

# **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 Tetsworth Neighbourhood Development Plan Review**

**26 JUNE 2025**

## **SUMMARY**

Following consultation with statutory bodies, South Oxfordshire District Council (the 'Council') determines that the Tetsworth Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Review does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. An initial screening opinion was used to determine whether or not the contents of the emerging Tetsworth Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Review requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC (the Directive) and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations).
2. Any land use plan or programme 'which sets the framework for future development consent of projects' must be screened according to a set of criteria from Annex II of the Directive and Schedule 1 of the Regulations. These criteria include exceptions 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.
3. The initial screening opinion was subject to consultation with Historic England, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Oxfordshire County Council. The results of the screening process are detailed in this Screening Statement.

## **THE SCREENING PROCESS**

1. Using the criteria set out in Annex II of the Directive and Schedule 1 of the Regulations, a Screening Opinion determines whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects.
2. The extract from 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' in Appendix 1 provides a flow diagram to demonstrate the SEA screening process.

3. Table 1 in Appendix 1 sets out the criteria from the Practical Guide, along with an assessment of the Tetsworth NDP Review against each criterion to ascertain whether a SEA is required.
4. Also part of the screening process is the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening, which can be found in Appendix 2, and the assessment of likely significance effects on the environment, which can be found in Appendix 3.
5. These two assessments feed into Table 1 and the SEA screening opinion.

## **TETSWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW**

6. The Tetsworth NDP Review will contain the following objectives and policies:

### **Objective 1**

To maintain Tetsworth's nucleated settlement character by supporting a mix of high quality infill housing that reflects the housing types and tenures which satisfies the local community housing need and is in proportion with the size and rural character of the Parish.

### **Objective 2**

To preserve the green spaces within and adjacent to the Tetsworth village settlement and the key views into and from its built-up area.

### **Objective 3**

To protect and enhance Tetsworth's heritage assets and their settings.

### **Objective 4**

To protect the rural landscape character and setting of Tetsworth while supporting and enhancing local amenities and environmental assets.

### **Objective 5**

To maintain and enhance wildlife habitats and biodiversity in the Parish.

### **Objective 6**

To identify and support service improvements and infrastructure initiatives which could enhance the sustainability of Tetsworth and wellbeing of its residents.

### **Policies**

TET1 Tetsworth Settlement Boundary

TET2 Housing Development within the Village Settlement Boundary

TET3 Housing Development in the Surrounding Countryside

TET4 Sustainable and High-Quality Housing Design

TET5 Community, Commercial and Utility Development within the Settlement Boundary

TET6 Commercial Development in the Surrounding Countryside

TET7 Renewable Energy Generation Development

TET8 Key Views

TET9 Conserving and Enhancing Local Heritage Assets

TET10 Landmark Buildings  
TET11 Common Land and Green and Public Open Spaces  
TET12 Dark Skies and Light Pollution  
TET13 Biodiversity and the Natural Environment  
TET14 Road Safety and Residential Parking

7. The Tetsworth NDP Review will contain policies to maintain the character of the village and surrounding countryside and specifies design criteria for new buildings.
8. The Tetsworth NDP Review is not seeking to allocate any sites for development; however, the review proposes to modify several policies with the addition of three new policies and does seek to introduce a settlement boundary. We have therefore considered whether focusing new development within the village boundary (through infill), could result in the plan directing new development to sites that could potentially have significant effects on the landscape and historic environment including listed buildings and archaeological remains.
9. Careful consideration of the proposed boundary in relation to how the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 guides the location and scale of development (mainly through policies H1, H16 and ENV8) indicates that the proposed boundary merely adds detail and aids the interpretation of existing policies.
10. Overall, we note that the plan does not allocate any sites for development and places great emphasis on conserving the character and appearance of the area.


## **CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

11. The screening opinion was sent to Natural England, The Environment Agency and Historic England on 15 May 2024 for a four-week consultation period. The responses in full are presented in Appendix 4.
12. The Environment Agency did not provide comments on this SEA Screening.
13. Historic England did not provide comments on this SEA Screening.
14. Natural England confirmed their agreement that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan and also agreed that the Tetsworth Plan Review does not require further HRA assessment. They did not have any specific comments on the draft Neighbourhood Plan Review.
15. Oxfordshire County Council confirmed that they have no comments on the Tetsworth SEA and HRA Screening Opinion.

