



Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Determination

Draft Sandhurst Neighbourhood Plan

October 2025

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Table 1 Acronyms

Acronyms	Definition
BFC	Bracknell Forest Council
BFLP	Bracknell Forest Local Plan (2024)
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
NP	Neighbourhood Plan
NPPG	National Planning Practice Guidance
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SALP	Site Allocations Local Plan (2013)
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SNP	Sandhurst Neighbourhood Plan
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
STC	Sandhurst Town Council
TBH SPA	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 This statement sets out the Council's determination under Regulation 9 (1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 on whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required for the Sandhurst Neighbourhood Plan. This statement also sets out the Council's consideration as to whether Appropriate Assessment is required under Regulations 105 and 106 of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). It is prepared in response to a SEA and HRA Screening Request submitted by Sandhurst Town Council on 31st August 2025¹.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 1.2 The basis for SEA legislation is the European Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive). This was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations). Under these requirements certain types of plans that set the framework for the consent of future development projects must be subject to an environmental assessment.
- 1.3 There are exceptions to this requirement for plans that determine the use of a small area at a local level and for minor modifications if it has been determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.
- 1.4 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) discusses SEA requirements in relation to Neighbourhood Plans in paragraph: 027 Reference ID: 11-027-20190722 and states that:

In some limited circumstances, where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a strategic environmental assessment. Draft neighbourhood plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This initial assessment process is commonly referred to as a 'screening' assessment and the requirements are set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

- 1.5 In accordance with the provisions of the SEA Directive and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) (Regulation 9(1)), BFC must determine if a plan requires an environmental assessment. To make a full determination three statutory bodies must be consulted: Historic England, Environment Agency, and Natural England (see Appendix B and C for responses). Within 28 days of making its determination the authority must publish a statement setting out its decision. If it determines that an SEA is not required, the statement must include the reasons for this.
- 1.6 Section 3 of this report deals with the SEA Screening.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 1.7 A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required to determine whether a plan or project would have significant adverse effects upon the integrity of internationally designated sites of nature conservation importance, or habitats sites. The need for

¹ The request was to screen the draft Sandhurst Neighbourhood Plan (version NPreg14rev6).

HRA is set out within the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) as amended, the 'Habitats Regulations'.

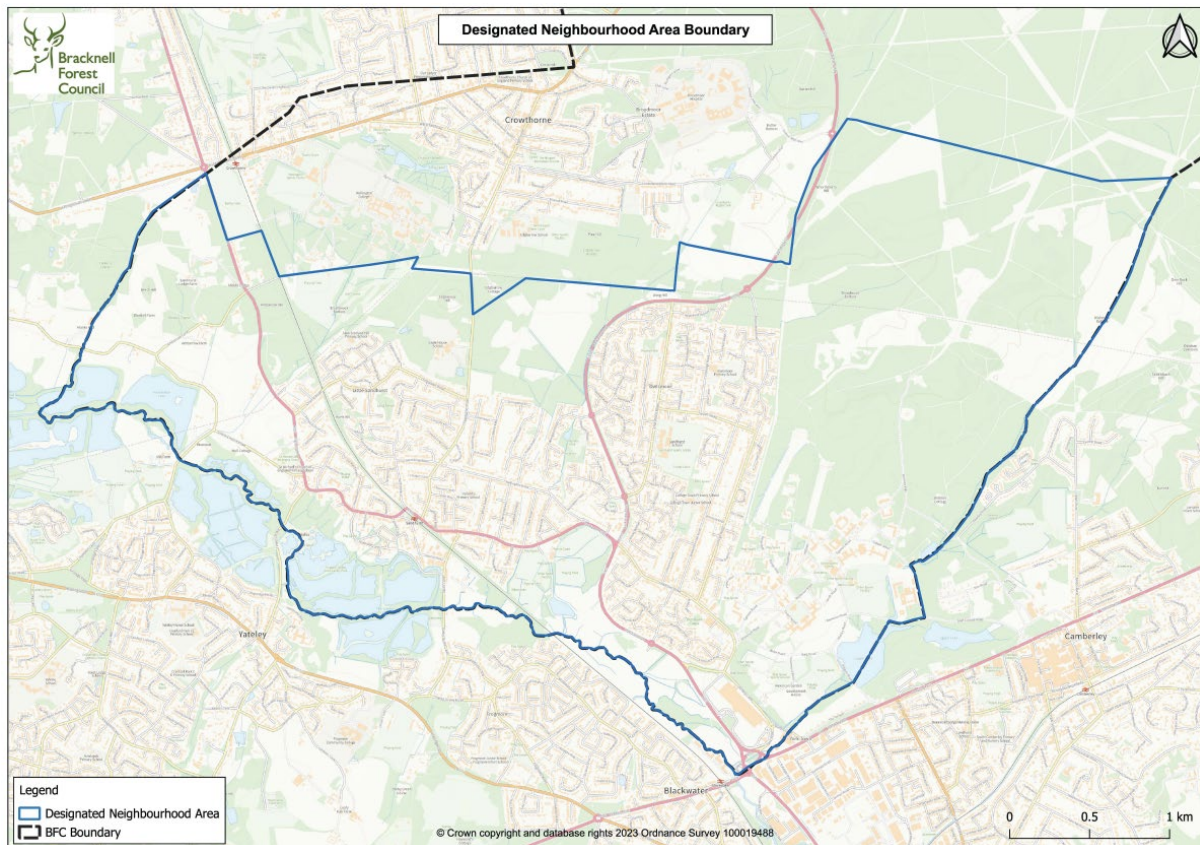
- 1.8 Section 4 of this report deals with the Screening of Likely Significant Effects. Natural England was consulted on the results of this report (see Appendix B for their response) which enabled BFC to issue this Screening Determination.

