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**Strategic Environmental Assessment
Re – Screening Determination Statement**

**Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood
Plan 2018 – 2031**

April 2024

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

Contents

1. Introduction to Strategic Environmental Assessments	3
2. Screening the neighbourhood plan.....	5
3. Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan	7
4. Screening assessment	9
5. Consultation Responses	13
6. Screening Determination.....	13

1. Introduction to Strategic Environmental Assessments

- 1.1. Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA is commonly used to mean an environmental assessment required by the European Directive “on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment”. The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive is implemented through the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#)¹ (“the Regulations”).
- 1.2. In summary the Regulations define “environmental assessment” as a procedure comprising:
 - preparing an Environmental Report on the likely significant environmental effects of the draft plan or programme;
 - carrying out consultation on the draft plan or programme and the accompanying Environmental Report;
 - taking into account the Environmental Report and the results of consultation in decision making; and
 - providing information when the plan or programme is adopted and showing how the results of the environmental assessment have been taken into account.
- 1.3. The Regulations define the environment to include such issues as: ‘biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors’².

What is the difference between Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal?

- 1.4. Broadly, the difference between SEA and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is that the latter also considers the social and economic effects of the Plan, although it is worth noting that the SEA Regulations also include some social issues (such as health and material assets) in its definition of the environment quoted above.
- 1.5. SA of Local Plans is currently required by the National Planning Policy Framework. Planning Practice Guidance requires that SEA be addressed as an integral part of the sustainability appraisal process.

Legal requirements

- 1.6. Planning Practice Guidance notes that: ‘*there is no legal requirement for a Neighbourhood Plan to have a sustainability appraisal as set out in section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*’³.
- 1.7. However, it goes on to say that ‘a qualifying body must demonstrate how its plan or order will contribute to achieving sustainable development and that preparing a sustainability appraisal is one approach that can be used.
- 1.8. Planning Practice Guidance acknowledges that there may be some limited circumstances where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/contents/made>

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/schedule/2/made>

³ Paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 11-026-20140306 Revision date: 06 03 2014

effects and that a strategic environmental assessment is required. A strategic environmental assessment may be required, for example, where:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the local plan or other strategic policies for the area.⁴

1.9. The SEA Regulations⁵ require the responsible authority to determine whether a plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, and therefore whether a SEA is needed. This process is commonly called “screening” and is the focus of this document. The responsible authority is required to consult with the SEA consultation bodies in making this determination. The Guidance goes on to say:

1.10. ‘Where it is determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for the determination should be prepared. A copy of the statement must be submitted with the Neighbourhood Plan proposal and made available to the independent examiner’⁶.

1.11. The detailed criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant environmental effects are outlined in the regulations⁷. These criteria have been included in the template which follows.

⁴ [Paragraph: 046 Reference ID: 11-046-20150209](#) Revision date: 09 02 2015

⁵ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 para 9

⁶ Environment Agency, Natural England, and Historic England

⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/schedule/1/made>

2. Screening the neighbourhood plan

- 2.1. This report sets out the Screening Determination for the Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan and has been prepared by North Herts Council. The purpose of the screening is to assess if the Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be prepared.
- 2.2. A SEA screening for a draft of the Barkway and Nuthampstead neighbourhood plan was undertaken by the Parish Council in 2020. Consultation took place with the statutory agencies and a determination statement issued by the District Council. Given that the screening of the neighbourhood plan took place a number of years before the Local Plan was adopted and a number of the policies in the neighbourhood plan have changed, the District Council has determined that a re-screening of the 2024 version of the neighbourhood plan would be appropriate, before it is submitted to the Council for public consultation. The outcome of the screening is the same as the original 2020 screening and has concluded that an SEA is not required.

Neighbourhood Plans and Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 2.3. European Union Directive 2001/42/EC requires an SEA to be undertaken for certain types of plans or programmes that could have significant environmental effects. The Directive has been transposed into law for England and Wales in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations). The purpose of Strategic Environmental Assessment is to promote sustainable development through assessing the extent to which the plan will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives.
- 2.4. Under Regulation 9 of the Regulations, the responsible body (local parish or town council or neighbourhood forum) is required to determine whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects, and therefore whether an SEA is required. This process is called screening and is undertaken using a specified set of criteria (set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations). The Regulations require that the results of this process are set out in an SEA Screening Determination (this document), which must be publicly available. This document should be submitted with the Neighbourhood Plan proposal and made available to the independent examiner.
- 2.5. Before the responsible body makes a formal determination, there is a requirement to consult three statutory consultation bodies designated in the regulations (Historic England, the Environment Agency & Natural England) on whether an environmental assessment is required.
- 2.6. Planning Practice Guidance states that “to decide whether a draft [Neighbourhood Plan](#) might have significant environmental effects, it must be assessed (screened) at an early stage of the plan’s preparation according to the requirements set out in regulation 9 of the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#)”⁸.
- 2.7. The Guidance also suggests that the “The local planning authority, as part of its duty to advise or assist, should consider putting in place processes to determine whether the proposed Neighbourhood Plan will require a strategic environmental assessment.”⁹ In