## CONCLUSION

16. As a result of the screening undertaken by the Council, the following determination has been reached.
17. The Tetsworth NDP Review is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Tetsworth Neighbourhood Development Plan Review is not required.
18. Based on the assessment presented in Appendices 1 & 3, the Tetsworth NDP Review is not likely to have a significant effect on the environment.
19. The Tetsworth Review NDP does not require a Strategic Environment Assessment.

Authorised by: Tim Oruye – Head of Policy and Programmes

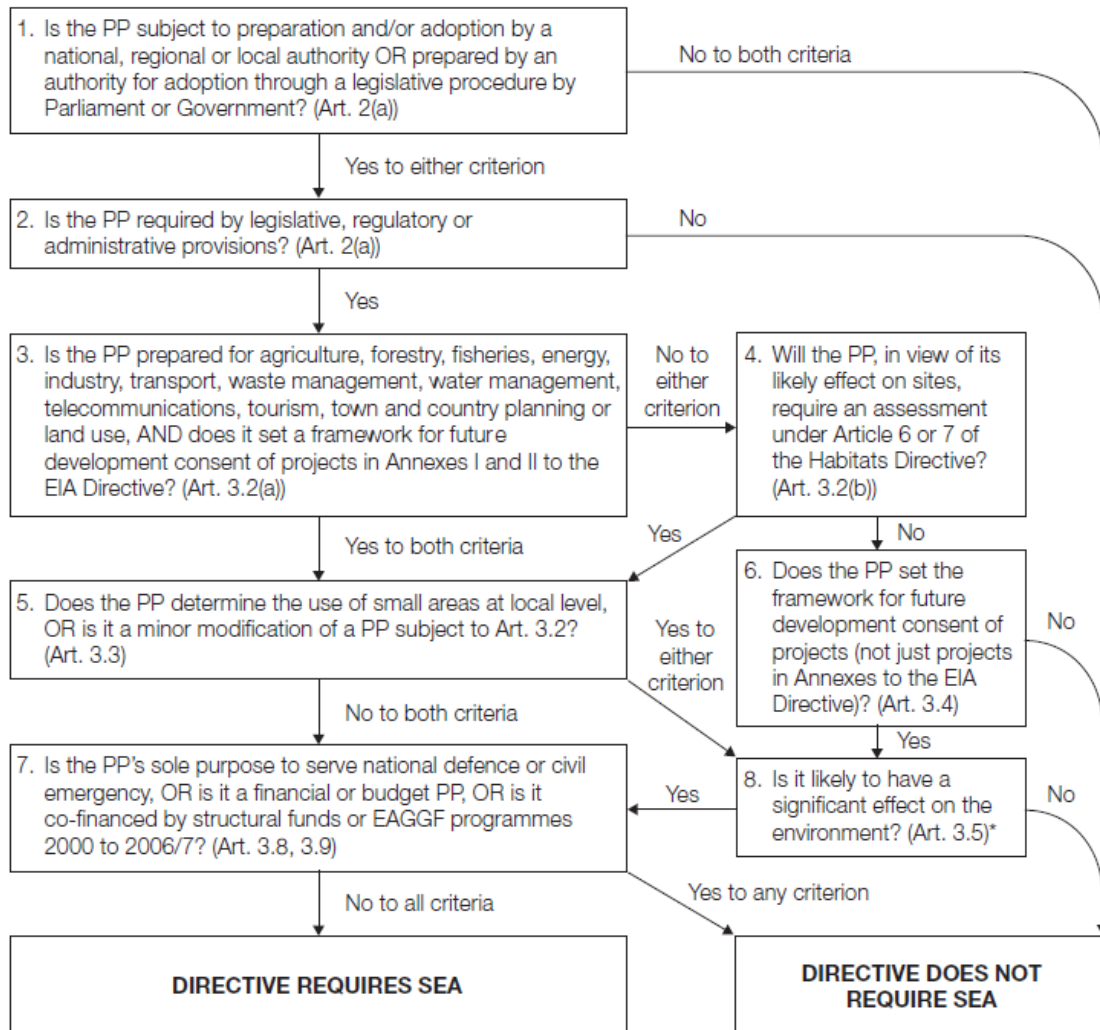
Signed: 

Date: 30 June 2025

## Appendix 1 – Extract from ‘A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’ (DCLG) (2005)

### Figure 2 – Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

This diagram is intended as a guide to the criteria for application of the Directive to plans and programmes (PPs). It has no legal status.



