

# Strategic Environmental Assessment

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Neighbourhood Plan  
2016-2026



**Clerk to Fairfield Parish Council**

Community Hall  
Kipling Crescent  
Fairfield  
Beds

SG5 4GY

**Your ref:**

**Our ref:** Fairfield/SEA/16

**Date:** 04/05/2016

**Dear Ms Henshaw**

**SEA Screening Determination of Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan**

In accordance with Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations 2004, the Central Bedfordshire Council, as the responsible authority, has determined on **4<sup>th</sup> May 2016** that a **strategic environmental assessment (SEA)** of the emerging Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan **is not required** as it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

As part of this SEA screening, Habitat Regulations screening was undertaken because plans that are likely to have significant impact on European Sites require a Strategic Environmental Assessment in addition to an Appropriate Assessment (Habitat Regulation Assessment). This screening concluded that the Fairfield NP is unlikely to have significant impact on European sites and therefore **Fairfield NP does not require a full HRA to be undertaken.**

In making this determination, the Council has had regard to Schedule 1 of the Regulations and has carried out consultation with the statutory consultation bodies. An assessment against Schedule 1 of the Regulations and comments made by the consultation bodies are set out in the attached SEA Screening Determination Statement.

The above determination was made based on information provided by the Fairfield Parish Council on the content of the emerging Plan, in this instance: initial draft Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan submitted to the Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2016.

Should the content of the Final Submission Plan be revised and/or there is a material change in the environmental characteristics in the locality (e.g. any new

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or any changes to nature conservation designations), then the screening process will have to be reviewed and determination reconsidered to take account of the changes.

This may result in changes to the above determination. It is Fairfield Parish Council responsibility to inform Central Bedfordshire Council about any changes before the final submission of their Neighbourhood Plan.

A copy of the statement will be available in due course for inspection at the Council website at <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk>. It will also be available on request at: Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5TQ.

Yours sincerely

**Monika Marczevska**  
Sustainable Growth Officer

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CC:

Environment Agency

Historic England

Natural England

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**Strategic Environmental Assessment  
Screening Determination Statement  
for  
Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan**

May 2016

**Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report  
for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan**

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# **Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan**

## **Executive summary**

This statement sets out the reasons for the Council's determination that the Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan Proposal is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects and therefore does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. In addition this statement determines that the Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan Proposal 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 intended to support Fairfield Parish Council in demonstrating that the Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan proposal 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 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016. Within 28 days of this determination, the Council will publish a statement, setting out its decision. Central Bedfordshire Council will publicise this determination statement in accordance with its regulatory requirements. A copy of the statement will be available for inspection at the Council website at <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/planning/policy/neighbourhood-planning/consultations.aspx>. It will also be available on request at: Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5TQ.

If you require any further information, then please contact Monika Marczevska by email to [monika.marczewska@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:monika.marczewska@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk).



# **Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Fairfield Parish Council has requested a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening opinion of its Neighbourhood Plan (NP). Central Bedfordshire Council is legally required to determine whether the Fairfield NP will require SEA.
- 1.2 This document is a final Screening Determination Statement which is being issued to Fairfield Parish Council and the statutory consultation bodies.
- 1.3 The Council undertook a screening exercise to determine whether or not the content of the Fairfield 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. These require an SEA to be undertaken for:
- i. Plans which are prepared for town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive; or
  - ii. Plans which have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive, Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.
- 1.4 Following the screening process the Council determined that the Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to result in significant effect on the environment. The Council has consulted the findings with the statutory consultation bodies: Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency.
- 1.5 Section 2 of this report outlines the regulations that set the need for this screening exercise. Process and criteria of the assessment are set out in Section 3.
- 1.6 A brief summary of the Fairfield NP is provided in Section 4.
- 1.7 The screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the NP is set out in Section 5 and the justification for the determination that the Fairfield NP does not require a full SEA with further recommendations is provided in Section 6.

# **Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan**

## **2. Legislative Background**

- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Detailed Guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM 2005)
- 2.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is prepared for spatial plans. It is considered best practice to incorporate requirements of the SEA Directive into an SA.
- 2.3 The Government has stated that SAs are not needed for NP's, but it must be demonstrated how the NP contributes to achievement of sustainable development in the area.
- 2.4 The Localism Act 2011 requires NP's to not breach, and be otherwise compatible with EU and Human Rights obligations. Ambitious and complex NP's may trigger the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive and Habitat Directive, and may need to undertake SEA and Appropriate Assessment depending on the scale and the impact of the plan proposals.
- 2.5 Schedule 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 refers to the Habitat Directive. The Directive requires that any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on European sites must be subject to an appropriate assessment. Paragraphs 2-5 of Schedule 2 amend the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 so that its provisions apply to Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs) and NPs. The Regulations state that NPs are not likely to have significant effect on a site designated at European level for its biodiversity, however, this needs to be ascertained through Habitat Regulations Assessment's screening process.
- 2.6 This report focuses on screening for both HRA and SEA and the criteria for establishing whether a full assessment is needed.

