

**Strategic Environmental Assessment
Screening Report
Stevington Neighbourhood Plan**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This screening report is used to determine whether or not the content of the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These require an SEA to be undertaken for:
 - i. Plans which are prepared for town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive; or
 - ii. Plans which have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive.
- 1.2 Plans which determine 'the use of a small area at local level' or which only propose 'minor modification to a plan' might be exempt if they are unlikely to have significant environmental effects. Neighbourhood Plans (NP) containing land allocations for development that are not included in the local authority's plan, are more likely to require an SEA. The main determining factor as to whether SEA is required on a NP is if it is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.
- 1.3 Section 2 of this report outlines the regulations that set the need for this screening exercise. Process and criteria of the assessment are set out in Section 3. A brief summary of the draft Stevington NP is provided in Section 4.
- 1.4 The screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the NP is set out in Section 5 and the decision on the screening is provided in Section 6.

2. Legislative Background

2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Regulation 9 sets out the process as follows:

“Determinations of the responsible authority

9. (1) The responsible authority shall determine whether or not a plan, programme or modification of a description referred to in –

(a) paragraph (4) (a) and (b) of regulation 5;

(b) paragraph (6)(a) of that regulation; or

(c) paragraph (6) (b) of that regulation, is likely to have significant environmental effects.

(2) Before making a determination under paragraph (1) the responsible authority shall –

(a) take into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 to these Regulations; and

(b) consult the consultation bodies

(3) Where the responsible authority determines that the plan, programme or modification is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), it shall prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.

The regulations define that a responsible authority as:

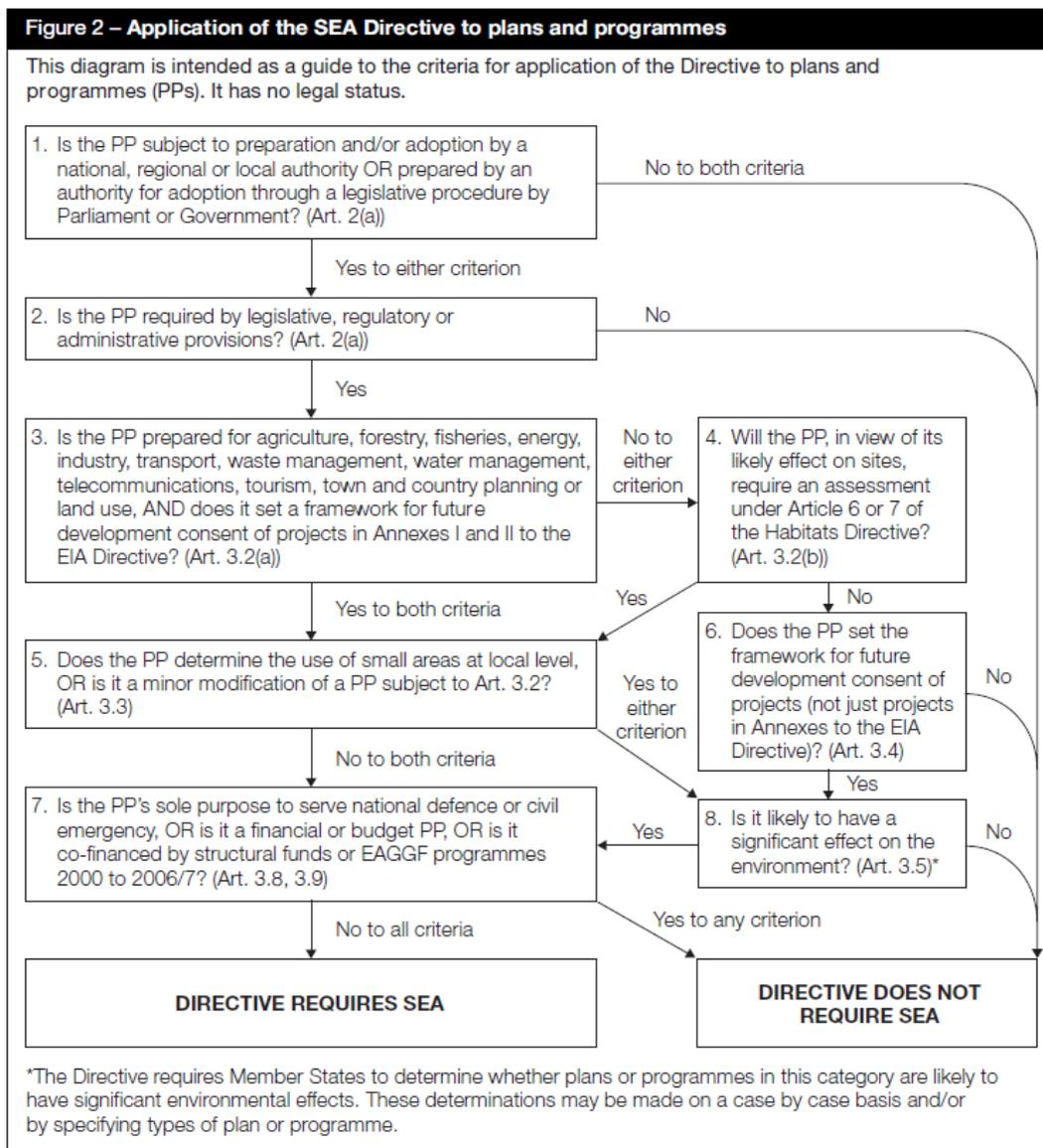
(a) the authority by which or on whose behalf it is prepared; and

(b) where, at any particular time, that authority ceases to be responsible, or solely responsible, for taking steps in relation to the plan or programme, the person who, at that time, is responsible (solely or jointly with the authority) for taking those steps;

2.2 The Government has stated that Sustainability Appraisals are not needed for Neighbourhood Plans (NPPG). It must however be demonstrated how the NP contributes to achievement of sustainable development in the area.