\*The Directive requires Member States to determine whether plans or programmes in this category are likely to have significant environmental effects. These determinations may be made on a case by case basis and/or by specifying types of plan or programme.

**Table 1: Application of SEA Directive as shown in Appendix 1**

| Stage  | Y/N | Explanation  |
|--|-----|--|
| 1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a)) | Y   | <p>The preparation of and adoption of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is allowed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by the Tetsworth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, a working group who report to the Tetsworth Parish Council (as the “relevant body”) and will be “made” by South Oxfordshire District Council as the local authority. The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is subject to the following regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2016</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2016</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2017</li> </ul> |
| 2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))   | Y   | <p>Whilst the Neighbourhood Development Plan is not a requirement and is optional under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, it will, if “made”, form part of the Development Plan for the District. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive.</p>   |

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|   |   | National Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 051 Reference ID: 41-051-20150209) sets out that draft neighbourhood plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This assessment should be undertaken in accordance with the requirements set out in <a href="#">regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004</a> . |
| 3. Is the Neighbourhood 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 (see Appendix 2) to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a)) | N | The Tetsworth NDP Review is prepared for town and country planning and land use and will not set out a framework for future development of projects that would require an EIA.  |
| 4. Will the Neighbourhood Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))  | N | The Tetsworth NDP Review is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Tetsworth NDP Review in Appendix 2.   |
| 5. Does the Neighbourhood Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)   | Y | The Tetsworth NDP Review will determine the use of sites/small areas at a local level.  |
| 6. Does the Neighbourhood Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)  | Y | When made, the Tetsworth NDP Review will include a series of policies to guide development within the parish. This will inform the determination of planning applications providing a framework for future development consent of projects.   |

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| 7. Is the Neighbourhood 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? (Art 3.8, 3.9) | N | N/A   |
| 8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)  | N | The plan is not likely to have significant effects on the environment. See assessment of the likely significance of effects on the environment in Appendix 3. |



## Appendix 2 - Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

### Screening Opinion for the Tetsworth Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

#### INTRODUCTION

1. The Local Authority is the “competent authority” under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and needs to ensure that Neighbourhood Plans have been assessed through the Habitats Regulations process. This looks at the potential for significant impacts on nature conservation sites that are of European importance<sup>1</sup>, also referred to as Natura 2000.
2. This Screening Assessment relates to a Neighbourhood Development Plan that will be in general conformity with the strategic policies within the development plan<sup>2</sup> (the higher level plan for town and country planning and land use). This Screening Assessment uses the Habitats Regulations Assessment of South Oxfordshire District Council’s Local Plan<sup>3</sup> as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Tetsworth Neighbourhood Development Plan Review is likely to result in significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites either alone or in combination with other plans and policies and, therefore, whether an ‘Appropriate Assessment’ is required. An updated HRA has been produced during the preparation of the emerging Joint Local Plan. Where relevant, findings from this report have been identified in the analysis of significant impacts.

#### LEGISLATIVE BASIS

3. 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.”*

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<sup>1</sup> Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for other species, and for habitats.

<sup>2</sup> The South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (December 2020)

<sup>3</sup> South Oxfordshire Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment Report (March 2019)

4. Regulations 105-106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 state:

*“105.—(1) Where a land use plan—*

- (a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and*
- (b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site,*  
*the plan-making authority for that plan must, before the plan is given effect, make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that site’s conservation objectives.*
- (2) The plan-making authority must for the purposes of the assessment consult the appropriate nature conservation body and have regard to any representations made by that body within such reasonable time as the authority specifies.*
- (3) The plan-making authority must also, if it considers it appropriate, take the opinion of the general public, and if it does so, it must take such steps for that purpose as it considers appropriate.*
- (4) In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, and subject to regulation 107, the plan-making authority must give effect to the land use plan only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site or the European offshore marine site (as the case may be).*
- (5) A plan-making authority must provide such information as the appropriate authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the discharge by the appropriate authority of its obligations under this Chapter.*
- (6) This regulation does not apply in relation to a site which is—*
  - (a) a European site by reason of regulation 8(1)(c), or*
  - (b) a European offshore marine site by reason of regulation 18(c) of the Offshore Marine Conservation Regulations (site protected in accordance with Article 5(4) of the Habitats Directive).*