2.0 Scope of Sandhurst Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 The draft SNP sets out a vision and objectives for the Sandhurst neighbourhood area (see Figure 1 below), together with a range of land use policies that seek to encourage appropriate and sustainable development whilst protecting the character of the area. It does not allocate sites. The key topics are:

- Housing
- Design
- Environment
- Transport
- Community
- Employment, Retail and Business
- Energy Saving

Figure 1 Sandhurst Neighbourhood Area



2.2. The draft policies are listed below:

- NP/H1 Housing
- NP/H2 Developments in the settlement of Sandhurst and in the countryside (general policy)
- NP/D1 Storey Heights
- NP/D2 Residential Developments on Brownfield Sites, Infill Sites and Development of Residential Gardens (general policy)
- NP/D3 Conservation and Enhancement of Grade II*, Grade II Listed and Locally Listed Buildings

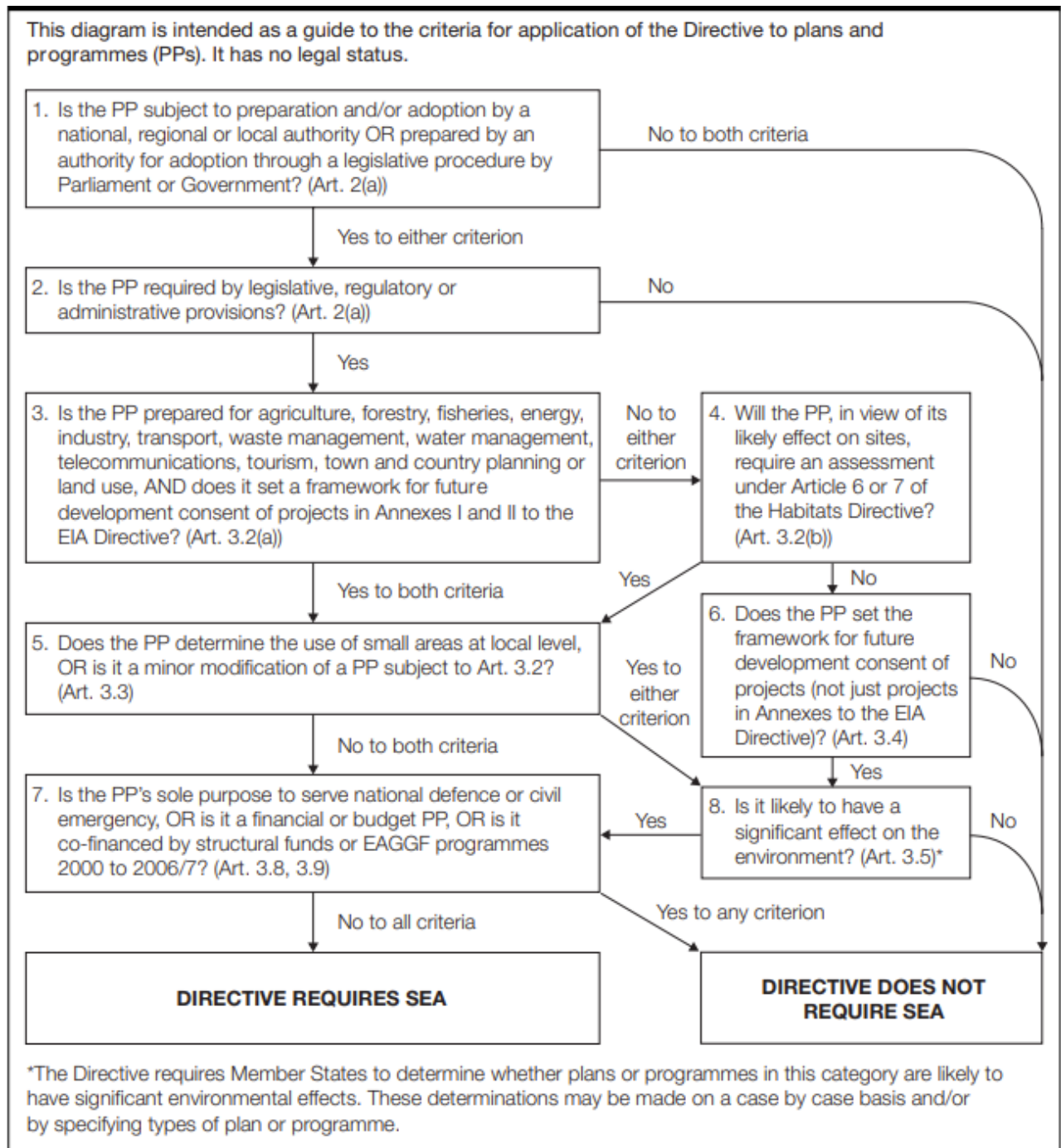
- NP/D4 Trees and hedgerows
- NP/EN1 Development in the Blackwater Valley Corridor
- NP/EN2 Wildlife within the Blackwater Valley Corridor
- NP/EN3 Memorial Park, Horseshoe Lake and Grove Lake, recreation matters
- NP/EN4 Footpaths in the Blackwater Valley Corridor
- NP/EN5 Local Green Space
- NP/T1 Traffic congestion
- NP/T2 Safe pedestrian and cycle routes
- NP/T3 Residential Parking
- NP/T4 Sustainable Transport
- NP/C1 Community Facilities
- NP/C2 Public Houses and Social Clubs
- NP/C3 Potential CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) and /or Section 106 Agreements
- NP/C4 Up Grading of Unadopted Roads
- NP/ERB1 Retail
- NP/ERB2 Employment Areas
- NP/ECC1 Energy Saving
- NP/ECC2 Heat Pumps