3. Screening assessment process

- 3.1 The screening opinion assessment is undertaken in two parts: the first part will assess whether the plan falls into a category of plans requiring SEA; and the second part of the assessment will consider whether the NP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, using criteria drawn from Schedule 1 of the EU SEA Directive and the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 3.2 The government guidance 'A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 2005'; sets out the following approach to be taken in determining whether SEA is required, shown in the figure below.



3.3 The criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC and Schedule 1 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 are set out below:

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to
 - the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
 - the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
 - the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
 - environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
 - the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to
 - the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
 - the cumulative nature of the effects,
 - the transboundary nature of the effects,
 - the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
 - the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
 - the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
 - intensive land-use,
 - the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

Source: Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC

3.4 The three statutory consultation bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England) are to be consulted to determine whether they agree with the findings and conclusions of this screening opinion, in establishing whether the Stevington NP requires an SEA and whether it may have a significant environmental effect.

4. Summary of Stevington Neighbourhood Plan

4.1 Stevington Parish Council has produced a draft Neighbourhood Plan with the following policies:

- Policy H01: Development Sites
- Policy H02: Housing Need
- Policy H03: Change of Use to Dwellings
- Policy H04: Subdivision of existing buildings, redevelopment following demolition
- Policy DH01: Design and character
- Policy DH02: Undesignated Heritage
- Policy DH03: Windmill Wind Corridor
- Policy EN01: (no name but relating to the environment)
- Policy LE2: Local Green Space
- Policy CF01: Community Facilities
- Policy T101: Traffic Impact
- Policy T102: Cycling and Walking
- Policy T103: Sustainable Urban Drainage
- Policy BE01: Business, Employment and Tourism
- Policy BE02: Broadband

The draft plan does not have any allocations for development, but relies on future development to be located within the existing Settlement Policy Area.

5. Assessment

5.1 The first part of the assessment is to establish the need for the SEA. The table below shows the assessment determining whether the Stevington NP falls into a category of plans requiring SEA. The references to Articles are from Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Council on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
1. Is the NP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Article. 2(a))	Y	The Local Authority has a statutory obligation to make a Neighbourhood Plan once it has successfully passed the stages as set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Article. 2(a))	Y	While it is not mandatory for a neighbourhood plan to be prepared, however once made, it is part of the development plan for assessing planning applications.
3. Is the NP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Article. 3.2(b))	N	The NP is prepared for town and country planning and land use purposes, but does not specifically set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I or II of the EIA Directive.
4. Will the NP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	N	An Appropriate Assessment has been carried out which determined that in order to offer protection to European sites, rewording of policies was required. The amended policies will avoid or mitigate the likely significant effects.
5. Does the NP determine the use of small areas at local level OR is it a minor modification of a plan/programme (Article 3.3)	Y If yes, go to Q8	Yes, the Neighbourhood Plan relates to the local area of the designated Neighbourhood Area.
6. Does the NP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Article. 3.4)		N/A
7. Is the NP's sole purpose to serve national defence or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to		N/A

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
2006/7? (Article. 3.8 & Article. 3.9)		
8. Is the NP likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Article. 3.5)	N	See the following table.

5.2 The next step in the screening assessment is to establish whether the Stevington NP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The criteria for determining the likely significance of effects are drawn from the Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC and are also set out in Schedule 1 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to—		
1a 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 draft NP does not set out any allocations, although there is policy relating to the location of development within the existing Settlement Policy Area.	N
1b The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The plan will be complementary to the Bedford Borough Development Plan.	N
1c The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	The achievement of sustainable development is one of the basic conditions that a Neighbourhood Plan must meet.	N
1d Environmental problems relevant to the plan.	The plan does raise any environmental problems.	N

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
1e The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection or renewable energy generation)	The plan does not relate to waste management or water protection.	N
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to—		
2a The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	The plan period is for up to 2035 and is for limited development within the parish during this time.	N
2b The cumulative nature of the effects	The plan covers a small area and given that it is not allocating sites and is a small area, it is considered that the cumulative effects are minimal.	N
2c The transboundary nature of the effects	Given the small scale development proposed, it is not considered that the effects will have any impact outside the borough or indeed the parish.	N
2d The risks to human health or environment (e.g. due to accidents)	The draft plan includes policies regarding future development and it is not considered that this will cause a risk to human health or the environment due to accidents.	N
2e The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical	The population as calculated from the 2011 census was 552 and there were 280 dwellings. The area of the parish was 678 hectares which	N

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
area and size of the population likely to be affected)	equates to a population density of 0.8 people per hectare.	
<p>2f The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; • Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or • Intensive land use 	The area that is likely to be developed is land within the existing Settlement Policy Area which does have a conservation area and listed buildings, however the development will be limited to infill as there is no extension of the Settlement Policy Area proposed.	
2g The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	There are no national or internationally recognised areas or landscapes within the parish. There are no recognised community areas or landscapes within the parish.	N

6. Screening Outcome

Bodsey Ecology Ltd undertook a Habitats Assessment of both the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan and the Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2030. In response to the Habitats Assessment, amendments have been made to the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan which strengthen environmental protections.

Based on the above information, the 'Responsible Body' (being Stevington Parish Council) conclude that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.