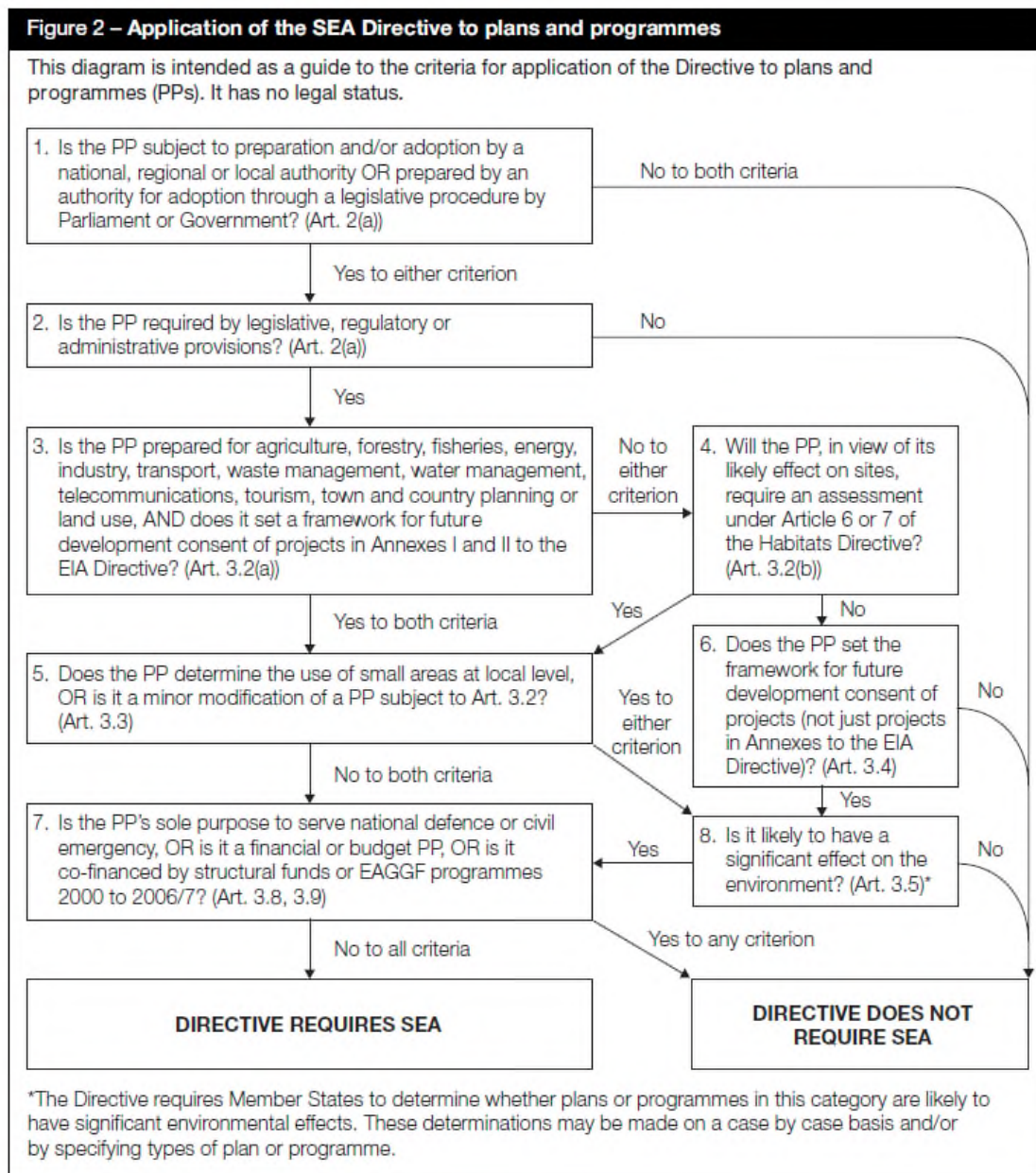


# Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan

## 3. Screening assessment process

3.1 The screening opinion assessment is undertaken in two parts: the first part will assess whether the plan falls into a category of plans requiring SEA; and the second part of the assessment will consider whether the NP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, using criteria drawn from Schedule 1 of the EU SEA Directive and the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

3.2 The government guidance 'A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive sets out the following approach to be taken in determining whether SEA is required, see flowchart below.