*106.—(1) A qualifying body which submits a proposal for a neighbourhood development plan must provide such information as the competent authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment under regulation 105 or to enable it to determine whether that assessment is required.*

*(2) In this regulation, “qualifying body” means a parish council, or an organisation or body designated as a neighbourhood forum, authorised*

*for the purposes of a neighbourhood development plan to act in relation to a neighbourhood area as a result of section 61F of the TCPA 1990 (authorisation to act in relation to neighbourhood areas)(159), as applied by section 38C of the 2004 Planning Act (supplementary provisions)(160).*

*(3) Where the competent authority decides to revoke or modify a neighbourhood development plan after it has been made, it must for that purpose make an appropriate assessment of the implications for any European site likely to be significantly affected in view of that site's conservation objectives; and regulation 105 and paragraph (1) apply with the appropriate modifications in relation to such a revocation or modification.*

*(4) This regulation applies in relation to England only."*

## **EUROPEAN SITES**

5. The HRA of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan used a screening distance of 17km to identify European sites which could be affected by development from the plan. This distance has been subject to consultation with Natural England and reflects the average travel to work distance in the district. As such, the same distance has been applied in this HRA Screening.
6. The following European sites lie wholly or partly within 17km of Tetworth and have been taken into consideration:
  1. Little Wittenham SAC – approximately 14.4km
7. One of the best-studied great crested newt sites in the UK, Little Wittenham comprises two main ponds set in a predominantly woodland context (broadleaved and conifer woodland is present). There are also areas of grassland, with sheep grazing and arable bordering the woodland to the south and west. The River Thames is just to the north of the site, and a hill fort to the south. Large numbers of great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* have been recorded in the two main ponds, and research has revealed that they range several hundred metres into the woodland blocks.
8. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of public access and disturbance, and invasive fish species upon great crested newt. With regard to the types of development that may be brought forward in the Local Plan, visitor disturbance could impact the site.

## 2. Chilterns Beechwoods SAC – approximately 5.9km

9. The Chilterns Beechwoods SAC comprises nine separate sites scattered across the Chilterns. There are three features of interest: semi-natural grasslands and scrubland on chalk; Asperulo-Fagetum beech woodland (for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK and lies in the centre of the habitat's UK range); and Stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence. The rare coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera* is found in these woods.
10. The main pressures and threats to this site include the impacts of forestry and woodland management, disease, deer and the invasive species of grey squirrel upon beech. Additionally, the changes in species distribution of stag beetle as well as the impact of public access and disturbance upon stag beetle. Air pollution and the impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition also threaten the dry grasslands, beech and stag beetle.

## 3. Aston Rowant SAC – approximately 5.1km

11. Aston Rowant is classified as SAC because it supports one of the largest remaining populations of juniper in lowland Britain. It is selected as an example of juniper formations on the chalk in the south east of England. At this site juniper is present as part of a mixed scrub community but also occurs as isolated bushes in chalk grassland. In common with most lowland populations of juniper, successful reproduction and survival of new generations of bushes is extremely rare and conservation is currently dependent upon significant levels of management intervention. The low level of reproductive success is the main threat to the feature at this site. Aston Rowant also supports Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests although this is not a primary reason for classification as SAC.
12. The main pressures and threats to this site include an unsustainable on-site population, changes in species distribution, disease of juniper as well as the impacts of air pollution and the risks of atmospheric nitrogen deposition upon juniper. Additionally, conflicting conservation objectives threaten beech.

## **ASSESSMENT**

13. As required under Regulation 106 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'), the qualifying body (Tetsworth Parish Council) provided the required information to enable South Oxfordshire District Council to determine whether the assessment under Regulation 105 is required. Consideration has been given to the potential for the development proposed by the neighbourhood plan to result in significant effects associated with:

Physical loss of/damage to habitat:

14. Any development resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan will be located within the neighbourhood area. There are no European sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area, therefore loss of habitat from within the boundaries of a European site can be ruled out in relation to all sites.
15. Loss of habitat from outside of the boundaries of a European site could still affect the integrity of that site if it occurs in an area used by the qualifying species of the site (e.g. for off-site breeding, foraging or roosting). Two of the European sites included in this assessment have mobile species amongst their qualifying features that could travel outside of the site to make use of other areas of habitat: -
  - Little Wittenham SAC; great crested newt.
  - Chiltern Beechwoods SAC: stag beetle
16. The HRA (March 2019) produced alongside the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 states that great crested newts will travel away from their breeding ponds, during the terrestrial phase of their lifecycle, but not large distance. 500 metres is considered an appropriate buffer distance inside which great crested newts might be found, from their breeding location. The site listing for Little Wittenham SAC states that great crested newts have been found to range several hundred metres into the site's woodland blocks. Research has found that great crested newts at Little Wittenham SAC migrate within woodland and do not over-winter in the arable farmland. All of the woodland within 500 metres of the ponds at Little Wittenham SAC is within the SAC boundary. Therefore potential loss of or damage to off-site habitats associated with Little Wittenham SAC can be screened out of further assessment.
17. The HRA (March 2019) produced alongside the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 states that where stag beetle is a qualifying feature of a site, the individuals may travel outside of the SAC boundary, although it is unlikely that they will travel far – it is generally only the male stag beetle that flies during the summer months, and the female beetle rarely flies. The preferred habitat for stag beetles is old, established woodland, and the larvae feed on rotting tree matter. As the beetle larvae take years to develop, they can be vulnerable to tree clearance and the 'tidying up' of wood in parks and especially gardens. Research suggests that 2 km may be an appropriate buffer inside which sites could be functionally connected, as this is the distance that males travel to females during the breeding season.

18. Chilterns Beechwoods SAC is a composite of nine SSSIs. Bisham Wood SSSI, which is the part of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC that supports the qualifying stage beetle population, is greater than 2km from the district boundary and approximately 5.9km from the NDP area. Therefore potential loss of or damage to off-site habitats associated with Chilterns Beechwoods SAC can be screened out of further assessment.

Non-physical disturbance e.g. noise/vibration or light pollution:

19. The most recent HRA of the South Oxford Local Plan (March 2019) states: 'Using a precautionary approach, we have assumed that the effect of noise, vibration and light are most likely to be significant if development takes place within 500 metres of a European site with qualifying features sensitive to these disturbances, or known off-site breeding, foraging or roosting areas.'
20. None of the European sites are within 500 metres of the designated area. Therefore, effects in relation to noise, vibration and light pollution can be screened out of further assessment.

Air Pollution

21. Air pollution is most likely to affect European sites where plant, soil and water habitats are the qualifying feature, but some qualifying animal species may also be affected, either directly or indirectly, by any deterioration in habitat as a result of air pollution. Deposition of pollutants to the ground and vegetation can alter the characteristics of the soil, affecting the pH and nitrogen availability that can then affect plant health, productivity and species composition.
22. Based on the Highways Agency Design for Road and Bridges (DMRB) Manual Volume 11, Section 3, Part 120 (which was produced to provide advice regarding the design, assessment and operation of trunk roads (including motorways)), it is assumed that air pollution from roads is unlikely to be significant beyond 200m from the road itself.
23. The European sites within 17km of Tetsworth that are within 200m of strategic roads are Aston Rowant SAC (M40) and Chilterns Beechwoods SAC (A404, A4010). As highlighted above, Tetsworth is approximately 5.1km from the Aston Rowant SAC and 5.9km from the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC.
24. The South Oxfordshire Local Plan HRA sets out that SODC commissioned Atkins to model the effects of the Local Plan on traffic flows within the District. No traffic data was available for the roads adjacent to the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC and, as they are located too far outside of the Atkins model network to be reasonably or reliably predicted. Although this location lies within the initial screening radius of 17 km, the actual distance which would need to be travelled to reach

these locations by car from the plan area exceeds this distance for most routes. It can therefore reasonably be expected that the contribution of growth within the Local Plan area to traffic flows at these locations would be de minimis, and as such they are screened out from any further assessment.

25. In relation to the Aston Rowant SAC the South Oxfordshire Local Plan HRA (March 2019) states:

‘In light of the above analysis, it is concluded that the ecological effects of the predicted increase in NO<sub>x</sub> concentrations and nutrient nitrogen deposition would either be negligible, or that any small effects would be highly unlikely to result in a deterioration in the condition of the qualifying features, and as such it is concluded that the in-combination effects of planned growth would not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the Aston Rowant SAC.’

