plan's objectives are to;

- Encourage sustainable housing development within the village settlement boundary
- Ensure that the location, design and scale of any housing development is managed in order to maintain the character and heritage of the village
- Protect and enhance the village's key green spaces and recreational facilities
- Support people with a local connection who wish to remain within or return to the community
- Promote energy efficient building and increase resilience to climate change

The Plan contains policies relating to:

- Allocation of a brownfield site for housing
- Permanently protecting open areas through Local Green Space designation
- Identifying housing styles and local characteristics and developing design guidance
- Setting criteria for affordable entry level housing for people with a local connection in the parish
- Promoting good practice in sustainable design to mitigate the impact of climate change

It also refers to the Norton St Philip Character Assessment, which sets out design parameters for new development in Norton St Philip, to ensure that the distinctive character of the village is respected by development. A Conservation Area Appraisal has already been carried out by Mendip District Council.

The policies in the Adopted Part 1 Mendip Local Plan have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal which incorporated SEA. The Norton St Philip Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with policies in the Plan.

### **The Screening Process**

The Responsible Authority (in this case Mendip District Council) must determine whether the plan or programme under assessment is likely to have significant environmental effects. This assessment must be made taking account of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (see Appendix 1), and in consultation with the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England.

Where the Responsible Authority determines that the plan or programme is unlikely to have significant environmental effects, and therefore does not need to be subject to full Strategic Environmental Assessment, it must prepare a statement showing the reasons for this determination.

Mendip District Council has carried out a screening process for the Neighbourhood Plan and consulted the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England. Concerns were raised by Historic England and some changes made to the draft plan. A further screening was then prepared, taking into account the changes.

Appendix 1 shows the results of the further SEA screening process for the policies and objectives within the Plan.

The submitted Screening Report concludes that the Plan is not considered likely to have any significant effects on the environment. As a result, a full SEA under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is not required.

### **Consultation Responses**

The Screening Statement was sent to the Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England.

Both the Environment Agency and Natural England concurred with the findings of the Screening Statement and agreed that a full SEA is not required.

The Environment Agency commented that any new development should comply with the NPPF.

Historic England raised concerns about;

- The allocation of brownfield land at Bell Hill Garage for a specified number of homes which if not developed with due regard to the need to conserve and enhance the historic heritage of the conservation area could have a significant effect
- The allocation of land at the former Catholic Church for a specified number of dwellings which if not developed with due regard to the need to conserve

and enhance the historic heritage of the conservation area could have a significant effect

- The inclusion of additional land within the development limit unless the entirety of this area constitutes a committed development site.

The Plan has been amended to address the concerns raised by Historic England.

The site at the former Roman Catholic Site will no longer be specifically promoted, and the policy will specify that development will have to have due regard to the Conservation Area and historic heritage.

The Bell Hill Garage Site is potentially improving a part of the conservation area which does not enhance the general appearance of the historic form. However the policy by specifying up to 18 dwellings could be in danger of promoting over-development of the site that would adversely impact on the conservation area. The site is characterised as both 'Close terraced cottages' and 'Leafy Cottages' within the Character Assessment. Thus the southern section is felt more appropriate for a denser development to the road frontage. Previous planning permission granted for 10 dwellings did not cover the entire site now offered. This is made clear in the amended Development Brief.

The area to be included within the extended development limit includes only the area within a committed development site, which is currently under construction. Historic England therefore consider that the extension to the development limit can be substantiated.

Historic England have confirmed that they do not consider that the amended plan will give rise to significant environmental effects or require a Strategic Environmental Assessment to be carried out.

### **Screening Outcome**

Concerns were raised by Historic England that significant environmental effects could be created. The plan has been amended to reduce this risk.

This screening, (following amendments to the plan) demonstrates that the Norton St Philip Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment. Therefore it will not be necessary to carry out a full SEA on this document.

# Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appropriate Assessment) Screening

## Introduction

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

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

This means that a Screening Assessment is carried out with regard to the Conservation Objectives of the European Sites and with reference to other plans or projects to identify if any significant effect is likely for any European Site. Only if a significant effect is likely need an Appropriate Assessment of the plan be undertaken.

## Screening Process and Outcome

Appendix 2 shows the results of this screening process for the policies and objectives within the Plan.

## Consultation Responses

No objections to the screening report were raised by the Consultation Bodies.

