

**Ashdon
Parish Council**

**Uttlesford District
Council**

Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
Screening Determination Statement (under
Regulation 9 and 11 of the Environmental Assessment of
Plans and Programmes 2004)**

January 2022

Executive Summary

This statement provides the determination (under Regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations)) that the draft Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects and therefore, does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This statement also includes the reasons for this determination (in line with Regulation 11 of the SEA Regulations).

In addition, this statement determines that the making of the draft Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to result in significant effects on any European sites and consequently the plan does not require Habitat Regulation Assessment.

This determination statement is also intended to demonstrate that the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan is compatible with certain European Union obligations as required by the basic conditions, namely:

- Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment;
- and
- Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

This determination has been made on 17 January 2022. Within 28 days of this determination, Uttlesford District Council will publish this determination statement in accordance with its regulatory requirements (as per Regulation 11 of the SEA Regulations). The statutory consultees will be sent a copy of this statement and a copy of the statement will be available for inspection at the Council's website at <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/ashdonnp>. It will also be available on request at: Uttlesford District Council, Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden, Essex, CB11 4ER.

If you require any further information, then please contact Demetria Macdonald by email at dmacdonald@uttlesford.gov.uk.

Determination Statement (including reasons for the determination)

This statement has been produced to ensure the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan will, when examined, comply with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) in particular Regulation 32 and Regulation 15(1) e (ii) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

A neighbourhood plan is required to meet a number of basic conditions (which are set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990), one of which being, it must not breach and must be otherwise compatible with EU and Human Rights obligations. This requires neighbourhood plans to fully consider the requirements of the SEA regulations¹ which transpose the EU's SEA Directive² into law and which requires those making plans that could impact on the environment to consider whether they are likely to have a significant effect or not.

Regulation 32 in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) sets out an additional basic condition to those set out in primary legislation. Regulation 32 states: *"The making of the neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (d)) or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007 (e)) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects).*

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) preliminary Screening Opinion was prepared by Uttlesford District Council for the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan. This opinion, see **Appendix 1** to this report, was made available to the statutory environmental bodies (Natural England, Historic England and Environment Agency) for comment starting on 24 November 2021.

Consultation responses were received from two (Historic England and Natural England) of the three statutory consultees but not from the Environment Agency. The conclusions from the two statutory bodies are summarised below, and their detailed comments are included in **Appendix 2**.

Historic England Response:

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 Ashdon 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**.

1. Known fully as The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

2 Known fully as Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of

the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

Natural England Response:

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.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

Natural England agrees with the report's conclusions that the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European Site, either alone or in combination and therefore no further assessment work would be required.

Environment Agency (No Response):

The Environment Agency did not respond to the initial request and subsequent several reminders. Uttlesford District Council sent the first consultation documents on 24 November 2021.

Subsequent reminders requesting the Environment Agency's opinion on Uttlesford District Council's SEA/HRA Screening Opinion were sent on the following dates, 9 December 2021, 23 December 2021 and 5 January 2022.

The Council's request for an opinion from the statutory bodies clearly states that "if no response is received within 21 days, it be assumed that the Statutory Body concurs with Uttlesford District Council's Screening Opinion".

Based on Historic England and Natural England Responses and the assumption that a non-response from the Environment Agency is an agreement with the Council's Screening Opinion, Uttlesford District Council's conclusion is that:

- Subject to the implementation of the NP policies and the modest expected development this assessment identifies no likely significant effects resulting from this NP; and
- The Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan is not predicted to have likely significant effects on any European site, either in isolation or in combination with other plans and projects.

APPENDIX 1: Ashdon SEA/HRA Screening Report

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report for the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan

22 November 2021

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Introduction

- 1.1 There are two purposes to this screening report:

SEA Screening

- 1.2 The purpose of this document is to help determine whether or not the draft Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan (NP) 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.
- 1.3 Uttlesford District Council (UDC) is required to consult the statutory bodies, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England prior to reaching a screening determination and will use this report as a basis for this consultation.

HRA Screening

- 1.4 The purpose of this document is also to ascertain whether the making of the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan would breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This is a required basic condition of neighbourhood plans as laid out in Schedule 2 to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended.
- 1.5 Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC reads:
- “Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.”*
- 1.6 In practice Article 6(3) requires a two-stage process.
- a) initially seeing if the draft plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with others plans or projects); and if likely significant effects cannot be ruled out
 - b) subjecting the neighbourhood plan to appropriate assessment where the purpose of the appropriate assessment is to ascertain the implications of the neighbourhood plan on the European site in view of the conservation objectives of the European site.
- 1.7 Where an appropriate assessment is required, the plan can only proceed to adoption if it is found the plan will have no adverse effects on the integrity of the European site. At the appropriate assessment stage (if that stage is needed) account may be taken of proposed mitigation measures but not prior to this.

Status of this Screening Report

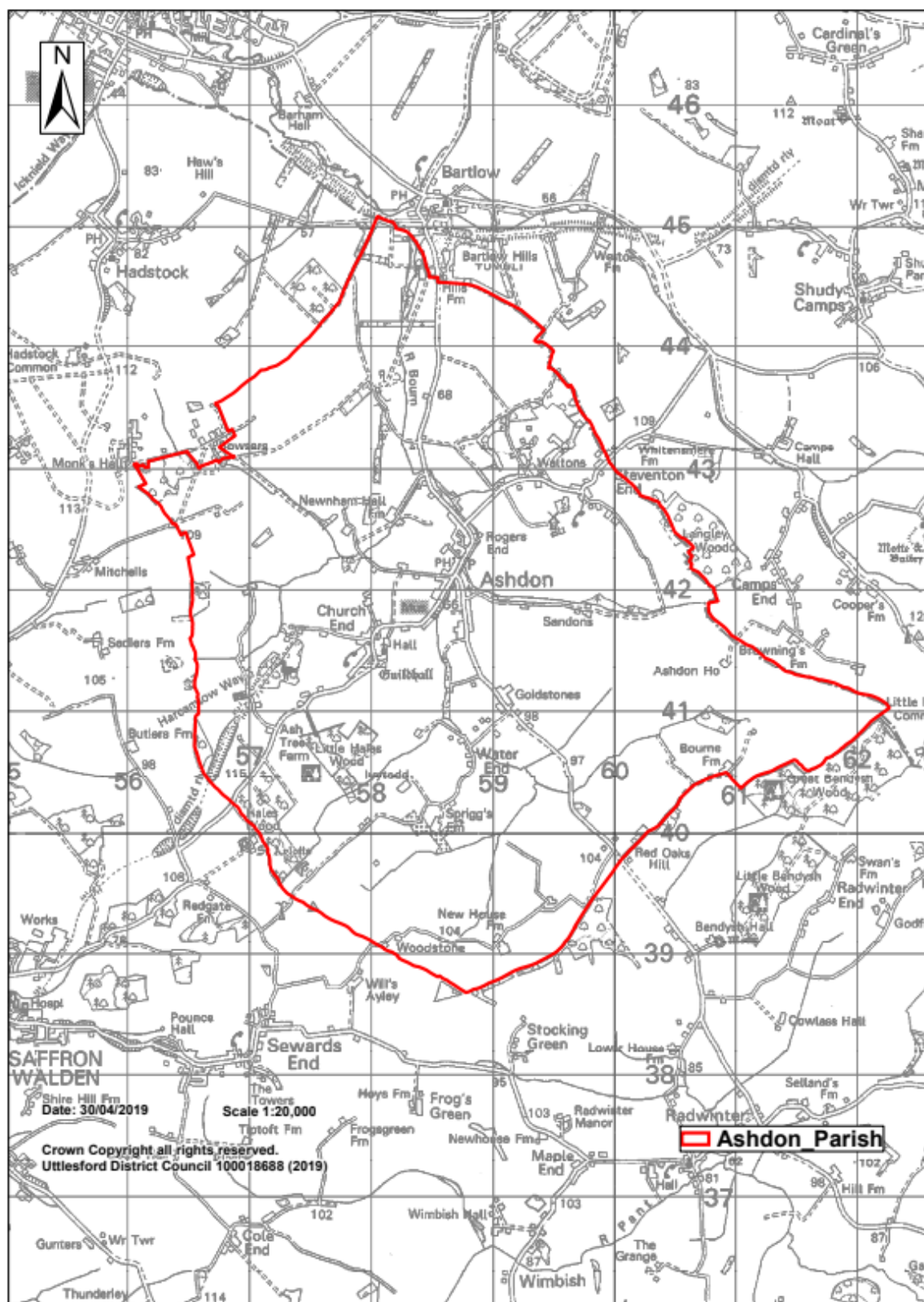
- 1.8 The views reached in this SEA/HRA screening report are preliminary views prior to consulting with Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England.