3.0 SEA Screening

The SEA Screening Process

- 3.1 The screening process is undertaken in two parts: the first part assesses whether the SNP requires SEA, and the second part considers whether the SNP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. Practical guidance to the SEA Directive, published by the Department of Environment in 2005 but still relevant, sets out the approach to be taken to determine whether SEA is required (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes



3.2 The process in Figure 2 has been undertaken and the findings can be viewed in Table 2 below. This is the assessment of whether the SNP will require an SEA.

Table 2 Establishing the need for an SEA

Stage	Reasoning
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) 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))	Yes. Neighbourhood Plans (NPs) are prepared by a qualifying body (Parish/Town Councils) under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The preparation of NPs is subject to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (as amended). Once the plan is 'made' by BFC, as the Local Authority, subject to passing an independent examination and community referendum, it will be part of the Development Plan for the borough.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? ((Art. 2 (a))	No. The preparation of a NP is optional. However, once 'made' it will form part of the statutory Development Plan for the borough and be used when making decisions on planning applications in the area it covers.
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes 1 and II to the EIA Directive? (Art. 3.2 (a))	Yes. The SNP is prepared for town and country planning and land use. The plan sets out a framework for future development in the plan area, and once 'made' will form part of the statutory Development Plan. The SNP does not allocate sites for development but will be used in the decision-making process.
4. Will the PP, 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))	No. An HRA screening assessment has been undertaken (see Section 4 below) and ruled out likely significant effects on habitats sites. An Appropriate Assessment will therefore not be required.
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at a local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art.3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Yes. Once 'made' the SNP will form part of the Development Plan and will be used in the decision-making process on planning applications. It therefore sets the framework for future developments at a local level.
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)	Yes. SNP will be used when determining relevant planning applications and will aim to ensure that development is of a high quality, in accordance with strategic policies in the adopted BFLP.
7. Is the PP's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or	No

Stage	Reasoning
budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art. 3.8. 3.9)	
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art.3.5)	No. See Table 3 below.

Likely Significant Effects

- 3.3 To decide whether the draft SNP might have significant environmental effects, its potential scope should be assessed against the criteria set out in Schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Using the information supplied by STC at the current stage of plan preparation (see Section 2 for the broad scope of the plan as currently drafted), the assessment in Table 3 has been carried out. Reference should also be made to Figure 3.

Table 3 Assessment of likely significant effects of the SNP against SEA Schedule 1 criteria

Schedule 1 Criteria	Comments	Likely significant effect?
1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular to:		
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 SNP sets out a local policy framework for development proposals but does not allocate land for development. It supports the implementation of policies in the adopted Bracknell Forest Local Plan (BFLP) (2024) and Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP) (2013) which have already been subject to SEA and assessed as having no significant environmental effects ² .	No
b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The SNP must be in conformity with the strategic policies in the BFLP and SALP and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It supports the implementation of strategic policies at the local level. The SNP only provides policies for the area it covers, with the adopted BFLP and SALP providing the necessary strategic context when determining planning applications.	No
c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	The SNP is required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, minimising any effects on the environment. Policies within the SNP will sit alongside those within the adopted BFLP and SALP, which provide environmental protection and promote sustainable development. The likelihood of significant effects on the environment is, therefore, minimised.	No
d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme:	The SNP seeks to minimise existing environmental problems in the Neighbourhood Area.	No
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 SNP is not directly relevant to the implementation of Community legislation on the environment and is not linked to waste management or water protection plans.	No

² See [Core submitted documents | Bracknell Forest Council](#) documents LP/Ev/1e and LP/CORE/008 and [Site Allocations Local Plan | Bracknell Forest Council](#)