English Nature agree with the conclusion of the screening opinion that the plan is unlikely to result in significant impacts on a European site and therefore HRA is not required. There are no nationally or internationally designated sites or landscapes located in the Neighbourhood Plan area; however it is within 500m of Cleaves Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Iford Manor SSSI, and a small part of the parish boundary is adjacent to the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The nearest European site to the Neighbourhood Plan area is a component of Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC), approximately 2.5 km to the north of the Parish, which is also nationally designated as Winsley Mines SSSI.

Somerset County Council's Ecologist confirmed that the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have a significant impact on bats. Norton St Philip is just within Band C of the Mells Valley SAC, but there is unlikely to be a significant impact on Greater Horseshoe Bat foraging areas or habitat that forms commuting structures.

## Screening Outcome

The report finds no other detrimental impacts arising from the policies and therefore it is concluded that a full HRA does not need to be undertaken for the Norton St Philip Neighbourhood Plan.

## Appendix 1; Assessment of requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment

The Neighbourhood Plan's objectives are to;

- Encourage sustainable housing development within the village settlement boundary
- Ensure that the location, design and scale of any housing development is managed in order to maintain the character and heritage of the village
- Protect and enhance the village's key green spaces and recreational facilities
- Support people with a local connection who wish to remain within or return to the community
- Promote energy efficient buildings and increase resilience to Climate Change.

The plan includes policies on housing on brownfield sites, protection of open area, housing styles, local characteristics and design guidance, affordable entry level housing for people with a local connection and good practice in sustainable design.

Its overall vision is to “maintain the special character and built heritage of the parish of Norton St Philip while promoting its development as a compact and sustainable community”.

Assessment Criteria	Assessment of Significant Effect	Justification	Amendments to Policy
Criteria 1 from Schedule 1 of 2004 SEA Regulations – The characteristics of plans and programmes having regard, in particular, to:			
The degree to which the plan or programme sets a	Not significant	The NSP NP must be in general conformity with the Mendip Local Plan and the NPPF.	None

<p>framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources</p>		<p>The local plan site allocations document is in preparation and the NSP NP will both influence and be influenced by the emerging Local Plan documents, which are now at examination. Both the local plan and the NSP NP will set the context for determining planning applications alongside the NPPF. The plan influences development within the confines of the parish of Norton St Philip and therefore guides other activities, including the determination of applications for planning permission. Policies relating to development proposals are assessed separately below. The Plan has as an overarching principle encouraging sustainable development, including the conservation and enhancement of historic heritage, and is therefore unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects.</p>	
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy</p>	<p>Not significant</p>	<p>The plan will both influence and be influenced by the emerging Local Plan site allocations document. However, it must be in general conformity with Part 1 of the Local Plan, which sets the strategic direction of development, and the NPPF. As such it is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects by reason of its influence on these tiers of the planning system.</p>	<p>None</p>

<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development</p>	<p>Not significant</p>	<p>The NSP NP includes encouraging sustainable development within the village as an overarching principle, and is therefore unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme</p>	<p>Not significant</p>	<p>The environmental impacts of proposals within the NSP NP are considered not to have significant environmental effects, as discussed in the policy section below. Other policies are not site specific and are guided by the overarching principle of encouraging sustainable development. The plan is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental impacts.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of European Community legislation on the environment</p>	<p>Not significant</p>	<p>The NSP NP must be in general conformity with the Mendip Local Plan. The Local Plan part 1 and the emerging Local Plan part 2 have regard to European Community legislation on the environment and therefore this will not be relevant to the NSP NP.</p>	<p>None</p>

Criteria 2 from Schedule 1 of 2004 SEA Regulations – Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

<p>The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects</p>	<p>Not significant</p>	<p>The NSP NP supports some forms of development and therefore some environmental effects will occur. However the plan aims to ensure that development is appropriate to the village, within the settlement boundary and on a site where the principle of development has been agreed in previous planning permissions. This will minimise adverse effects, within the overarching principle of encouraging sustainable development. Some of the impacts will depend on the detail of proposals that come forward. The plan and any proposals requiring planning permission must be in conformity with the Mendip Local Plan and NPPF. The NSP NP is therefore unlikely to give rise to significant environmental impacts.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>The cumulative nature of the effects</p>	<p>Not significant</p>	<p>The policies set out in the NSP NP must work with the overall strategic envelope set by the Mendip Local Plan and NPPF. Within this context, the cumulative impact of policies in the NSP NP are unlikely to give rise to significant environmental impacts.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>The transboundary nature of the effects</p>	<p>Not significant</p>	<p>Effects will be local, with limited effect on neighbouring areas. The policies in the NP</p>	<p>None</p>