Introduction to Ashdon

- 1.9 The neighbourhood plan area is made up of Ashdon Parish. Ashdon Parish is located in the north-west corner of Essex, closely bordered by the counties of South Cambridgeshire to the north and Suffolk to the east. The centre of Cambridge is about 23.7 kilometres north-northwest to the village of Ashdon. Ashdon is located about 7.1 kilometres northeast of Saffron Walden. The Parish covers 21 square kilometres of mainly agricultural land.
- 1.10 The settlement in Ashdon Parish is made up of several historic settlements in a rural landscape setting. The settlement is concentrated in Ashdon village core and in Church End. There are also a series of historic 'Ends' some of which have been incorporated into the Ashdon village core (Rogers End and Holden End) and some of which retain their distinct identity – Water End, Steventon End and Knox End. Throughout the Parish there are several historic sunken lanes, some adjoining Ashdon village core (Kates Lane, Rectory Lane and Dorvis Lane), one adjoining the Church End settlement (Fallowden Lane) and some further afield (Puddlewharf Lane and New House Lane). There are also scattered farmsteads and other dwellings on the main road into the Parish from Saffron Walden (the Walden Road). Ashdon is designated as a Type A village and as Other Villages in the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005.
- 1.11 Ashdon Parish is influenced by local topography of rounded hills and slopes and steep in places where the River Bourn has incised the valley over time. Ashdon village and Water End are located on the steeper valley sides along the River Bourn. Holden End and Rogers End are located in a wide valley floor with gentle valley sides.
- 1.12 As at the 2011 Census there were 373 dwellings in the plan area. Since 2011, there has been limited housing growth in the parish with the completion of an additional 10 homes up to 31 March 2019.

The Ashdon Neighbourhood plan area can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan Area



Introduction to the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan

1.13 The Ashdon NP covers the period 2020 – 2036 and has the following vision:

“Over the Plan period Ashdon will evolve whilst retaining and enhancing its natural and historic rural environment and continue to be inhabited by a vibrant sustainable community.”

1.14 The vision is underpinned by the following eleven objectives:

Village character objectives

1. Any new development in the Parish will be modest in scale and appropriate to meeting village needs.
2. Any new development will deliver high quality design and be appropriate and sensitive to neighbouring buildings and landscape setting.
3. The unique hilly landscape and openness of the village with its close connection to the rural landscape will be protected; this includes key views.

Climate change and biodiversity objectives

4. The NP will address the challenge of climate change at our Parish level. As part of this it will anticipate the impact of increased frequency of heavy rainfall when planning for flood management solutions for the village.
5. The NP will aim for new development to have a low carbon footprint (covering energy demand, building materials, construction process etc) and support innovative solutions.
6. The NP will plan to maintain and promote local ecosystems to protect wildlife, trees and hedgerows

Vibrant community and ‘getting around’ objectives

7. Affordable housing should be available to meet the needs of local people.
8. Promote a vibrant community in which it is easier to get around – both within the community and in and out of the village
9. Promote health and wellbeing of the community by protecting and improving opportunities for outdoor recreational activities
10. Promote maintenance and enhancement of local facilities, clubs and societies.

Employment objectives

11. Promote and enhance local employment opportunities

1.15 Individual policies and community aspirations have been developed within the components of the Plan underlying each objective. To help realise the objectives listed above planning policies in the NP are arranged under the topics and set out in the table below. Information on the planning policies is currently available in the attached draft Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan document.

1.16 The Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any residential sites. Uttlesford District Council provided the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan with an indicative figure of 15 dwellings. However, in 2020 there were 15 extant permissions in Ashdon Parish.

- 1.17 Any future development in Ashdon will be subject to policies which will contain specific criteria to ensure mitigation of adverse impacts and implementation of potential positive effects.
- 1.18 The Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan does not identify new housing allocations but recognises that additional dwellings are likely to come forward during the period to 2036 that are compliant with planning policies. Currently there are 15 extant planning permissions.
- 1.19 Infill development will be supported within the Development Limits subject to compatibility with the character of the settlement. Affordable housing development will be supported within the Development Limits and on rural exception sites outside the Development Limits.
- 1.20 The Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan is underpinned by a comprehensive set of evidence base documents comprising:
- Housing Needs Survey, Ashdon – February 2020 - RCCE
 - Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal Final Report by Alison Farmer Associates (AFA) (Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning) March 2020
 - Ashdon Character Assessment (Undertaken by Ashdon NP Volunteers in Autumn 2019 – Summer 2020)
 - Ashdon Conservation Appraisal
 - Flooding in the Parish of Ashdon, The Ashdon Flood Group – 2021
 - Uttlesford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Final Report, May 2016
 - Flood Mapping Study of River Bourn in Ashdon by JBA Consulting October 2008
 - The Parish of Ashdon – Natural Environment and Biodiversity
 - Uttlesford District Council – Local Wildlife Review, October 2007
 - Local Green Space Assessment – Updated August 2021
 - Review of Ashdon Indoor Community Spaces Summary – Updated August 2021
 - Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan footpath Survey 2020 by Hugh V. Feldman
 - Ashdon path by path survey by Hugh Feldman March – May 2020
 - Business Survey Summary 2020
- 1.21 This will ensure that proposed policies in the Neighbourhood Plan are robust, and evidence based.
- 1.22 Of great importance is the current policy context in which the NP sits. In the adopted 2005 Local plan, Ashdon falls within the Other Villages classification. Paragraph 2.2.4 of the Local Plan states that where there are development limits in Other Villages they are tightly drawn. The potential for development within these tightly drawn limits is limited to previously developed sites. Local affordable housing and community facility needs may be met on “exception sites” outside development limits. Uttlesford District Council currently has no five-year land supply,

and the current Local Plan (adopted 2005) is out of date in terms of delivering housing numbers since the 2005 plan delivers housing up to the year 2011.

- 1.23 Whilst the Local Plan is out of date and increasingly so as time passes, the spatial strategy which recognises the role of certain settlements such as Ashdon, remains a cornerstone of the distribution of development throughout the district. In other words, small and medium development proposals on sustainable sites within or adjacent to the Ashdon development limits and in the countryside are likely to be permitted when considered against the policies in the NPPF.
- 1.24 There are currently 15 extant Planning Permissions in the Parish. In addition, there is a decision pending for 3 dwellings and also an Appeal lodged on 20 April 2021 for 5 dwellings.

Table 1: An indicative overview of the emerging development management policies in the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan
OVERALL SPATIAL STRATEGY
<p><u>POLICY ASH1 – A SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR ASHDON</u></p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan area will accommodate development commensurate with Ashdon’s position in the District’s Settlement Hierarchy.</p> <p>Development Limits, as defined on the Policies Map, identify the extent of land which is required to meet the development needs of the Parish.</p> <p>Proposals for development located outside the Development Limits will only be permitted where they are in accordance with National and District level policies.</p>
HOUSING
<p><u>POLICY ASH2 – HOUSING MIX – MEETING LOCAL NEEDS</u></p> <p>Housing development must contribute to meeting the existing and future needs of the village. A mix in the size and type of housing is desired, taking into account the needs of young people looking for 2 and 3- bedroom properties as well as the needs of an ageing population looking to downsize into smaller homes.</p>
<p><u>POLICY ASH3 – AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON RURAL EXCEPTION SITES</u></p> <p>Proposals for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes, including entry level homes for purchase and starter homes (as defined by paragraph 72 of the NPPF) on rural exception sites outside the Development Limits, where housing would not normally be permitted by other policies, will be supported where there is a proven local need and provided that the housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. remains affordable in perpetuity; and ii. is for people that are in housing need because they are unable to buy or rent properties in the Parish at open-market prices; and

Table 1: An indicative overview of the emerging development management policies in the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan

- iii. is offered, in the first instance, to people with a demonstrated connection to Ashdon, as defined in paragraph 7.19 of the Neighbourhood Plan. Where there is no need, a property should then be offered to those with a demonstrated need for affordable housing in neighbouring villages.

These restrictions should be delivered through a legal agreement attached to the planning consent for the housing. Applications for such development will be considered in relation to the appearance and character of the surrounding area, the potential impact on residential amenity and highway safety.

To be acceptable, proposals should demonstrate that a local need exists which cannot be met by applying normal planning policy for the provision of affordable homes in association with market housing.

Any application for affordable housing in respect of this policy should be accompanied by a detailed need and the accommodation proposed should contribute to meeting this proven need.