Schedule 1 Criteria	Comments	Likely significant effect?
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard in particular to:		
a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	Policies seek to protect and improve the environment and provide mitigation where required.	No
b) the cumulative nature of the effects	The cumulative effects of policies within the SNP are unlikely to result in negative effects, but more likely to have a positive impact	No
c) the transboundary nature of the effects	The extent of any effects will be largely within the Neighbourhood Area. Any potential effects on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA (which lies inside and outside of the Neighbourhood Development Area) will be required to be mitigated.	No
d) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	No risks to human health or the environment have been identified as a result of draft policies in the SNP.	No
e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The SNP is concerned with development within Sandhurst Neighbourhood Area which has an area of approx. 14 km ² and a population of approx. 20,000 (2021). The extent of any effects is therefore likely to be limited and minimal.	No
f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage ii) exceeded environmental quality standards of limit values; or iii) intensive land-use.	Within the Neighbourhood Area there are (see Figure 3): • a number of listed and locally listed buildings • one Scheduled Ancient Monument • Several Local Wildlife Sites • Several areas of ancient woodland • Part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA) and several Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs). • Flood Zones 3 and 2 Policies seek to protect and improve the environment and sit alongside those within the adopted BFLP and SALP which provide environmental protection and promote sustainable development. The value and vulnerability of the area is not likely to be affected due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, exceeded environmental quality standards or intensive land use.	No
g) the effects on areas of landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	None. Any effects on the integrity of SSSIs and the Thames Basin Heaths SPA will require mitigation through the NP and other development plan policies.	No

Screening Outcome

3.4 Having reviewed the criteria the Council has concluded that the emerging SNP is not likely to have a significant environmental effect and will not require a SEA. The main reasons for this conclusion are:

- The SNP does not allocate land for development.
- SNP policies seek to protect and improve the environment and sit alongside those within the adopted BFLP and SALP, which provide environmental protection, promote sustainable development and set out avoidance and mitigation measures to enable developments to comply with the Habitats Regulations.
- Section 4 below has concluded that an AA will not be required in accordance with the Habitats Regulations.

4.0 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening for Likely Significant Effects

- 4.1 The purpose of this section is to ascertain whether further assessment (an Appropriate Assessment or AA) of the SNP is required in accordance with the Habitats Regulations.
- 4.2 The BFLP HRA³ screened in the following habitats sites for consideration:
- TBH SPA
 - Windsor Forest and Great Park Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
 - Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC (which sits largely within the TBH SPA)
 - Chilterns Beechwoods SAC
- 4.3 Only one habitats site, the TBH SPA, lies within the Sandhurst Neighbourhood Area and makes up a significant part of it (see Figure 4). The TBH SPA was designated in March 2005 for its lowland heathland, supporting significant populations of three ground-nesting birds (Nightjar, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler). The regulations covering this designation require that any plan or proposal should have regard to whether it will adversely affect the integrity of the TBH SPA. The two areas of the SPA that lie within Bracknell Forest are the Broadmoor to Bagshot Heaths Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths (also known as Wildmoor Heath) SSSI.
- 4.4 Part of the Sandhurst Neighbourhood Area also lies within the 400m TBH SPA buffer zone and the 400m – 5km TBH SPA buffer zone. Within these buffer zones all new residential development is considered to have the potential to affect the integrity of the TBH SPA, through for example, potential additional recreational pressure. Non-residential development is dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.5 Developer guidance on the TBH SPA can be found in the [Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document \(2025\)](#)
- 4.6 Appendix A below contains a detailed description of the TBH SPA including its conservation objectives and a description of potential adverse effects on the integrity of the site.
- 4.7 Table 4 below screens the draft policies in the SNP.

³ See [Core submitted documents | Bracknell Forest Council](#) document references LP/Ev/8e and LP/CORE/009