		relate only to the parish of Norton St Philip and transboundary effects will be very limited.	
The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	Not significant	There is little scope for risks to human health as a result of the policies in the NSP NP.	None
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	Not significant	The NSP NP covers a limited area (the parish of Norton St Philip) with a small population, so any effects are likely to be localised.	None
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage	Not significant	The policies of the plan seek to protect the special characteristics of the area, including its open spaces, distinctive character and heritage.	None
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values	Not significant	The level of development proposed through the NSP NP is not of a scale that would affect the value or vulnerability of the area. The overall level of development is determined by the local Plan part1 and the NSP NP must be in conformity with this.	None
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to intensive land-use	Not significant	The scale of development proposed in the NSP NP would not result in intensive land use. The overall level of development is determined by the Local Plan Part1 and the NSP NP must be in conformity with this	None

	Not significant	No landscapes that have a recognised national, European Community or international protections status will be affected by the NSP NP. The significance of buildings listed nationally for their historic or architectural value is acknowledged in the plan.	None
<b>Development Policy Criteria Assessment</b>	<b>Assessment of significant effect</b>	<b>Justification</b>	<b>Amendments to Policy</b>
Policy 1: Settlement Boundary	Not significant	The boundary has been set with reference to existing development, and planning permissions currently being built out. Open space within it is mostly proposed as Local Green Space in the Plan. The boundary is based on the previous one in the Mendip Local Plan 2002-2011, which was a saved policy in the Local Plan Part 1. This boundary is the same as proposed in the emerging Local Plan Part 2	None
Policy 2: Housing Sites within the Development Boundary	Potential effect	The policy currently proposes two sites within the development boundary and conservation area, which if not developed with due regard to the need to conserve and enhance the historic heritage of the conservation area could have a significant effect. The alterations to the policy proposed are felt to address this matter, in that the potential site at the former Roman Catholic Site will no longer be specifically promoted,	See Revised policy 2 below. With the proposed alterations the danger of potential effect is considered no longer relevant.

		<p>and the policy will specify that development will have to have due regard to the Conservation Area and historic heritage to make the point clearer. The Bell Hill Garage Site is potentially improving a part of the conservation area which does not enhance the general appearance of the historic form. However the policy by specifying up to 18 dwellings could be in danger of promoting over-development of the site that would adversely impact on the conservation area.</p> <p>The site is characterised as both ‘Close terraced cottages’ and ‘Leafy Cottages’ within the Character Assessment. Thus the southern section is felt more appropriate for a denser development to the road frontage. Previous planning permission granted for 10 dwellings did not cover the entire site now offered. This needs to be clear in the Development Brief.</p>	
Policy 4: Promoting Locally-Responsive Good Design	Not significant, potential benefit	The policy is requiring good design that complies with the Character Assessment and the requirements of the Conservation Area Appraisal. It aims to ensure that new development within the village enhances rather than detracts from the historic heritage.	None – unless conservation bodies and experts are able to suggest improvements?

## Revised Policy 2: Development Site within the Settlement Boundary

The following site is allocated for housing development in line with the development brief in Appendix 1:

Bell Hill Garage site. The site is well suited to residential development subject to design constraints set out in Appendix 1 and the need to conserve and enhance the conservation area and comply with guidance in the Village Character Assessment, as set out in Policy 4.

In order that the current oversupply of larger homes in the village is reversed, the dwelling mix should be predominately 2 and 3 bedroom homes. A small number of flats may be suitable at the southern part of the site adjacent to Bell Hill in the Close Terraced Cottage area defined by the Village Character Assessment.

## Appendix 2; HRA Assessment

HRA Assessment			
Potential impact	Assessment of significant effect	Justification	Amendments to Policy
Impact on bat foraging areas	Not significant	The designated area is just within Band C of the Mells Valley SAC, but the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have a significant impact on	None

		Great Horseshoe Bat habitats, including foraging areas and commuting structures.	
Impact on international wildlife designations	Not significant	No significant impacts on international wildlife designations have been identified.	None