In exceptional circumstances, a small number of market homes will be permitted where it can be demonstrated:

- a. that no other means of funding the construction of the affordable homes is available; and
- b. the market housing is subsidiary to the affordable housing element of the proposal and the amount of market housing required is, as demonstrated through a viability assessment, the minimum required to deliver the affordable housing.

Where sites for affordable housing in the countryside are brought forward with an element of market housing, both housing tenures should be built to the same design standards and contribute towards the character of the area.

NATURAL LANDSCAPE AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

POLICY ASH4 - PROTECTING ASHDON'S LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Proposals must, proportionate to the development, demonstrate how the landscape characteristics of the site and its vicinity have been considered in preparing the scheme.

Important views from public vantage points, either within the built-up area or into or out of the surrounding countryside, are identified on the Policies Map. Any proposed development should not detract from the key landscape and built development features of those views as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan Assessment of Important Views document.

Proposals outside the Development Limits, and proportionate to the scale of development, must demonstrate, through a Landscape Visual Impact Appraisal or other appropriate and proportionate evidence, how the proposal can be accommodated in the countryside, for example by reason of the building's scale, materials and location, without having a detrimental impact on the landscape characteristics of the site and its setting.

Table 1: An indicative overview of the emerging development management policies in the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan

Proposals that result in an unacceptable impact on the wider landscape setting of the area will not be supported unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated, through a project level Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, that the resultant impact on the landscape character, referenced to the Ashdon Landscape Appraisal, can be mitigated.

POLICY ASH5 - SETTLEMENT GAPS

To conserve the generally open and undeveloped nature of the gaps separating the distinct settlements (the Ends) as identified on the Policies Map, development proposals shall, where appropriate, demonstrate how they would not result in the erosion of the settlement gaps identified on the Policies Map.

POLICY ASH6 - CONSERVATION AREAS

Development within, or which has potential to affect the setting of, the Conservation Areas as identified on the Policies Map will be assessed against the content of the Ashdon Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals (2013) and any subsequent adopted Appraisal.

Proposals for development within a Conservation Area should:

- a. Demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the Conservation Area alongside an assessment of the potential impact of the proposal on that significance;
- b. Preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area;
- c. Be of an appropriate design, scale, form, height, massing and position;
- d. Retain features important to settlement form and pattern such as open spaces, plot divisions, position of dwellings, hierarchy of routes, hierarchy of buildings, and their uses, boundary treatments and gardens; and
- e. Use high quality materials and methods of construction which complement the character of the area. Proposals for development which affect the setting of a Conservation Area should be considered against criteria a), c) and e) above.

Proposals which involve the demolition of non-listed buildings that make a positive contribution to a Conservation Area, including those identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, will be expected to demonstrate:

- i. The building is structurally unsound and beyond technically feasible and economically viable repair (for reasons other than deliberate damage or neglect); or
- ii. All measures to sustain the existing use or find an alternative use/user have been exhausted.

In all cases, proposals for demolition should include comprehensive and detailed plans for redevelopment of the site.

Table 1: An indicative overview of the emerging development management policies in the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan

POLICY ASH7 - DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Proposals for new development must reflect the local characteristics and circumstances in the Neighbourhood Plan Area and create and contribute to a high quality, safe and sustainable environment.

Planning applications should demonstrate how they satisfy the requirements of the design principles in the Ashdon Design Code, as appropriate to the proposal.

In addition, proposals will be supported where:

- a. the key features, characteristics, landscape/building character, local distinctiveness, and special qualities of the area, including gateways as defined on the Policies Map, are maintained, and enhanced, having particular regard to the Conservation Area Appraisal and Neighbourhood Plan Character Assessments.
- b. there is no loss of important open, green, or landscaped areas, including Important Open Areas as identified on the Policies Map, which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of that part of the Neighbourhood Plan Area.
- c. taking mitigation measures into account, important landscape characteristics including trees and ancient hedgerows and other prominent topographical features identified in the Ashdon Landscape Appraisal are not adversely affected.
- d. the design and materials have regard to the Ashdon Design Code and do not adversely change the character of the site or its setting.
- e. any water run-off would not add-to or create surface water flooding.
- f. designs, in accordance with standards, maintain or enhance the safety of the highway network ensuring that all vehicle parking is provided within the plot.
- g. as appropriate, they make adequate provision for the covered storage of all wheelie bins and cycle storage in accordance with adopted cycle parking standards.
- i. suitable ducting capable of accepting fibre to enable superfast broadband is included.
- h. one electric vehicle charging point per new off-street parking place created is provided.
- j. they are located so as users and nearby residents would not be significantly and adversely affected by noise, smell, vibration, overlooking, light or other forms of pollution unless adequate mitigation can be incorporated as part of the proposal.

POLICY ASH8 - LIGHT POLLUTION

While ensuring that new developments are secure in terms of occupier and vehicle safety, dark skies are to be preferred over lighting. Any future outdoor lighting systems should have a minimum impact on the environment, minimising light pollution and adverse effects on wildlife, subject to highway safety, the needs of particular individuals or groups, and security. Schemes

Table 1: An indicative overview of the emerging development management policies in the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan

should reduce the consumption of energy by promoting efficient outdoor lighting technologies, keeping the night-time skies dark and reducing glare.

Excessive glazing in elevated positions should be avoided if this results in light spillage beyond the site.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY

POLICY ASH9 - FLOOD RISK

Proposals for new development, or the intensification of existing development, will not be permitted in Flood Zones 2 and 3, unless the applicant has satisfied the safety requirements in the Flood Risk National Planning Policy Guidance (and any successor). These include the 'sequential test'; where needed the 'exception test' and also a site-specific flood risk assessment that addresses the characteristics of flooding and has tested an appropriate range of flood event scenarios (taking climate change into consideration). This should address as a minimum: finished floor levels; safe access and egress; an emergency flood plan; identification and provision of surface water exceedance routes; flood resilience/ resistance measures; any increase in built or surfaced area; and any impact on flooding elsewhere, including sewer flooding.

Developments should exhibit the three main principles of flood risk, in that, they should be safe, resilient and should not increase flood risk elsewhere.

Proposals for all new development will be required to submit schemes appropriate to the scale of the proposal detailing how on-site drainage and water resources will be managed so as not to cause or exacerbate surface water and fluvial flooding elsewhere. Proposals should, as appropriate include the use of above-ground open Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). These could include:

- wetland and other water features, which can help reduce flood risk whilst offering other benefits including water quality, amenity/ recreational areas, and biodiversity benefits; and
- rainwater and stormwater harvesting and recycling; and
- other natural drainage systems where easily accessible maintenance can be achieved.

POLICY ASH10 – BIODIVERSITY AND HABITATS

Development proposals should avoid the loss of, or substantial harm to, important trees, hedgerows, wildlife corridors and other natural features including the chalk stream and ponds.

Where such losses or harm is unavoidable:

- i. the benefits of the development proposal must be demonstrated to clearly outweigh any impacts; and
- ii. suitable mitigation measures, that may include equivalent or better replacement of the lost features, will be required.

Table 1: An indicative overview of the emerging development management policies in the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan

It is expected that the mitigation proposals will form an integral part of the design and layout of any proposal, and that development will be landscape-led having appropriate regard to its setting, context and ongoing management.

Where new access is created, or an existing access widened through an existing hedgerow, a new hedgerow of native species shall be planted on the splay returns into the site to maintain the appearance and continuity of hedgerows in the vicinity.

Proposals will be supported where they integrate improvements to biodiversity which will secure a measurable net gain as part of the design through, for example,

- a) the creation of new natural habitats including ponds;
- b) the planting of additional native trees and hedgerows (reflecting the character of Ashdon's traditional trees and hedgerows);
- c) the installation of bird and bat boxes; and
- d) restoring and repairing fragmented wildlife network

POLICY ASH11 - CHALK STREAMS PROTECTION

Proposals that would result in additional surface water run-off into the chalk streams (River Bourn and its tributaries) will not be supported unless accompanied by a watercourse and surface water drainage appraisal and commensurate measures which will avoid and mitigate contamination of the watercourse.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

POLICY ASH12 – VILLAGE SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Proposals that would result in the loss of services and facilities (or premises last used for such purposes), and which support the local community will only be permitted where:

- a. it can be demonstrated that the current use is not economically viable and is not likely to become viable. Supporting financial evidence should be provided including any efforts to advertise the premises for sale for a minimum of 12 months; and
- b. it can be demonstrated, through evidenced research, that there is no local demand for the use and that the building/site is not needed for any alternative social, community or leisure use; or
- c. alternative facilities and services are available, or replacement provision is made, of at least equivalent standard, in a location that is accessible to the community it serves with good access by public transport or by cycling or walking.