26. The submission Joint Local Plan HRA (2024) is still awaiting additional work in regards to air quality before significant effects can be ruled out at Aston Rowant SAC and Chilterns Beechwoods SAC. However, given the modest scale of proposed development in the Tetsworth Neighbourhood Plan, the distance of the SACs from the neighbourhood area and. that there are no allocations proposed in the Tetsworth Neighbourhood Plan Review; the NDP will not add in combination effects, therefore significant effects on the SACs in relation to air quality can be screened out and do not need to be considered further.

#### Increased recreation pressure

27. The most recent HRA of the South Oxford Local Plan (March 2019) states:

‘Natural England’s Site Improvement Plans record the threats and pressures relevant to each European site. Public access or disturbance are not identified as current threats or pressures at the following sites, despite their lying close to large settlements: Aston Rowant SAC, Hartslock Wood SAC, Cothill Fen SAC, and Oxford Meadow SAC.’

28. The HRA of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan sets out that the potential for effects depends upon the scale of development proposed and the features for which the site is designated. However, as a conservative estimate, it is assumed that any development within 7 km of a sensitive site could have impacts due to recreation. Where site specific information indicates that development beyond 7 km could produce recreation impacts, this will be taken into account; for example at Little Wittenham SAC, where development in the eastern fringes of the Vale of White Horse District could be relevant.

29. Tetsworth is approximately 14.4km from Little Wittenham SAC, which is part of a larger site managed by the Earth Trust as a nature reserve. The areas which are most important to the population of great crested newts (GCN) have restricted access which is designed to prevent conflicts between the visiting public, the newts and their habitat.
30. The increased visitor levels which are likely to occur as a result of the modest increase in population in Tetsworth may result in increased pressure on the habitats on the reserve as a whole. However, due to restricted access to the areas where newts are primarily found, the increased visitor numbers will be concentrated onto other habitats on the reserve. These habitats are not related to the primary reasons for the selection of the SAC.
31. Great crested newts are not believed to be particularly sensitive to human disturbance provided their breeding ponds are not affected and their primary terrestrial habitat and hibernacula are not adversely affected. Provided controls on access to the most sensitive areas are maintained (i.e. ponds and hibernacula are not disturbed) there is no reason to believe that there would be any significant effect on the integrity of the site or the primary reason for the selection of the site.
32. The HRA of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan identifies that at the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC, public access / disturbance is only identified in relation to the stag beetle population. The portion of the SAC that supports the stag beetle population (Bisham Woods SSSI) is greater than 7km from the District boundary, and therefore is considered unlikely to result in likely significant effects from development within South Oxfordshire, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.
33. Therefore, likely significant effects in relation to visitor pressure and the impact of recreation can be ruled out and do not need to be considered further.
34. The JLP HRA (2024) states that the latest Natural England condition assessment of the great crested newt features (22/07/2010) still recorded 'favourable' status. Given the low sensitivity of the great crested newt population to recreational disturbance and the visitor management measures in place likely significant effects alone and in combination to the Little Wittenham SAC are screened out.

#### Changes to hydrological regimes

35. European sites at which aquatic or wetland environments support qualifying features have the potential to be affected by changes in water quantity or quality. The European sites close to Tetsworth are:



- Little Wittenham SAC: its ponds support great crested newts, but changes to water quality or quantity have not been identified as an issue at this site – the site has therefore been screened out.

36. The types of development that have the potential to affect water quality / quantity or flow regimes at sensitive European sites are residential or employment development that would involve significant increase in demand for water supply and treatment, and infrastructure development that requires significant excavation in proximity to watercourses or groundwater.
37. The scale of development proposed in the Tetsworth Neighbourhood Plan Review is modest; therefore, likely significant effects in relation to water quality and quantity can be screened out and does not need to be considered further.