Figure 4 Sandhurst Neighbourhood Area and the TBH SPA

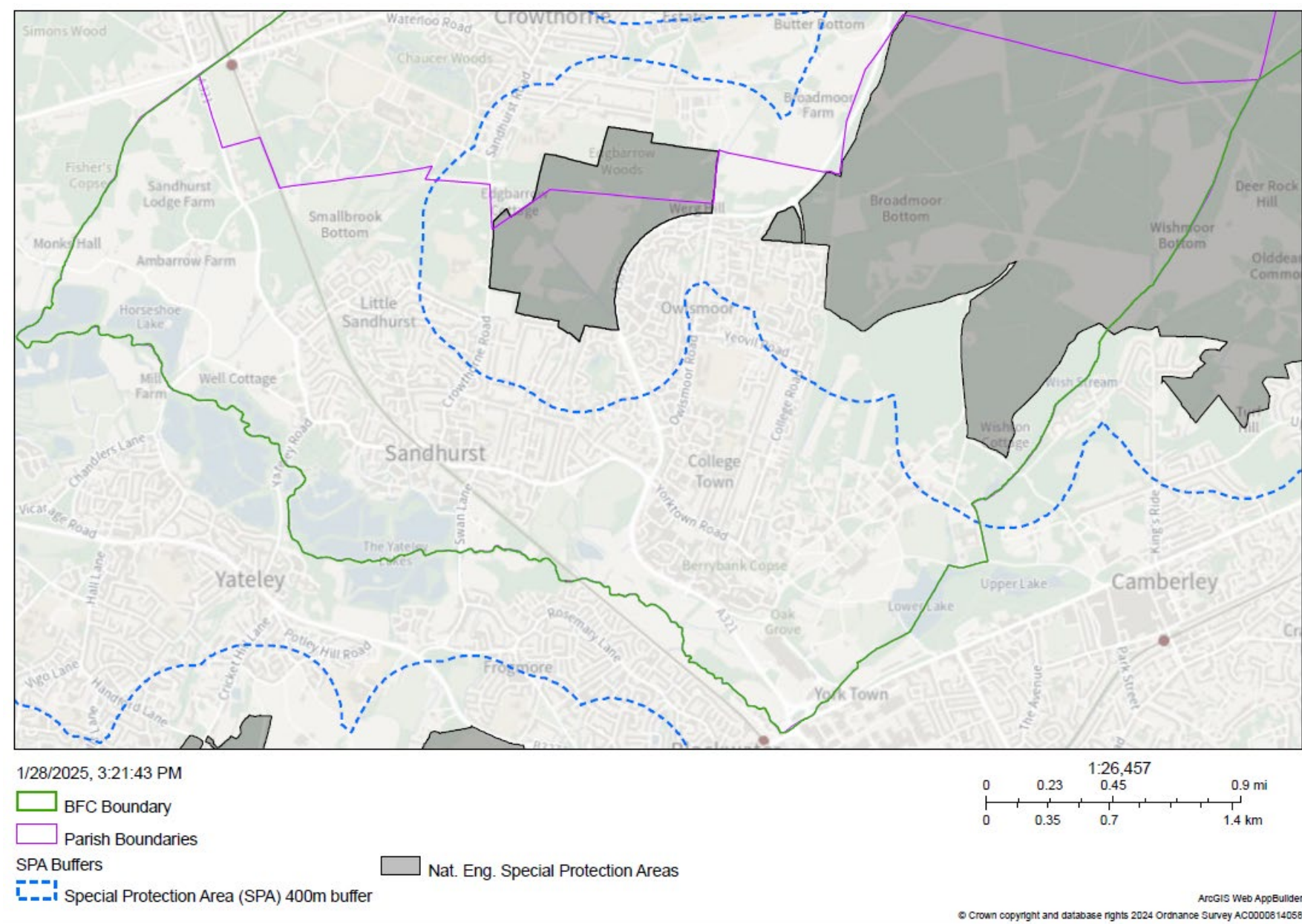


Table 4 HRA Screening of SNP Policies

Draft policy reference / name	Pathways of impact ⁴	Likely significant effect?
NP/H1 Housing	This policy supports appropriate density development proposals on brownfield sites and affordable and starter homes. Unmitigated and depending on the location of development, this could result in the following pathways of impact linking to the habitats sites: - Loss of functionally linked land⁵ in relation to the TBH SPA - Urbanisation from a net increase in dwellings within 400m of the TBH SPA - Recreational pressure from a net increase in dwellings located between 400m to 5km of the TBH SPA and a net increase in publicly accessible car parking within 400m of the TBH SPA. - Air pollution from an increase in traffic (TBH SPA, Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC, Chilterns Beechwoods SAC and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC) This policy is unlikely to lead to a significant effect on habitats sites as a result of air pollution. Development allocated in the BFLP or SALP (including an allowance for windfall sites) has already been subject to an Air Quality Assessment⁶ of the effects on habitats sites. For further development coming forward (which was not included in the Air Quality Assessment report) Natural England requires an air quality assessment for developments with a net increase of over 100 dwellings. This is unlikely however the requirement is part of the BFLP policy and therefore this mitigation would be applied if necessary. The BFLP and SALP have been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessments⁷ and the SNP must conform with these plans and the policies in them. Mitigation will therefore be required to be provided, in accordance with these plans. Potential mitigation measures are referred to in SNP policy criterion c). It can therefore be concluded that mitigation requirements are in place to address any significant effects on habitats sites.	No
NP/H2 Developments in	This policy is concerned with the location of development. Unmitigated and depending on the location of development,	No

⁴ Pathways are routes by which a change in activity associated with a development can lead to an effect upon a habitats site.

⁵ The ground nesting birds (for which the TBH SPA was designated) are mobile and rely on a network of land surrounding the TBH SPA to roost and feed. This supporting land is termed functionally linked land.