Proposals for the enhancement of the existing services and facilities will generally be supported subject to there being no significant adverse impact on the natural and historic environment, infrastructure and the amenity of residents.

Table 1: An indicative overview of the emerging development management policies in the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan

POLICY ASH13 – LOCAL GREEN SPACES

The following Local Green Spaces are designated in this Plan and identified on the Policies Map.

Rectory Lane and Village Core

1. Children's play area with equipment, green space and picnic area off Rectory Lane
2. Wildflower meadow - Beeches Nursery
3. Glebe Meadow in front of The Old Rectory
4. War memorial and picnic area with trees and benches
5. Allotments
6. Allotment meadow (fenced area, former allotments)
7. Banks and flat, entrance to Carters Croft

Radwinter Road

8. Donkey Field with Millennium Oak Church End
9. Children's play area with equipment
10. Picnic area and amenity space
11. Green space with fitness trail and basketball hoop
12. Church End Green, Guildhall verges and bus shelter triangle
13. Churchyard

Sports Grounds

14. Football pitch - Knox End
15. Cricket pitch - Steventon End

Steventon End

16. Steventon End Green
17. Curtilage of Windmill

(The numbers in the Policy relate to the numbers on the Policies Map)

HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIVITY

POLICY ASH14 - PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Any new development on or adjacent to an existing Public Right of Way or which is clearly visible from a Public Right of Way must consider the appearance of the proposal from the Right of Way and incorporate green landscaping to reduce any visual impacts.

Table 1: An indicative overview of the emerging development management policies in the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan
Enhancements or extensions to the network, for example through improving accessibility or connectivity, will be supported and may be required where a scheme is likely to increase usage.
<u>POLICY ASH15 – PROTECTED LANES</u> Proposals that would have an adverse environmental impact upon Protected Lanes, as defined on the Proposals Map, including eroding their character will not be supported. Any proposals which would give rise to a material increase in the amount of traffic using Protected Lanes will not be permitted.
EMPLOYMENT
<u>POLICY ASH16 - FARM DIVERSIFICATION</u> Proposals for new business development in redundant farm buildings will be supported where the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on residential amenity, heritage assets and the highways network.

2. Legislative Background to SEA

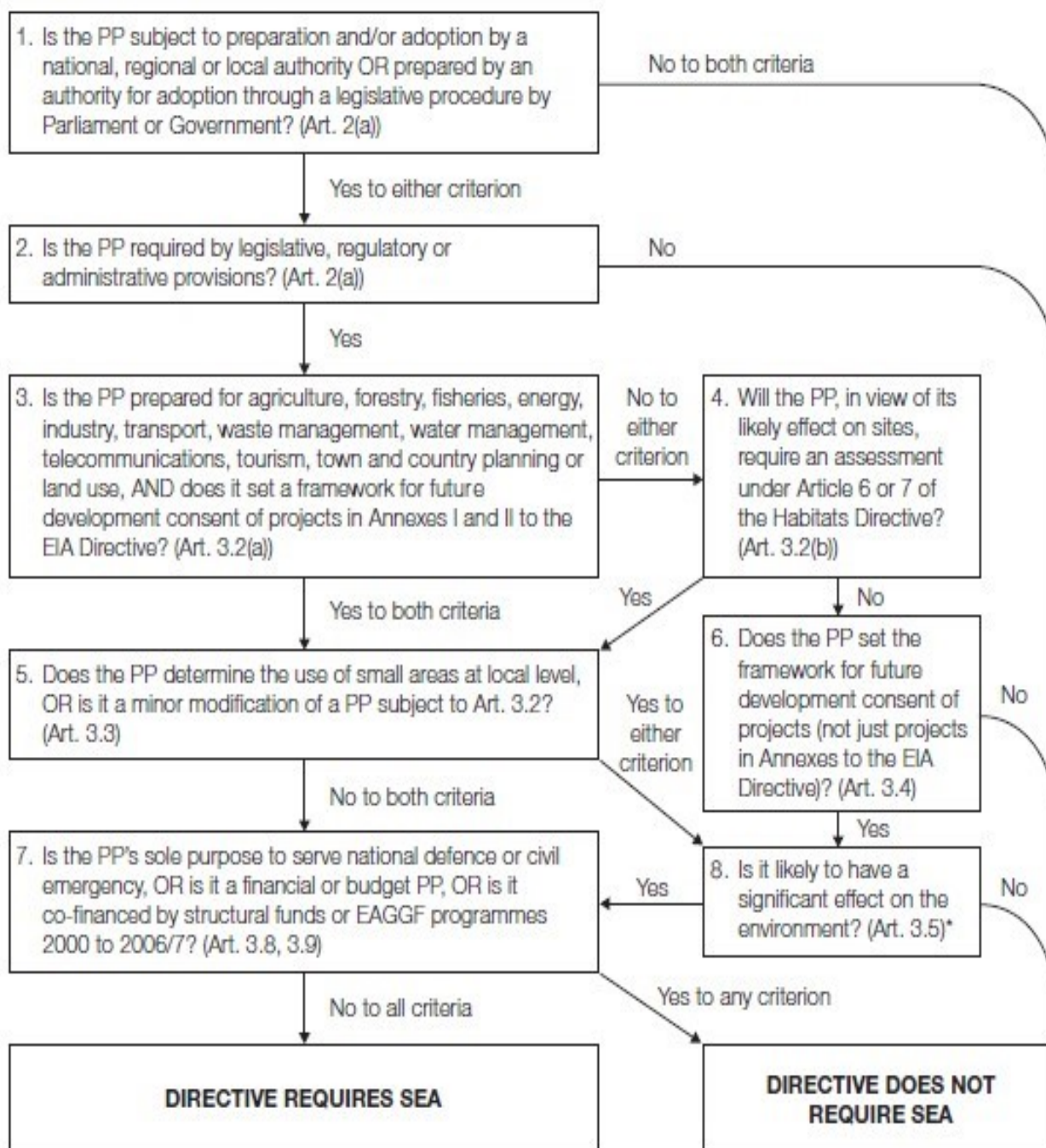
- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC which was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, often referred to as the “SEA Regulations”. Detailed guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication “A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive” (ODPM 2005) available to view at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-directive-guidance>

- 2.2 The Government publication “A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive” (ODPM 2005) includes a useful table intended as a guide to the circumstances where the SEA directive applies to plans and programmes. This is reproduced below:

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

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



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

2.3 The table below uses the diagram above to help determine whether or not the SEA directive applies to the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan.

Table 2: Assessing how the SEA legislation applies to the Ashdon NP			
Stage	Response	Outcome	Comment
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 a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	Go to question 2	The preparation and adoption of the NP is allowed under The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The NP is being prepared by the Ashdon Neighbourhood Steering Group which has been appointed by Ashdon Parish Council (as the Qualifying Body) and will be “made” by Uttlesford District Council as the local authority. The preparation of NP is subject to the following regulations: The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012.
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	Go to question 3	Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan is not a requirement and is optional under the provisions of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, it will, if “made”, form part of the statutory Development Plan for the District.
	No	NO SEA required	
3. Is the NP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II (see Appendix 2) to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	Yes to both	Go to question 5	The Neighbourhood Plan does not set the framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive (see Appendix 2 for list).
	No to either	Go to question 4	

Table 2: Assessing how the SEA legislation applies to the Ashdon NP

Stage	Response	Outcome	Comment
4. Will the NP, 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))	Yes	Go to question 5	See separate assessment in Section 6 of this report.
	No	Go to question 6.	
5. Does the NP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Yes to either	Go to question 8	The Neighbourhood Plan applies to the Civil Parish of Ashdon.
	No to both	Go to question 7.	
6. Does the NP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Yes	Go to question 8	The Neighbourhood Plan is to be used for determining future planning applications.
	No	Does not require SEA	
7. Is the NP's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	Yes to any criteria	Does not require SEA	Not applicable
	No to all criteria	Requires SEA	
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art 3.5)	Yes	Requires SEA	Likely significant effects are explored in more detail in section 3 of this report.
	No	Does not require SEA	

- 2.4 The table above tells us that an environmental assessment of the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan is only required if it is 'screened in' following an assessment of likely significant effects on the environment.

3. Criteria for determining likely significance of effects on the environment

- 3.1 When determining whether a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) has a likely significant effect on the environment, the SEA Regulations require that the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations be considered. These are the criteria “for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment”. These criteria are split into two categories: those relating to the characteristics of the plan and those relating to the characteristics of the effects and area likely to be affected. These are set out below.