⁸ Paragraph: 028 Reference ID: 11-028-20150209

⁹ *ibid*

this case North Herts Council (NHC) is providing assistance by undertaking the screening determination.

2.8. The Guidance notes particular circumstances which may require a SEA¹⁰:

“A strategic environmental assessment may be required, for example, where:

- *a Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites for development*
- *the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan*
- *the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the [Local Plan](#)”.*

2.9. This Screening Determination has taken account of the Guidance in reaching its conclusions, and it notes that the particular circumstances described above are encompassed by the criteria outlined in Schedule 1 of the Regulations.

¹⁰ Paragraph: 046 Reference ID: 11-046-20150209

3. Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.1. Barkway and Nuthampstead are contiguous rural villages situated along and near the B1368, 20 miles south of Cambridge and at an approximately equal distance (4 miles) from the town of Royston to the north and Buntingford to the south. The B1368, which runs parallel to the A10 and passes through Barkway, allows access to London and Cambridge. To the north of Barkway lies the hamlet of Newsells (included within the boundary of the parish).
- 3.2. Barkway has a range of facilities and community groups. The church and chapel remain active, and the village hall, social club, pavilion, Reading Room and Cokenach Cricket Club all continue to provide facilities for use by the villagers and visitors. The Barkway Community Group regularly organises social outings. Despite having no village football team of our own, the football pitches on the recreational area are in high demand from neighbouring villages. The last pub in the village, The Tally Ho, continues to trade. Nuthampstead has more limited facilities, but The Woodman Inn is an important asset, and the shooting ground provides expert support for clay pigeon shooting, while fishing, dog training and model aircraft flying are regular activities on the airfield.
- 3.3. Historically Barkway and Nuthampstead had been one ecclesiastical parish and so it was deemed appropriate (by parishioners of both villages) that it should become a single Neighbourhood Plan Area for the purpose of this Plan.
- 3.4. Barkway Parish Council as the relevant body, applied for the designation of the area. The joint Neighbourhood Plan Area was designated by NHC Cabinet on [5 August 2014](#). A map of the designated neighbourhood area is shown in Figure 1 below.

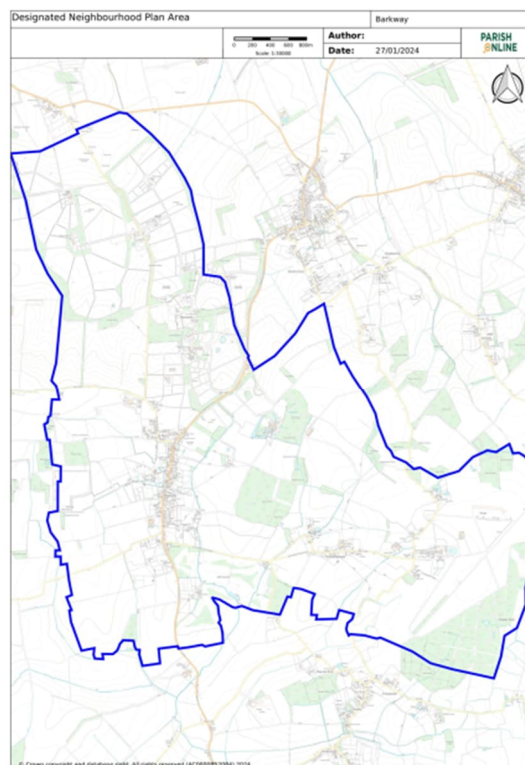


Figure 1: Map of the designated Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan area

- 3.4. The Neighbourhood Plan is the result of public consultation within the community over a number of years, through questionnaires, informal consultation events, public meetings and a formal consultation period in 2020.
- 3.5. The neighbourhood plan sets out the following vision for Barkway and Nuthampstead alongside a number of objectives as illustrated in the tables extracted from the neighbourhood plan below:

Our vision for these villages is that they continue to thrive and to meet the housing needs of all sectors of our community. This will be achieved by respecting and, where at all possible, preserving the many centuries of history embedded in our buildings, landscape and environment.