#### In combination effects

38. The Council has considered the HRA of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (March 2019) in respect of the potential in combination effects of the proposals in the Tetsworth Neighbourhood Plan Review. As the South Oxfordshire Local Plan covers the period from 2011 to 2035, the quantum of development proposed in the Local Plan includes some completed and committed development (Committed development includes sites under construction, with planning permission, made neighbourhood plan allocations and allocations carried forward from the Local Plan 2011 and Core Strategy). The policies that enabled those developments to be permitted have already been subject to HRA as part of the Core Strategy, Local Plan 2011 or as part of the HRA for the relevant NDP. Paragraph 5 to 40 of this assessment has considered how the development proposed in the Tetsworth Neighbourhood Plan Review is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. Given the modest scale of development proposed and having regard to conclusions of paragraphs 5 to 40 it is considered that the development proposed in the Tetsworth Neighbourhood Plan Review is not likely to give rise to significant in combination effects.

## **CONCLUSION**

39. The Tetsworth NDP Review is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Tetsworth NDP Review is not required.

## Appendix 3 - Assessment of the likely significance of effects on the environment

| 1. Characteristics of the Plan, having regard to:   |  |
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| (a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources; | The Tetsworth NDP Review would, if adopted, form part of the Statutory Development Plan and as such does contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects. However, the Plan will sit within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework and the strategic policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035.  |
| (b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;   | A Neighbourhood Development Plan must be in conformity with the Local Plan for the District. It does not influence other plans. The Tetsworth Neighbourhood Plan Review is unlikely to influence other Plans or Programmes within the statutory Development Plan.  |
| (c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;  | National policy requires a presumption in favour of sustainable development. A basic condition of the Tetsworth NDP Review is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Within this wider context, the Tetsworth NDP Review itself is unlikely to have a significant positive or negative effect.   |
| (d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and   | <p>The environmental impact of the proposals within the Tetsworth NDP Review is unlikely to be significant due to the scale of development proposed.</p> <p>The Tetsworth NDP Review area contains the following environmental designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ancient Woodland</li> <li>- Archaeological Constraints</li> <li>- BAP Priority Habitats</li> <li>- Flood Zones 2 and 3</li> <li>- Listed Buildings</li> <li>- Local heritage asset</li> <li>- Proposed local wildlife sites</li> <li>- Protected species buffer</li> <li>- Tree Preservation Orders</li> </ul> <p>There are the following SACs within 17km of the Tetsworth NDP Review. These are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aston Rowant SAC 5.1km</li> <li>- Chiltern Beechwood SAC 5.9km</li> </ul> |

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|   | <p>- Little Wittenham SAC 14.4km</p> <p>There are also the following SSSI located within less than 5km of the Tetsworth NDP Review area:</p> <p>-Spartum Fen SSSI 3.4km<br/>-Knightsbridge Lane SSSI 4.7km</p> <p>Given the NDP is not allocating sites, the amount of potential infill sites within the parish and their relationship to the designations within the NDP area, the proposals in the plan are unlikely to harm these designations. Therefore, the effects are not likely to be significant.</p>   |
| (e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection). | The proposed development in the Tetsworth NDP Review has been judged not to have an impact on Community legislation.  |
| <b>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b>   |   |
| (a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;  | <p>The Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have modest but enduring positive environmental effects. The effects are not likely to be reversible as they relate to development. However, the proposals are minor and will be of a local scale.</p> <p>The main influence will be on developments such as householder and small scale infill development. The Plan does not allocate sites for development. It seeks to influence infill and redevelopment within the parish in line with policies in the existing development plan.</p> <p>The effects will be of a local scale and the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will add detail to existing development plan policies. No development is proposed near sensitive locations that would cause likely significant effects.</p> |
| (b) the cumulative nature of the effects;   | It is intended that the positive social effects of supporting sustainable development will have positive cumulative effects for the area. However,  |

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|   | given the nature and scale of the proposals in the plan these are not likely to be significant.  |
| (c) the transboundary nature of the effects;  | The effects of the Plan are unlikely to have transboundary <sup>3</sup> impacts.   |
| (d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);   | The policies in the plan are unlikely to present risks to human health or the environment.   |
| (e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);   | The Tetsworth NDP Review relates to the parish of Tetsworth. The parish is focused around a single settlement, Tetsworth. The Tetsworth NDP Review does not seek to allocate development sites and therefore the magnitude and spatial extent of the plan is likely to be limited.   |
| (f) the value and vulnerability of the area to be affected due to:<br>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;<br>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or<br>(iii) intensive land-use; and | <p>The Tetsworth NDP Review offers an opportunity to enhance the natural environment and the cultural heritage of the area through the proposals being considered.</p> <p>The main vulnerability of the area is the impact of householder and small scale developments on the listed buildings, local heritage assets and archaeological sites. However given the NDP aims to ensure development conserves and enhances the area through the plans policies and it is not allocating sites, and the amount of potential infill sites within the settlement, the proposals in the plan are unlikely to harm these designations. Therefore, the effects are not likely to be significant.</p> <p>The Plan seeks to influence infill and redevelopment within the settlement in line with policies in the existing development plan. Any effects will be of a local scale and not likely to be significant. The policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will add detail to existing development plan policies offering protection to special features.</p> <p>The plan is considered to have a neutral effect on cultural heritage because there is no indication given in the plan and appendices that the plan would go beyond national and local policy and therefore, it is considered that the effects of the proposals in the plan are not likely to be significant. Environmental quality standards</p> |