Plan characteristics

- 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 [European] Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).

Characteristics of the effects and the plan area

- 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 (for example, 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
-

- 3.2 In order to identify any likely significant environmental effects, Table 3 below considers the characteristics of the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan and Table 4 considers the characteristics of the effects and the plan area likely to be affected.
-

Table 3: Criteria for determining the likely significance of environmental effects – Plan Characteristics

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 Ashdon NP would, if adopted (“made”), form part of the Statutory Development Plan and as such will contribute to the Framework for future development consent of projects. However, the plan will sit within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the strategic policies of the Uttlesford District Council Local Plan (2005) and the emerging Local Plan. The NP will include a range of development management type policies including the following:

Overall Spatial Strategy

Policy ASH1 – A Spatial Strategy for Ashdon

This policy seeks to accommodate development commensurate with Ashdon’s position in the District’s Settlement Hierarchy. Development needs of the Parish will be met within the defined Development Limits. However, development beyond Development Limits will be supported in accordance with National and District level policies.

Housing

Policy ASH2 – Housing Mix – Meeting Local Needs

This policy seeks to contribute to the existing and future needs of the village through the provision of a mix in housing to cater for the young and elderly. Provision of a mix of 2 and 3 bedrooms will ensure a balanced housing stock in Ashdon.

Policy ASH3 – Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites

This is an enabling policy for the consideration of exception site affordable housing proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan area and sets out the criteria that will need to be taken into account in making decisions for such applications.

Natural Landscape and Built Environment

Policy ASH4 – Protecting Ashdon’s Landscape Character

This policy seeks to protect the hilly landscape, openness and key views from new development. This policy encourages new development that is of high design, appropriate and sensitive to neighbouring buildings and the landscape setting.

Table 3: Criteria for determining the likely significance of environmental effects – Plan Characteristics

Policy ASH5 – Settlement Gaps

This policy seeks to ensure that the open and undeveloped gaps between settlements are kept free and open and stop coalescence of the settlements in the Parish.

Policy ASH6 – Conservation Areas

This policy protects the Ashdon historic environment that is of local and national importance. There are 66 listed buildings scattered throughout the Parish. Twenty-one of the listed buildings are within the Ashdon Village core and Church End Conservation areas. There is also the Scheduled Monument southeast of All Saints' Church, comprising the former site of the medieval village. Ashdon has nine non-designated heritage assets on Uttlesford District Council's Local Heritage List.

Policy ASH7 – Design Considerations

This policy seeks to ensure that new development reflects the local characteristics and circumstances in the Neighbourhood Plan Area, create and contribute to a high quality, safe and sustainable environment. Planning applications are required to demonstrate how they satisfy the requirements of the design principles in the Ashdon Design Code, as appropriate to the proposal.

Policy ASH8 – Light Pollution

This policy seeks to ensure that future outdoor lighting systems have a minimum impact on the environment, local amenity and minimising light pollution and adverse effects on wildlife.

Climate Change and Biodiversity

Policy ASH9 – Flood Risk

This policy seeks to address and manage on-site drainage and water resources so that new development does not cause or exacerbate surface water and fluvial flooding in the parish.

Policy ASH10 – Biodiversity and Habitats

This policy seeks to avoid the loss of or substantial harm to, important trees, hedgerows, wildlife corridors and other natural features including chalk streams and ponds.

Table 3: Criteria for determining the likely significance of environmental effects – Plan Characteristics

	<p><u>Policy ASH11 – Chalk Streams Protection</u></p> <p>This policy seeks to protect new development additional surface water run-off into the chalk streams (River Bourn and its tributaries).</p> <p>Community Facilities</p> <p><u>Policy ASH12 – Village Services and Facilities</u></p> <p>This policy seeks to promote health and wellbeing of the community by limiting the loss of services and facilities as well as encouraging the enhancement of existing community facilities.</p> <p><u>Policy ASH13 – Local Green Spaces</u></p> <p>This policy seeks to protect 17 local green spaces which are of importance to the local communities.</p> <p>Highways, Transport and Connectivity</p> <p><u>Policy ASH14 – Public Rights of Way</u></p> <p>This policy seeks to protect the appearance of existing Public Rights of Way as well as extend and /or enhancement to existing Public Rights of Way network.</p> <p><u>Policy ASH15 – Protected Lanes</u></p> <p>This policy protects Protected Lanes from adverse environmental impacts and development that would result in a material increase in traffic using the lane.</p> <p><u>Policy ASH16 – Farm Diversification</u></p> <p>This policy seeks to promote and enhance local employment opportunities by supporting the use of redundant farm buildings.</p>
	<p>the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy</p>
	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Development Plan for the District. Whilst it does not influence other lower level plans the community will expect the district to take into account the Neighbourhood Plan in the drafting of the new Local</p>

Table 3: Criteria for determining the likely significance of environmental effects – Plan Characteristics	
	Plan. The plan will form part of the development plan, however strategic policies of the District Council and the site allocations made in the Local Plan take priority.
the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	
	National policy requires a presumption in favour of sustainable development which should be seen as a golden thread through the plan-making including the Ashdon NP. Before the NP can be made it will need to be tested against the basic conditions. This includes a requirement to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development. The plan will promote sustainable development through policies requiring the protection of existing and new open space, policy requirements for community facilities, protection of employment sites and protection of biodiversity.
environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	
	<p>Environmental issues relevant to the Ashdon NP area are set out below theme by theme:</p> <p><u>Biodiversity:</u></p> <p><u>European sites:</u> As shown on Figure 2 there are no European sites within or close to the NP area. The closest European site is the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC which is approximately 26.3km away from the north-western edge of Ashdon Parish. Other European sites include Devil's Dyke Special Area of Conservation which is approximately 19.6 km from the northern edge of Ashdon Parish.</p> <p><u>SSSIs and NNRs:</u> The Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the Parish are Shadwell Wood, Hales Wood, Ashdon Meadows and Nunn Wood SSSI. There are no Local Nature reserves in the plan area.</p> <p><u>Local Wildlife Sites:</u> There are a number of Local Wildlife Sites in the NP area. These have been identified as part of an Uttlesford-wide review of sites undertaken in 2007 (see Selected Local Wildlife Site Review prepared by Essex Ecological Services Ltd in 2007, and available to view at www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/1799/Local-Wildlife-Site-Review-2007/pdf/Local_Wildlife_Site_Review_Oct07_PDFa.pdf?m=636989606384370000 The identified sites in the NP area include a) Ashdon Road Protected Roadside Verge (UfD124)(West Section and Ashdon Road Protected Roadside Verges (UTT23).</p> <p><u>Population:</u> No identified issues: According to the Census 2011, there were 893 usual residents in Ashdon Parish as at Census Day 2011. There were 360 households in living in 373 dwellings. Approximately 69.2% of the housing is owner-occupied and 16.4% the housing is social rented.</p>

Table 3: Criteria for determining the likely significance of environmental effects – Plan Characteristics

Children under 16 accounted for 20.5% of the population, working age adults accounted for 61.3% and people over 65 accounted for 18.3% of the Ashdon parish population.

Flora: A variety is recorded on www.magic.gov.uk .

Ashdown Parish falls mostly within the Ashdon Farmland Plateau. This plateau landscape is characterised by a rolling landform which rise to a broad open plateau dissected by small streams forming valleys. The plateau is characterised by open vistas and wooded valleys. There are scattered patches of ancient woodland. The tree cover is mostly deciduous. The area is endowed with copses and small woods. Parts of the river valleys contain willow pollards.

There are several small traditional orchards in the Parish.

“This landscape forms the elevated plateau landscape which wraps around the Parish to the west, south and east, with fingers extending in towards the centre of the parish at Church End, Spriggs Farm, Goldstones and Braggs Mill windmill. It comprises chalky boulder clay, overlying chalk creating a relatively flat and open landscape with views to wooded horizons. Many of the woodlands are ancient. e.g., Little Hales Wood, Hales Wood, Shadwell Wood, Griggs Grove and Nunn Wood, with Great Bendysh Wood and Langley Wood bordering the Parish. This upland area is drained by numerous small watercourses which dissect the plateau, creating a series of shallow valleys. Field ponds are a feature in places.” (Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan: Landscape Appraisal by AFA March 20202)

Fauna: A variety is recorded on www.magic.gov.uk

In Ashdown Parish the following are recorded: arable assemblage farmland birds, lapwing, corn bunting, grey partridge, tree sparrow, turtle dove, yellow wagtail snipe, stone curlew, tree sparrow, turtle dove, yellow wagtail.

Soil: The vast majority of agricultural land is classified as Grade 2 (very good).