⁶ See [Bracknell Forest Local Plan evidence base | Bracknell Forest Council](#) documents LP/Ev/8f

⁷ For the SALP see documents ref. SAL114, SAL114a and SAL120 at [Site Allocations Local Plan - post submission documents | Bracknell Forest Council](#). For the BFLP see documents ref. LP/Ev/8e and LP/CORE/009 at [Core submitted documents | Bracknell Forest Council](#)

Draft policy reference / name	Pathways of impact ⁴	Likely significant effect?
the Settlement of Sandhurst and in the Countryside (general policy)	this could result in the following pathways of impact linking to the habitats sites: - Loss of functionally linked land⁸ in relation to the TBH SPA - Urbanisation from a net increase in dwellings within 400m of the TBH SPA - Recreational pressure from a net increase in dwellings located between 400m to 5km of the TBH SPA and a net increase in publicly accessible car parking within 400m of the TBH SPA. - Air pollution from an increase in traffic (TBH SPA, Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC, Chilterns Beechwoods SAC and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC) This policy is unlikely to lead to a significant effect on habitats sites as a result of air pollution. Development allocated in the BFLP or SALP (including an allowance for windfall sites) has already been subject to an Air Quality Assessment⁹ of the effects on habitats sites. For further development coming forward (which was not included in the Air Quality Assessment report) Natural England requires an air quality assessment for developments with a net increase of over 100 dwellings. This is unlikely however the requirement is part of the BFLP policy and therefore this mitigation would be applied if necessary. The BFLP and SALP have been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessments and the SNP must conform with these plans and the policies in them. Mitigation will therefore be required to be provided, in accordance with these plans. Explanatory text after the policy cross-references to the relevant BFLP Policy LP32. It can therefore be concluded that mitigation requirements are in place to address any significant effects on habitats sites.	
NP/D1 Storey Heights	This policy states that developments of more than 3 storeys will generally not be supported. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.	No
NP/D2 Residential Developments on Brownfield Sites, Infill Sites and Development of Residential	This policy sets criteria for when residential development on brownfield sites, infill sites and development of residential gardens will be supported. This policy is unlikely to have significant effects on habitats sites as no specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.	No

⁸ The ground nesting birds (for which the TBH SPA was designated) are mobile and rely on a network of land surrounding the TBH SPA to roost and feed. This supporting land is termed functionally linked land.

⁹ See [Bracknell Forest Local Plan evidence base | Bracknell Forest Council](#) documents LP/Ev/8f

Draft policy reference / name	Pathways of impact ⁴	Likely significant effect?
Gardens (general policy)		
NP/D3 Conservation and Enhancement of Grade II*, Grade II Listed and Locally Listed Buildings	This only policy refers to BFLP Policy LP 29 which has already undergone SEA/HRA assessment through the Local Plan process.	No
NP/D4 Trees and hedgerows	This policy requires development proposals to protect trees and hedgerows, or plant replacements where this is unavoidable. New planting is encouraged. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.	No
NP/EN1 Development in the Blackwater Valley Corridor	This policy sets requirements which apply to the Blackwater Valley Corridor in terms of landscape character. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.	No
NP/EN2 Wildlife within the Blackwater Valley Corridor	The aim of this policy is to ensure that there will be no adverse impact on wildlife in the Blackwater Valley Corridor area (as defined in the SNP) which lies some distance from the TBH SPA. Any increase in car parking on these sites where increased public access is encouraged would not occur within 400m of the TBH SPA. There are no impact pathways present.	No
NP/EN3 Memorial Park, Horseshoe Lake and Grove Lake, recreation matters	This policy supports improvements to recreational facilities and encourages recreational uses on the Memorial Park and Horseshoe Lake where this does not conflict with the sites' function as SANGs. It also supports proposals on Grove Lake that enhance its use as a nature reserve and for nature viewing purposes. There are no impact pathways present.	No
NP/EN4 Footpaths within the Blackwater Valley Corridor	This policy supports the retention, enhancement and creation of public rights of way in the Blackwater Valley Corridor (as defined in the SNP). Although this policy could lead to low level development in the form of new footpaths, it is unlikely to have significant effects on habitats sites and does not directly affect recreation on the TBH SPA which lies some distance from the Blackwater Valley Corridor area (as defined in the SNP).	No
NP/EN5 Local Green Space	This policy designates specific areas as Local Green Space. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.	No
NP/T1 Traffic congestion	This policy requires developments to provide traffic statements or traffic assessments in certain cases. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.	No