Our vision is to preserve and enhance our neighbourhood's character.

Objective 1: To ensure that all new development is sustainable, well designed and sympathetic to its surroundings in terms of style, layout and design, and benefits the community.

Objective 2: To preserve the character, appearance and settings of all designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Objective 3: To promote biodiversity by protecting green spaces within the parish and to support ecosystem services by ensuring new builds are as eco-friendly as possible.

Objective 4: To increase opportunities to foster a sense of community through the development, preservation and maintenance of community facilities.

Objective 5: To promote access to nature through preserving and creating footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways leading to the countryside, and their settings.

Objective 6: To have a sustainable local economy through the preservation and creation of local employment opportunities.

Objective 7: To improve road safety and opportunities to use sustainable transport modes, throughout the Neighbourhood Plan area, providing safer routes between settlements and facilities.

Objective 8: To support local educational institutions.

Objective 9: To promote health, wellbeing and sustainability in the villages and their communities.

Objective 10: To preserve the important views within and around the parish.

4. Screening assessment

- 4.1. As noted above, the Regulations specify a set of criteria which must be used to assess whether any plan covered by the Regulation is likely to have a significant environmental effect and therefore require a SEA. The table below considers each of these criteria in turn for the Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan.

Table 1: Screening of the Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan against SEA criteria

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Likely to have significant effects	Justification for assessment
1 (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	No	<p>The framework for development in the Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan is set out in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 and the NPPF.</p> <p>The Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan does not include site allocations or provide for any other projects which are likely to have significant effects.</p>
1 (b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	No	A Neighbourhood Plan is at the bottom of the planning hierarchy and must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan.
1 (c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	No	The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on protecting the quality of the neighbourhood and its environment, particularly in the case of the site allocated in the Local Plan for residential development in Barkway. The Local Plan was subject to sustainability appraisal at all stages in its preparation and the outcomes of those assessments have

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Likely to have significant effects	Justification for assessment
		been considered with regard to this Neighbourhood Plan. It is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan's likely impact will be to have a positive effect on the environment by providing an additional layer of policy protection.
1(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan	No	None have been identified
1 (e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	No	The Plan will be in conformity with the Local Plan Policies and the NPPF, which have each taken account of existing legislation for environmental protection. As noted above it is likely to have a positive effect by improving environmental protection.
2 (a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	No	No significant effects have been identified
2 (b) the cumulative nature of the effects	No	No significant effects have been identified
2 (c) the trans-boundary nature of the effects	No	No significant effects have been identified
2 (d) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	No	No significant effects have been identified
2 (e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	No	No significant effects have been identified

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Likely to have significant effects	Justification for assessment
<p>2 (f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</p> <p>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards</p> <p>(iii) intensive land-use</p>	No	<p>The neighbourhood planning area does contain sensitive features, as noted in the neighbourhood plan, but there are no proposals in the Plan which are likely to have significant environmental effects on these features.</p> <p>In fact, key policies are designed to protect these features. The following policies protect heritage assets, the environment and development design:</p> <p>Policy BN H2: Design and Layout</p> <p>Policy BN H3: Sustainable Construction</p> <p>Policy BN H4: Design Codes</p> <p>Policy BN NE1: Local Green Space</p> <p>Policy BN NE2: River Quin Protection</p> <p>Policy BN NE4: Important Views</p> <p>Policy BN NE5: Chestnut Avenue Protection</p> <p>Policy BN HA1: Designated heritage assets</p> <p>Policy BN HA2: Non-designated heritage assets</p> <p>Policy BN HA3: Barkway conservation area</p>
<p>2 (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a</p>	No	<p>There are far reaching views of the Chilterns AONB across open countryside. The views across the Parish will be</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Likely to have significant effects	Justification for assessment
recognised national, community or international protection status		<p>protected by Policy BN NE4: Important Views.</p> <p>The river Quin, a chalk river runs through the area and is the subject of a specific policy, BN NE2: River Quin Protection.</p>

5. Consultation Responses

- 5.1. The Council originally consulted the three statutory consultation bodies designated in the Regulations (Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England) on whether an environmental assessment is required in 2020. Responses were received from Historic England and Natural England.
- 5.2. At that time, both Historic England and Natural England agreed with the draft SEA screening report that a SEA for the neighbourhood plan is not required. Copies of those responses are attached in the appendices.
- 5.3. As described above, the District Council has re-screened the 2024 version of the neighbourhood plan and re-consulted the statutory consultation bodies.
- 5.4. Natural England and Historic England have responded to the consultation and have again concluded that a SEA for the neighbourhood plan is not required. Copies of the responses are included in the appendices.