Water: The Parish is divided north to south by the main valley of the River Bourn which rises at Grigg’s Grove, upstream of Water End, and travels northwards to join the River Granta at Bartlow. In summer the river is little more than a trickle and in winter can be 1m deep and up to 2m wide. Feeding into the Bourn are a series of three smaller tributaries, all un-named. Along the River Bourn are small scale linear meadows and woods forming part of the natural flood plain.

Table 3: Criteria for determining the likely significance of environmental effects – Plan Characteristics

Ashdon is liable to flooding due to being set within the incised valley of the River Bourn and its tributaries. The Parish has a history of several flooding events. Much of the flooding in the Ashdon tightly follows the route of the river and tributaries with large flood meadow areas to the north of the village and Holden End / Knox End, where the valley floor provides a wider flood plain. There are areas of flood risk to the south of Ashdon, including: the field at the rear of dwellings off Church Hill Road; the junction of Radwinter Road and Church Hill; and along the green gap provided by the allotments at Rogers End.

Climatic factors: no noted issues.

Cultural heritage:

Ashdon Parish is rich in historic buildings. There are two Conservation Areas, 66 listed structures and nine locally listed structures. The Parish is on the site of the Battle of Assandun between the Anglo Saxons and the Danes. The historic area of the settlement stretches back to the Roman period. The original settlement was at Church End. There was little change in the agrarian economy until the arrival of the railway in 1866. The Parish is characterised by a network of ancient lanes, bridleways and footpaths following the topography. The Parish is characterised by scattered farmsteads, “Ends” and two larger areas of settlement i.e., Ashdon Village Core and Church End. During the 20th Century small scale developments of social housing were introduced thus altering the historic agrarian character.

Landscape: At the national scale, Ashdon Parish is falls within covered by two National Character Areas viz NCA 87 East Anglian Chalk, forming a spur to the north extending to Steventon End and the majority of the Parish falls within NCA 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland.

Essex County-wide Landscape Character Assessment places the neighbourhood plan area, primarily within the Ashdon Farmland Plateau (B1).

The Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (commissioned jointly with Braintree District Council, Brentwood Borough Council, Chelmsford Borough Council, Maldon District Council and Uttlesford District Council in 2006) places the plan area in the Farmland Plateau Character Area.

The Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan Group commissioned a Landscape Appraisal in March 2020. The document records the sensitivity and capacity as follows:

Assessment Area A: North Ashdon, including Rogers End and Holden End: “This area is sensitive to residential and employment development, particularly where it would rise up the valley slopes or fill in important physical gaps or areas which form an important flood alleviation function. This area of landscape is visually sensitive as a result of views from upper valley slopes over the valley and further cul-de-sac estate development would undermine the historic settlement pattern. The natural limits of existing settlement are defined by the River Bourn and

Table 3: Criteria for determining the likely significance of environmental effects – Plan Characteristics

	<p>flood plain, topography and woodland, however there may be limited opportunity for a small-scale linear development comprising 1- 2 dwellings along the lane to Stevenson End between the 50-65m contours”. (Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan: Landscape Appraisal Final Report March 2020 by Alison Farmer Associates).</p> <p>Assessment Area B: South and Central Ashdon Village, including Kate’s Lane, Radwinter Road and Church Hill: “This landscape is sensitive to residential and employment development due to the rising valley topography which forms a rural setting to the settlement, course of the River Bourn and open gaps in built form which provide strong visual and physical connections to the wider rural valley landscape”. (Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan: Landscape Appraisal Final Report March 2020 by Alison Farmer Associates).</p> <p>Assessment Area C: Church End including the wider setting: “The peripheral landscape surrounding Church End is a sensitive landscape to residential and employment development due to elevation on the upper valley slopes and junction with the wider plateau landscape. Settlement edges have the potential to be visually prominent locally and over longer distances from the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, land to the east of the settlement is sensitive as it plays a particular function in providing a gap between Church End and Ashdon and as a setting to many historic assets”. (Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan: Landscape Appraisal Final Report March 2020 by Alison Farmer Associates).</p> <p><u>Material Assets:</u></p> <p>Public Rights of Way: Many public rights of way routes run through the plan area. The Parish has approximately 63 km of Public Rights of Way and by-ways. New House Lane is a Protected Lane. There are several sunken, historic and single lanes in the Parish. There are a total of 73 footpaths with a total length of 48.23kms, 13 bridleways with a total length of 13.47kms and a single by-way of 1.97kms.</p>
the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of [European] Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	
	There are no known conflicts between the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan and statutory plans linked to waste, water etc.

3.3 Table 4 below focuses on any identified effects and the characteristics of the plan area.

Table 4: Criteria for determining the likely significance of environmental effects: Effects and areas characteristics from the Ashdon NP the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects

The following likely impacts of the draft plan have been identified theme by theme:

Biodiversity, fauna and flora:

The Ashdon NP does not allocate any sites for development. The Plan does not propose any allocations and any future development is expected to be small scale and restricted to the less sensitive areas. Any future development will be steered to areas in and around Development Limits on land that is least sensitive in landscape and heritage terms. Policy ASH10 – Biodiversity and Habitats states that “Development Proposals should avoid loss of, or substantial harm to, important trees, hedgerows, wildlife corridors and other natural features including the chalk stream and ponds.”

No likely significant environmental effects are therefore identified as a result of the draft Ashdon NP.

Population and Human Health:

The NP is focused on reinstating a plan led approach to planning the plan area. The vision and objectives are very much focused on improving wellbeing in the plan area.

No likely significant environmental effects therefore identified.

Soil:

Ashdon has slightly acidic soils.

The built-up areas of Ashdon Village and the Ends are surrounded by good quality agricultural land. Small and medium development proposals on sustainable sites within or adjacent to the Ashdon and Church End development limits are likely to be permitted when considered against the policies in the NPPF.

No likely significant environmental effects therefore identified as a result of the draft Ashdon NP.

Water:

No likely significant environmental effects therefore identified as a result of the draft Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan.

Table 4: Criteria for determining the likely significance of environmental effects: Effects and areas characteristics from the Ashdon NP the

Air and climatic factors:

No likely significant environmental effects are therefore identified as a result of the draft Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan..

Surface and Fluvial Water Flood Risk:

There is a long history of flooding in Ashdon associated with the River Bourn, an ordinary watercourse that flows through the centre of the village. Ashdon is subject to Fluvial Flood Risk as it is located within Flood Zones. Flood Zones 3b, 3a,3aCC and 2 run through the centre of Ashdon. Flood Zones are similar in extent and confined to a narrow floodplain by the topography. Surface water flooding is along the flow paths such as Church Hill and the Radwinter Road that are defined by topography. There are surface water flow routes and areas of ponding within the villages. There are areas of surface and fluvial water flood risk in the plan area. Flood risk will be taken into account in the site assessment process as required by the NPPF and the Local Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan proposes to address the challenge of climate change

No likely significant effects.

Material Assets:

No known impacts resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan.

Cultural Heritage:

The plan area's rich heritage is one of the key elements in the quality of the local environment. The NP has no site allocations but expects that future developments will be mostly on small or medium sites and modest development is anticipated for the life of this NP. Conserving and enhancing the historic heritage is a key element of the NP. Protecting the distinctiveness of Ashdon can be achieved by:

- paying particular attention to views to and from Ashdon Parish settlements and footpaths,
- ensuring that the Development Limits of settlements are respected,
- preserving the distinctiveness of the Ends,
- protecting the rural lanes,

Table 4: Criteria for determining the likely significance of environmental effects: Effects and areas characteristics from the Ashdon NP the

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preserving and enhancing green corridors which lead into the centre of settlements, and • preserving and enhancing the open spaces in the centre of settlements. <p>No likely significant environmental effects subject to determination of planning applications in line with the relevant NP, NPPF and Local Plan policies.</p> <p><u>Landscape:</u></p> <p>Landscape quality and sensitivity is a key consideration in the Ashdon NP. It is expected to be fully taken into account when determining a planning applications. The site allocations will be on small or medium sites and overall number of dwellings is expected to be modest. Protecting landscape quality is a key thrust of the NP as seen in the draft objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The unique hilly landscape and openness of the village with its close connection to the rural landscape will be protected; this includes key views – Any new development will deliver high quality design and be appropriate and sensitive to neighbouring buildings and landscape setting – Any new development in the Parish will be modest in scale and appropriate to meeting village needs.” <p>No likely significant environmental effects subject to determination of planning application I accordance with relevant policies.</p>
the cumulative nature of the effects	
	<p>The development management policies in the draft NP are focused on enhancing wellbeing and the environment. These are anticipated to have a number of minor positive impacts. There may be some negative impacts resulting from some of the extant planning permissions, but these are not expected to be significant when looked at collectively. This is due to the modest level of growth being expected and against a backdrop of modest historic development (approximately 15 dwellings over the past 10 years).</p>
the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	
	<p>No likely significant environmental effects</p>
the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	
	<p>The development proposed through extant planning permissions in the neighbourhood plan is modest (approximately 15 dwellings)</p>
the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: -	

Table 4: Criteria for determining the likely significance of environmental effects: Effects and areas characteristics from the Ashdon NP the

special natural characteristics or cultural heritage

exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values intensive land-use

The plan area is sensitive in terms of historic and landscape value. However, protecting this value is a key thrust of the plan.

the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status

The landscape is recognised locally as of high quality. The Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan: Landscape Appraisal concluded that settlements within Ashdon Parish have limited capacity to accommodate housing development. Due to the area's special qualities, appropriate development is most likely to comprise small scale schemes rather than a single larger development." The effects are not likely to be significant due to the modest level of growth expected.