Draft policy reference / name	Pathways of impact ⁴	Likely significant effect?
NP/T2 Safe pedestrian and cycle routes	This policy supports the provision of safe pedestrian and cycle access whilst recognising that increased access to the TBH SPA must not be encouraged. There are no impact pathways present.	No
NP/T3 Residential Parking	This policy sets minimum parking standards for residential developments. It explains that a net increase in publicly accessible parking within 400m of the SPA will not be supported. There are no impact pathways present.	No
NP/T4 Sustainable Transport	This policy supports improvements to pedestrian access to Sandhurst Railway Station and bus services. There are no impact pathways present.	No
NP/C1 Community Facilities	This policy supports the maintenance and extension of community facilities and seeks to ensure that there is no decrease in car parking spaces. The policy states that any reprovision of public car parking spaces should occur outside of the 400m SPA buffer zone. The explanatory text explains that proposals related to new or upgraded community facilities that result in a net increase in car parking within 400m of the TBH SPA cannot be made available to the public wishing to access the TBH SPA.	No
NP/C2 Public Houses and Social Clubs	This policy states that the change of use of public houses and social clubs will not be supported unless they are not financially viable or no longer provide a valued function to the community. It also supports the provision of new public houses and social clubs subject to certain criteria. The explanatory text includes a reference to BFLP Policy LP32 and mitigation will need to be provided especially where the development of any pubs and social clubs includes residential development. There are no impact pathways present.	No
Policy NPC3: - Potential CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) and /or Section 106 Agreements:	This policy identifies specific infrastructure needs. This includes a cycleway linkup between the current cycleways in Yorktown and Crowthorne roads which, depending on exact location, could lead to increased access to the TBH SPA. However, policy criteria 3 addresses this as follows: ' <i>To potentially include a cycleway linkup between the current cycleways in Yorktown and Crowthorne roads, where such routes do not encourage increased access to the TBH SPA</i> '. There are no impact pathways present.	No
NPC4: Up Grading of Unadopted Roads:	This policy promotes the upgrading of poorly surfaced unadopted roads to provide a suitable road surface. There are no impact pathways present.	No
NP/ERB1 Retail	This policy supports proposals that do not lead to a net loss of retail floorspace and do not adversely impact residential	No

Draft policy reference / name	Pathways of impact ⁴	Likely significant effect?
	properties. No specific development is identified. There are no impact pathways present.	
NP/ERB2 Employment Areas	This policy supports the development of employment generating uses within the designated business areas of Vulcan Way and Lakeside Business Park which lie some distance from the TBH SPA. Unmitigated, increased traffic as a result of new development arising from this policy has the potential to lead to a significant effect on the integrity of the TBH SPA, Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC, and Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC as a result of air pollution. In the unlikely event that, significant new development comes forward on these business parks which was not assessed in the BFLP Air Quality Assessment¹⁰, guidance is in place¹¹ and Natural England requires an air quality assessment for certain non-residential developments on a case-by-case basis. Mitigation would be applied if necessary. There are no impact pathways present.	No
NP/ECC1 Energy Saving	This policy encourages new housing developments to incorporate energy-saving and sustainable features into their design. There are no impact pathways present.	No
Policy NP/ECC 2. Heat Pumps	This policy encourages dwellings to utilise ground source heat pumps and minimise the impact of air source heat pumps. There are no impact pathways present.	No

4.8 Based on the screening exercise of the SNP above, likely significant effects on habitats sites were ruled out. An Appropriate Assessment of the SNP will therefore **not** need to be undertaken.

¹⁰ See [Bracknell Forest Local Plan evidence base | Bracknell Forest Council](#) documents LP/Ev/8f

¹¹ See Appendix 3 in the [Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document](#)

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 For the reasons outlined above, BFC considers that the SNP is not likely to have significant environmental effects nor lead to likely significant effects on habitats sites. Therefore, an SEA and AA are **not** required to be undertaken.

Consultation Responses

- 5.2 From 4th September 2025 to 9th October 2025 a consultation was undertaken with Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England in a draft copy of this screening report; the responses to this consultation are contained in Appendices B and C. A Consultation Statement is included in Appendix D showing how the responses have been considered.
- 5.3 No response to this consultation was received from the Environment Agency.
- 5.4 Historic England agrees with the Council's conclusion that a Strategic Environmental Assessment will not be required.
- 5.5 Natural England advises that:
- significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,
 - significant effects on Habitats sites, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.
- 5.6 Whilst Natural England is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require an SEA, it provides standing advice to assist the Council in this matter.

APPENDIX A - Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

The TBH SPA was proposed in October 2000, and full SPA status was approved on 9 March 2005. It is an example of a heathland landscape based within a highly active economy. It consists of a composite site covering an area of some 8,274 hectares, consisting of 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) scattered from Hampshire in the west, to Berkshire in the north, through to Surrey.

The habitat consists of both dry and wet heathland, mire, oak, birch acid woodland, gorse scrub and acid grassland with areas of rotational conifer plantation.

Qualifying Species

This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive as it is used by 1% or more of the Great Britain population of species of European Importance listed in Annex I of the Directive. During the breeding season this includes:

- Dartford warbler (*Sylvia undata*)
- Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*)
- Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*)

The TBH SPA supports the second largest concentration of Dartford warbler in Great Britain, the third largest number of woodlark, and the fourth largest population of breeding nightjars.

Non Qualifying Species of Interest

Hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), merlin (*Falco columbarius*), short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*) and kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) (all Annex I species) occur in non-breeding numbers of less than 1% of the GB population.

Seasonality

The breeding season of the protected bird species occurs predominantly in April, May, June and July, but an extended season can occur between February and August, therefore this is when the ground-nesting species are most vulnerable to disturbance. The breeding season for nightjar occurs from mid-May through to August, with a peak in June; woodlark nest from March until July, but commence territorial activity from early February; the Dartford warbler generally breeds between April and August. Territorial activity may begin as early as February and, as yet, there is no indication of how climate change might affect the breeding season.