<sup>3</sup> Transboundary effects are understood to be in other Member States.

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|--|---|
|  | <p>or limit values are not considered likely to be significantly affected by the Tetsworth NDP Review.</p> <p>The HRA Screening Assessment in Appendix 2 concluded that the Tetsworth NDP Review is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects; therefore, an Appropriate Assessment of the Tetsworth NDP is not required.</p> <p>In light of the minor proposals in the Tetsworth NDP Review, the plan is also not likely to cause significant effects in relation to intensive land use.</p> |
| (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status. | <p>There are no areas or landscapes with recognised national, community or international protection status affected by the neighbourhood plan.</p>  |

# Appendix 4 – Statutory Consultee Responses

## NATURAL ENGLAND

Date: 11 June 2025  
Our ref: 512849  
Your ref: Tetworth Neighbourhood Plan



South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District Councils

BY EMAIL ONLY  
[planning.policy@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@southandvale.gov.uk)

Hornbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
Electra Way  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Dear [REDACTED]

### Tetworth Neighbourhood Plan - Review - SEA/HRA Screening Opinion consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 15 May 2025.

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 (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:

- significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,
- significant effects on Habitats sites<sup>1</sup>, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the [Planning Practice Guidance](#). This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

- 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.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent

<sup>1</sup> Habitats sites are those referred to in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (Annex 2 - glossary) as "any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites".

as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's [standing advice](#) on protected species.

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission [standing advice](#).

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk)

Yours sincerely

  
Consultations Team

## OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**From:** [REDACTED] - Oxfordshire County Council on behalf of [PlanningInOxfordshire](#)  
**To:** [Planning Policy S&V](#); '[planning\\_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk](#)'; '[e-seast@HistoricEngland.org.uk](#)'; [Natural England](#); [PlanningInOxfordshire](#)  
**Cc:** [Deborah Bryson](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Tetsworth Neighbourhood Plan Review and Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA Screening Opinions – please reply by 12 June  
**Date:** 06 June 2025 10:58:13

**\*\*EXTERNAL\*\***

Good morning,

On behalf of Oxfordshire County Council, we have no comments in relation to either of these reports.

Thank you for including us in this consultation.

[REDACTED]

**Assistant Strategic Planner**  
**Strategic Planning**  
**Place Shaping Services**

*Email:* [REDACTED]@[oxfordshire.gov.uk](#)

*Mob:* [REDACTED]

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**From:** Planning Policy S&V <[planning.policy@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@southandvale.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** 15 May 2025 17:26  
**To:** '[planning\\_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:planning_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk)'; '[e-seast@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:e-seast@HistoricEngland.org.uk)' <[e-seast@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:e-seast@HistoricEngland.org.uk)>; [Natural England](#) <[consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk)>; [PlanningInOxfordshire](#) <[PlanningInOxfordshire@Oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningInOxfordshire@Oxfordshire.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@southandvale.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Tetsworth Neighbourhood Plan Review and Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA Screening Opinions – please reply by 12 June

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon,

I am writing on behalf of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils to seek your views on the attached draft SEA and HRA Screening Opinions for Tetsworth Neighbourhood Plan Review and Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan. The conclusion of these reports is that no further SEA or HRA work is required.

We would be grateful if you could please review these opinions and provide responses by **5pm on Thursday 12 June**, even if you have no comments.

Kind regards,



Assistant Planning Officer (Enquiries)  
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils  
Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE  
Telephone: 07598545955  
To find out more about how the council holds, uses and stores your personal data,  
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