4. SEA Conclusions

- 4.1 The Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan (NP) has been prepared for town and country planning purposes and sets a framework for future development.
- 4.2 The NP does not include any site allocations. Currently Ashdon Parish has extant planning permissions for 15 dwellings. It is likely the NP will be adopted ahead of the Local Plan. The NP will therefore have an important influence on the location of future development in the plan area.
- 4.3 The plan area is sensitive in terms of heritage assets and landscape sensitivities. These are well documented and evidenced based through the:
 - The Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan: Landscape Appraisal Plan undertaken by Alison Farmer Associates in March 2020
 - Ashdon Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals January 2013 (Uttlesford District Council)
- 4.4 The draft NP includes a community shared vision, eleven objectives and a number of development management type policies which are focused on enhancing well-being in the plan area protecting and enhancing village and rural characteristics and delivering infrastructure improvements. To reflect the environmental sensitivities in the plan area a key thrust of the plan is focused on protecting historic assets and landscape quality. The NP does not site allocations but supports development within and adjacent to development limits and in the countryside in line with Local Plan and NPPF policies.
- 4.5 The context within which this NP is being prepared is important. Whilst the Local Plan is out of date and increasingly so as time passes, the spatial strategy which recognises the role of certain settlements such as Ashdon, remains a cornerstone of the distribution of development throughout the district. In other words, small and medium development proposals on sustainable sites within or adjacent to the Ashdon & Church End development limits are likely to be permitted when considered against the policies in the NPPF.
- 4.6 Should further development proposals be consented in the NP area ahead of the NP being made, it is likely the amount of growth being permitted will be minimal. However, depending on what is consented during the interim period it is also possible that the overall net level of growth being delivered in the plan area 2020 to 2036 will be modest.
- 4.7 The additional impact the Ashdon NP is likely to make in terms of quantity of current extant planning permissions against the current context is therefore very modest. The Ashdon NP will once adopted succeed to reinstate a plan-led process to the plan area.
- 4.8 Subject to the application of the plan's policies this assessment therefore identifies no likely significant effects resulting from this NP.

5. Legislative Background to HRA

- 5.1 The application of Habitats Regulation Assessment to land use plans is a requirement of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations); the UK's transposition of European Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (widely referred as to the Habitats Directive). Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that any plan (or project) which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site (also known as a Natura 2000 site) but would be likely to have a significant effect on such a site, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subject to an 'appropriate assessment' of its implications for the European site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The plan-making body shall agree to the plan only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned.
- 5.2 European sites provide ecological infrastructure for the protection of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats of exceptional importance within the European Union. These sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), designated under European Union Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive). The government also expects authorities to treat Ramsar sites, designated under the Convention of Wetlands of International Importance, UNESCO 1971, as if they are European sites.

6. HRA Screening for the Ashdon NP

- 6.1 This section of the report considers whether there are any European sites which could potentially be affected by the Ashdon NP.

Natura 2000 Sites

- 6.2 Natura 2000 is central to the EU nature and biodiversity policy and forms an EU wide network of nature protection areas. The aim of the network is to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.
- 6.3 The sites are designated under the European Union (EU) Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds) and the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora).
- 6.4 The Birds Directive requires the establishment of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds. Similarly, the Habitats Directive requires Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to be designated for other species, and for habitats. Ramsar sites (Wetlands of International Importance) are also part of the Natura 2000 network. SPAs and SACs comprise Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and all Ramsar sites in England are SSSIs. The Natura Network in England comprises SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites.

European Sites to be considered

- 6.5 As shown on Figure 2 below, there are no European sites which lie within or close to the Ashdon NP area. The closest European sites are the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC which is about **19.6 km** away to the northwest and Devil's Dyke SAC which is about 26.3 km to the northeast.

Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

- 6.6 The Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC is a 66.48 hectares of broad-leaved deciduous woodland. The woodland has been designated a SAC because a colony of barbastelle bats (scientific name is *Barbastella barbastellus*) is associated with the woodland. Barbastella are listed as a protected European species in Annex II of Directive 92/43/EEC.
- 6.7 The formal description of the site (referred to as citation) when the site was designated at SAC in 2005 is copied below:

Site Description: *The site comprises a mixture of ancient coppice woodland (Eversden Wood) and high forest woods likely to be of more recent origin (Wimpole Woods). A colony of barbastelle bats *Barbastella barbastellus* is associated with the trees in Wimpole Woods. These trees are used as a summer maternity roost where the female bats gather to give birth and rear their young. Most of the roost sites are within tree crevices. The bats also use the site as a foraging area. Some of the woodland is also used as a flight path when bats forage outside the site.*

Qualifying species: *The site is designated under article 4(4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following species listed in Annex I*

- *Barbastelle bat *Barbastella barbastellus**

Source: English Nature, EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Eversden and Wimpole Woods
2005

6.8 The Conservation Objectives for the European site is:

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- *The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species*
- *The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species*
- *The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely*
- *The populations of qualifying species, and,*
- *The distribution of qualifying species within the site.*

Source: Natural England European Site Conservation Objectives for Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation Site code: UK0030331

6.9 In 2018, Natural England issued supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features at Eversden and Wimpole Woods (see: European Site Conservation Objectives: supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Site code: UK0030331). This includes a set of nine targets specifically written for this site. Two of these targets refer to the need for management measures outside the actual site. These are:

- *Maintain the management measures (either within and/or outside the site boundary as appropriate) which are necessary to maintain the structure, functions and supporting processes associated with Barbastelle and/or its supporting habitats.*
- *Maintain core areas of feeding habitat outside of the SAC boundary that are critical to Barbastelle bats during their breeding period*

6.10 There is however no indication given in the supplementary advice that this has implications for sites as far away as 26.3km. Furthermore, the advice indicates that some of the bats have been recorded to travel as far as 11km to forage at night and states elsewhere that barbastelle bats may forage up to 5-7kms from their maternity roosts.

6.11 To conclude, the Ashdon NP area is considered to be outside the zone of influence for the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC and there is no need to consider this further as far as the HRA process is concerned.

Devil's Dyke SAC

6.12 The Devil's Dyke Special Area of Conservation is an 11km linear earthen barrier in east Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. It has been designated as a SAC due to the habitat of semi-natural habitat of dry grassland which is listed in Annex 1 to the European Directive (92/43/EEC).