Conservation Objectives

The conservation objective for the TBH SPA is "*Subject to natural change, to maintain, in favourable condition, the habitats for the populations of Annex 1 bird species of European importance, with particular reference to lowland heathland and rotationally managed plantation.*"

The above conservation objective can be broken down into its separate components to assist with the HRA and impact prediction:

- To maintain, in favourable condition, lowland heathland and rotationally managed plantation to provide habitats for Annex I breeding bird populations of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler.
- To maintain the geographical extent of the habitat area.

- To sustain and improve population numbers of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler.

SSSI Condition

The two areas of the TBH SPA that lie within Bracknell Borough are the Broadmoor to Bagshot Heaths SSSI and the Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths (also known as Wildmoor Heath) SSSI. The condition of these SSSIs is shown below.

Condition of Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI

Condition	% of Area
Favourable	75.63%
Unfavourable recovering	23.83%
Unfavourable no change	0.55%
Unfavourable declining	0%
Destroyed / part destroyed	0%

Condition of Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths (also known as Wildmoor Heath) SSSI

Condition	% of Area
Favourable	0%
Unfavourable recovering	100%
Unfavourable no change	0%
Unfavourable declining	0%
Destroyed / part destroyed	0%

Ecological Requirements of the Qualifying Species

- **Dartford warbler** - Large unbroken dwarf-shrub layer of heather with scattered gorse; abundance of shrub layer invertebrates; mix of heather trees and gorse amongst heathland vegetation; reduction in displacement of birds; extent and distribution of habitat area.
- **Nightjar** - Abundance of night flying insects; open ground with predominantly low vegetation bare patches and sparse woodland/scrub cover; reduction in displacement of birds; extent and distribution of habitat area.
- **Woodlark** - Abundance of ground surface invertebrates; mix of shrub/tree cover, short-medium vegetation and bare ground; reduction in displacement of birds; extent and distribution of habitat area.

Description of Potential Adverse Effects on Site Integrity

The Natura 2000 Standard Data Form for the TBH SPA (dated 25 January 2016) identifies the following threats and pressures which may have a negative impact on the site as:

- Air pollution, air-borne pollutants (from inside and outside the TBH SPA)
- Other human intrusions and disturbances (from inside the TBHSPA)
- Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities (from inside the TBH SPA)
- Biocenotic evolution, succession (from inside the TBH SPA)
- Forest and Plantation management & use (from inside the TBH SPA)

Source: European Site Conservation Objectives for Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Site Code: UK9012141 (Natural England) <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4952859267301376>

Appendix B Consultation Response from Natural England

Date: 15 October 2025
Our ref: 525893
Your ref: Sandhurst Neighbourhood Plan



Ms Julie Gil
Bracknell Forest Council

BY EMAIL ONLY
Julie.Gil@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

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

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Gil

Sandhurst Neighbourhood Plan - SEA & HRA Screening Report (September 2025) Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 4 September 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 sites¹, 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

¹ 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".

species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent 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

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle
Consultations Team

Appendix C Consultation Response from Historic England



By email only to: Julie.Gil@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Our ref: PL00799870

Your ref: Sandhurst Neighbourhood Plan SEA

Main: 020 7973 3700

e-seast@historicengland.org.uk

louise.dandy@historicengland.org.uk

Date: 17/10/2025

Dear Sir or Madam

Sandhurst Neighbourhood Plan (Amended) SEA Screening Opinion

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on this consultation. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied.

It is noted that the SNP does not allocate sites for development.

Given the unlikely significant effects upon the historic environment/heritage assets, Historic England concurs with the Local Authority and hence considers that a Strategic Environmental Assessment will not be required.

Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the relevant local authorities are closely involved throughout the preparation of the plan and its assessment. They are best placed to advise on; local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the Historic Environment Record (HER), how the allocation, policy or proposal can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and



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Please note that Historic England operates an access to information policy.

Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available.





design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets.

We should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by you with your correspondence. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the NP process and, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan) where we consider that these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

Please do contact me, via email if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Louise

Louise Dandy
Historic Places Adviser

Appendix D Consultation Statement: Sandhurst Neighbourhood Plan SEA / HRA Screening Report (September 2025)

Consultee	Comment	Officer Response	Recommendation
Natural England	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, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.	Noted	No change to screening conclusion
	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.	Noted	No change to screening conclusion
	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 as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's standing advice on protected species.	Noted	No change to screening conclusion

Consultee	Comment	Officer Response	Recommendation
	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.		
Historic England	For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied.	Noted	No change to screening conclusion
	It is noted that the SNP does not allocate sites for development.	Noted	No change to screening conclusion
	Given the unlikely significant effects upon the historic environment/heritage assets, Historic England concurs with the Local Authority and hence considers that a Strategic Environmental Assessment will not be required.	Noted	No change to screening conclusion
	Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the relevant local authorities are closely involved throughout the preparation of the plan and its assessment. They are best placed to advise on; local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the Historic Environment Record (HER), how the allocation, policy or proposal can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets.	Noted	No change to screening conclusion

Consultee	Comment	Officer Response	Recommendation
Environment Agency	No response received.	N/a	N/a