6. Screening Determination

- 6.1. In summary, it is concluded that the Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan 2018 - 2031 is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore a SEA is not required. The principal reasons for this conclusion are:
 - there are no sites allocated for development;
 - the neighbourhood plan focuses on protecting the character of the village and its environment;
 - there are no proposals in the neighbourhood plan which are likely to have significant environmental effects on the natural and heritage features in the neighbourhood planning areas; and
 - the neighbourhood plan does not seek to change the outcomes of the development proposals in the Local Plan to the extent that it might lead to substantively different effects to those which have already assessed.

APPENDIX A

Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan 2018 – 2031 Submission Version – March 2024

Consultation Responses from Historic England and Natural England for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Clare Skeels

From: McGivern, Ross <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 15 March 2024 18:16
To: Clare Skeels
Subject: Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Re -Screening

Categories: Barkway NP

Dear Clare,

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. Therefore we welcome this opportunity to review the Screening Report for this plan. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied with the Screening Opinion.

The Screening Report indicates that the Council considers that the plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We note that the plan does not propose to allocate any sites for development.

On the basis of the information supplied, and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with the Council that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

The views of the other two statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for an SEA is made.

I should be pleased if you can send a copy of the determination as required by REG 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

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 SEA 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, despite the SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

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.

Please do contact me, either via email or the number below, if you have any queries.

Kind regards,
Ross

Ross McGivern (he/him)
Historic Places Adviser
Mobile no – [REDACTED]

East of England Region
Partnerships Team

Historic England | Brooklands
24 Brooklands Avenue | Cambridge | CB2 8BU
Tel: [REDACTED]
Follow us on Twitter at [@HE_EoE](#)



Work with us to champion heritage and improve lives. Read our Future Strategy and get involved at historicengland.org.uk/strategy.

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Date: 11 April 2024
Our ref: 470115
Your ref: Barkway & Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan



Ms Clare Skeels
North Herts Council

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

BY EMAIL ONLY

Clare.Skeels@north-herts.gov.uk

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Skeels

Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 8 March 2024.

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)

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.

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 area (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 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 B

Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan 2018 – 2031

Pre-Submission Version

**Consultation Responses (2020) from Historic England and Natural
England for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

Clare Skeels

From: James, Edward <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 03 November 2020 18:21
To: Clare Skeels
Subject: RE: Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening
Categories: Barkway NP

Dear Clare,

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. Therefore we welcome this opportunity to review the Screening Report for this plan. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Barkway and Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied with the Screening Opinion.

The Screening Report indicates that the Council considers that the plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We note that the plan does not propose to allocate any sites for development.

On the basis of the information supplied, and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with the Council that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

The views of the other two statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for an SEA is made.

I should be pleased if you can send a copy of the determination as required by REG 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

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 SEA 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, despite the SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

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.

Please do contact me, either via email or the number below, if you have any queries.

Kind regards,

Edward

Edward James

Date: 07 October 2020
Our ref: 329130 & 329453
Your ref: Barkway & Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan



Clare Skeels
North Hertfordshire District Council
[REDACTED]
CC: parishclerk@barkway-villiage.co.uk

Hornbeam House
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Cheshire
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BY EMAIL ONLY

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Clare Skeels

Barkway & Nuthampstead Neighbourhood Plan – SEA Screening Determination

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 30 September 2020 which was received by Natural England on 30 September 2020

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils) are concerned, that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

Neighbourhood Plan

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in light of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), is contained within the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#). The guidance highlights three triggers that may require the production of an SEA, for instance where:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that in our view the proposals contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies / proposals within the plan. It remains the case, however, that the responsible authority should provide information supporting this screening decision, sufficient to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected.

Notwithstanding this advice, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all potential environmental assets. As a result the responsible authority should raise environmental issues that we have not identified on local or national biodiversity action plan species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites or local landscape character, with its own ecological and/or landscape advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local landscape and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by this plan, before determining whether an SA/SEA is necessary.

Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA/SA screening stage, should the responsible authority seek our views on the scoping or environmental report stages. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make.

Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Consultation

Natural England also have no comments to make on the Barkway and Nuthampstead Regulation 14 Neighbourhood Plan Pre-Submission Consultation.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Dominic Rogers at [REDACTED]. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Dominic Rogers
Consultations Team