6.13 The formal description of the site (referred to as citation) when the site was designated in 2005 as a SAC is copied below:

Site description: *The Devil's Dyke holds an extensive area of species-rich chalk grassland of a type characteristic to chalklands of south, central and eastern England. The Dyke is an ancient linear earthwork comprising a deep ditch and high bank. It was originally colonised by plants from adjacent grassland (much of which is now arable) and remains as one of the few areas still supporting these vegetation communities. The species-rich grassland is dominated by upright brome *Bromopsis erecta* and a range of typical chalk herbs are present including salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris* and rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*. Some uncommon plants such as purple milk-vetch *Astragalus danicus*, bastard toadflax *Thesium humifusum* and the pasque flower *Pulsatilla vulgaris* are also present. It is the only known UK semi-natural dry grassland site for lizard orchid *Himantoglossum hircinum*.*

Qualifying habitats: *The site is designated under article 4(4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:*

- *Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (FestucoBrometalia) (important orchid sites). (Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone, including important orchid sites).*

Source: English Nature EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

6.14 The Conservation Objectives for the European site is:

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- *The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats*
- *The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and*
- *The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely*

Source: Natural England 2018, European Site Conservation Objectives for Devil's Dyke Special Area of Conservation Site Code: UK0030037

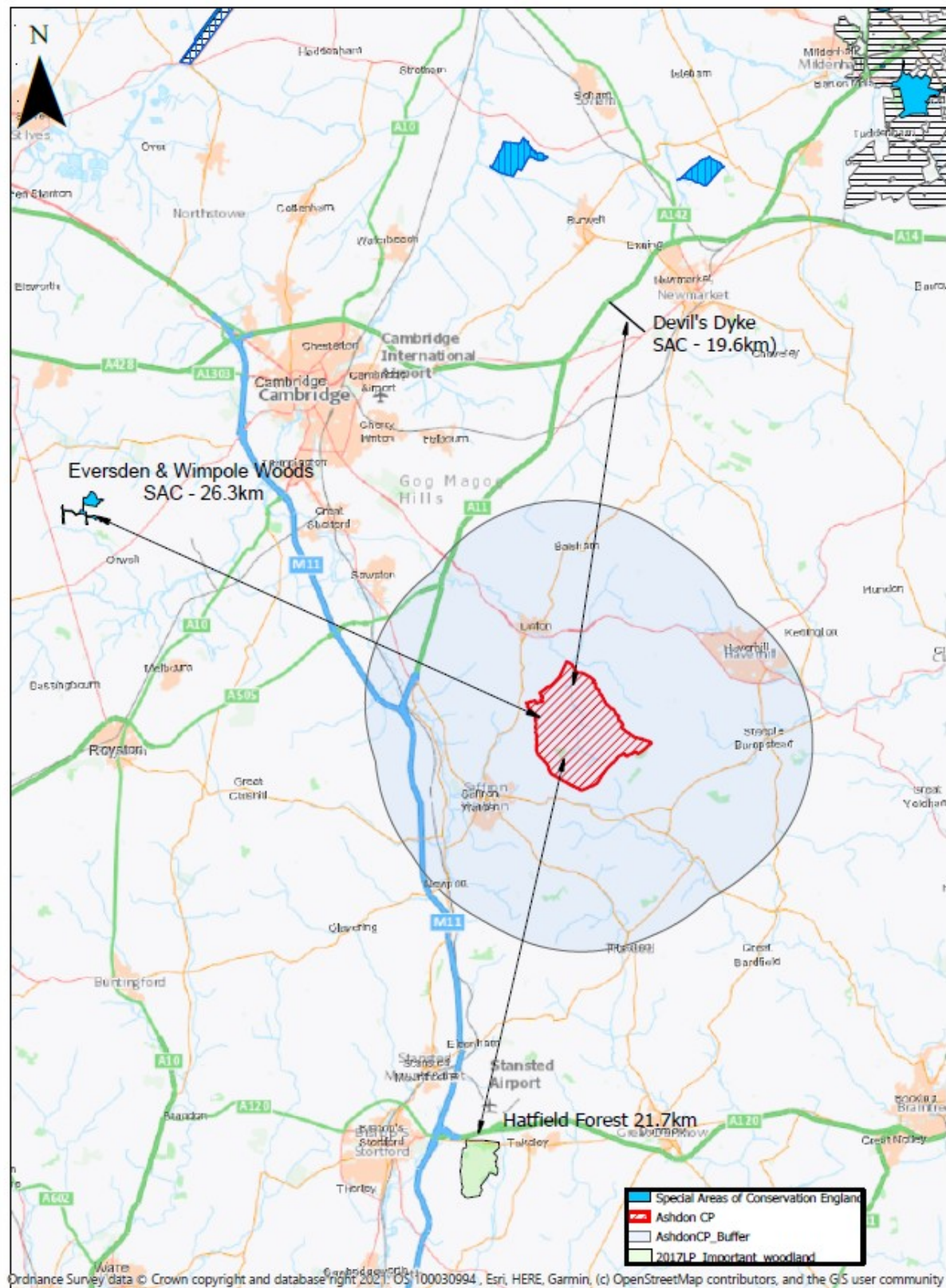
6.17 In 2019, Natural England published supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features (see Natural England 2019: European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features Devil's Dyke Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Site Code: UK0030037). This specifies a further 13 site specific targets, three of which refer to the need to address areas outside the extent of the SAC as follows.

- *Maintain the extent, quality and spatial configuration of land or habitat surrounding or adjacent to the site which is known to support the feature*
- *Maintain the overall extent, quality and function of any supporting features within the local landscape which provide a critical functional connection with the site*
- *Maintain the management measures (either within and/or outside the site boundary as appropriate) which are necessary to maintain the structure, functions and supporting processes associated with the feature.*

6.18 However, there is no evidence or suggestion provided in the supplementary advice that this would affect land as far as 19.6 km away.

- 6.19 To conclude, the Ashdon NP area is considered to be outside the zone of influence for the Devil's Dyke SAC and there is no need to consider this further as far as the HRA process is concerned.

Figure 2: Ashdon NP Showing European Sites and 8km Buffer Zone



7. SEA and HRA Conclusions

7.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- 7.1.1 The Ashdown Neighbourhood Plan (NP) has been prepared for town and country planning purposes and sets a framework for future development.
- 7.1.2 The NP does not include site allocations and will not direct development to specific locations. It is likely the NP will be adopted ahead of the Local Plan. The NP Policies will therefore have an important influence on the location of new development in the plan area.
- 7.1.3 The impact the Ashdon NP is likely to make is in terms of the quantity of future development against the current context is very modest. The Local Plan is currently out of date. This means, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In this regard, the 2005 Local Plan spatial strategy which recognises the role of certain settlements such as Ashdon, remains a cornerstone of the distribution of development throughout the district. The implications of this, is that small and medium development proposals on sustainable sites within or adjacent to the Development Limits are likely to be permitted when considered against the policies in the NPPF. The Ashdon NP will once adopted reinstate a plan-led process to the plan area.
- 7.1.4 Subject to the implementation of the NP policies and the modest expected development this assessment identifies no likely significant effects resulting from this NP. Given that the NP policies are informed by up-to-date evidence on cultural and landscape assets.
- 7.1.5 This is a preliminary view reached prior to consulting the statutory consultees: Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency

7.2 HRA Screening

- 7.2.1 The Neighbourhood Plan HRA Screening Assessment concludes that there are no European sites that need to be assessed for likely significant effects as a result of the Ashdon NP.
- 7.2.2 Subject to Natural England's review, this HRA screening report indicates that the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan is not predicted to have likely significant effects on any European site, either in isolation or in combination with other plans and projects.
- 7.2.3 This is a preliminary view reached prior to consulting the statutory consultee: Natural England.

APPENDIX 2

CONSULTATION RESPONSES FROM

STATUTORY BODIES

HISTORIC ENGLAND RESPONSE

From: [James, Edward](#)
To: [Demetria Macdonald](#)
Cc: [Harper, Sally](#)
Subject: [External] RE: Consultation: Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan Screening Opinion for SEA/HRA
Date: 25 November 2021 18:28:30
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Dear Demetria,

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 Ashdon 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,

HISTORIC ENGLAND RESPONSE contd.

Edward

Edward James
Historic Places Adviser - East of England
Historic England

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Are you an organisation that has used or considered using our Enhanced Advisory Services (EAS)?

Click the following link: [SmartSurvey](#) to take part in a short 10 minute review of our services if you'd like to have your say.

We'd welcome your views.



Historic England

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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NATURAL ENGLAND RESPONSE

Date: 29 November 2021
Our ref: 375682
Your ref: Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan

Demetria Macdonald
Planning Policy Officer
Uttlesford District Council
dmacdonald@uttlesford.gov.uk

BY EMAIL ONLY



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T 0300 060 3900

Dear Demetria Macdonald

Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan Screening Opinion for SEA/HRA

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 24 November 2021 which was received by Natural England on 24 November 2021

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.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

Natural England agrees with the report's conclusions that the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European Site, either alone or in combination and therefore no further assessment work would be required.

For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Jacqui Salt
Consultations Team

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY RESPONSE

The Environment Agency did not respond to the initial request and subsequent several reminders. Uttlesford District Council sent the first consultation documents on 24 November 2021.

Subsequent reminders requesting the Environment Agency's opinion on Uttlesford District Council's SEA/HRA Screening Opinion were sent on the following dates, 9 December 2021, 23 December 2021 and 5 January 2022.

Since the Environment Agency has not responded to the Council's request it is assumed that the Agency concurs with Uttlesford District Council's conclusion that:

- Subject to the implementation of the NP policies and the modest expected development this assessment identifies no likely significant effects resulting from this NP; and
- The Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan is not predicted to have likely significant effects on any European site, either in isolation or in combination with other plans and projects.