## **Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan**

3.4 Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below:

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

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

3.5 The three statutory consultation bodies (English Heritage, Environment Agency and Natural England) were consulted to determine whether they agree with the findings and conclusions of the screening opinion, in establishing whether the Fairfield NP requires SEA and whether it may have a significant environmental effect.

3.6 This document is a final Screening Determination Statement which is being issued to Fairfield Parish Council and the statutory consultation bodies. This determination has been made on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016. Within 28 days of this determination, the Council will publish a statement, setting out its decision.

## **Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan**

### **4. Summary of Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan**

4.1 Fairfield NP covers administrative boundaries of Fairfield Parish Council. The Plan does not address land use and is not looking to allocate sites for housing or employment.

4.2 Fairfield is a rural parish in the South East corner of Central Bedfordshire with one settlement. This settlement comprises the restoration and conversion of the former Fairfield Hospital buildings and a new housing development that was developed between 2004 and 2012 to enable the restoration of the Hospital buildings. It has a unique character in that all of the design of the new development has been inspired by the features and character of the existing buildings. In 2011 the population of Fairfield Parish was 2680 and there were 1140 dwellings.

4.3 The purpose of the Fairfield NP is to ensure that:

- New development is sympathetic to the unique character of Fairfield;
- Extensions and infill development retain the character of the existing dwellings;
- The existing green spaces are maintained and retained as such into the future;
- To enhance the Green Infrastructure in line with the priorities identified by the community.

4.4 The Plan contains three policies to guide development in the Parish of Fairfield. These policies focus on the following issues:

- Design and character of the development within the parish;
- Environment and improvements to Green Infrastructure;
- Designation of Local Green Spaces.

4.5 Policy 1: Design and character: asks all new development and all extensions and infill developments to be in keeping with Fairfield Design Statement produced alongside the Plan.

4.6 Policy 2: Improving Green Infrastructure: specifies that any development should seek to protect and enhance existing green infrastructure assets and deliver green infrastructure enhancement in line with the priorities identified in the Green Infrastructure Plan.

4.7 Policy 3: Designating Local Green Spaces; identifies five sites for designation; four existing green spaces and one new site to the south of Fairfield. Two of existing sites: East Orchard and West Orchard sites are currently designated as County Wildlife Sites. The old hospital cemetery is an area of historical significance recorded in the Historic Environment Record database. The

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fourth area is located in the heart of Fairfield and provides recreational facilities to local community. The proposed new site is expected to create community greenspace and provide allotments, football pitch, skate park, trim-trail and barbecue area. This site is currently in an agricultural use.

# Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan

## 5 Assessment

5.1 First part of the assessment is to establish the need for the SEA. The table below shows the assessment determining whether Fairfield NP falls into a category of plans requiring SEA.

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
1. Is the NP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	<b>Y</b>	The preparation and adoption of the NP is allowed under Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Neighbourhood Plan will be prepared by Fairfield Parish Council (as the 'relevant body') and will be 'made' by the Central Bedfordshire Council as the local authority. The preparation of NPs is subject to the following regulations: The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012.  <b>GO TO STAGE 2</b>
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	<b>Y</b>	Whilst the NP 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 Local Plan for the unitary area. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have a significant effect on environment and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive.  <b>GO TO STAGE 3</b>
3. Is the NP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set framework for future development consent of	<b>Y&amp;N</b>	The NP is being prepared for town and country planning and land use as it proposes to designate sites as Local Green Spaces, but it does <b>not</b> set a framework for future development consent for projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive.

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Stage	Y/N	Reasons
projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art. 3.2(b))		<b>GO TO STAGE 4</b>
4. Will the NP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	<b>N</b>	<p>The NP does not propose to allocate new sites for urban development. The only site within Fairfield Parish which is likely to be developed within Plan's lifetime is land at the former Pig Development Unit, Hitchin Road, Stotfold. This site was allocated in the Central Bedfordshire North Site Allocation Plan DPD (2011). The development will be delivered in compliance with Central Bedfordshire North Core Strategy and Development Management DPD policies (2009). The Habitat Regulations screening undertaken for the Site Allocations DPD found that there will be no significant effects on the Natura sites considered, either alone or in-combination arising from developing allocated sites and therefore no further Appropriate Assessment was considered necessary.</p> <p align="right"><b>GO TO STAGE 6</b></p>
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)		<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>
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)	<b>Y</b>	<p>The NP will set the framework for future development of projects not included in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive.</p> <p align="right"><b>GO TO STAGE 6</b></p>
7. Is the NP's sole purpose to serve national defence or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art. 3.8 & Art. 3.9)		<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>



## Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
8. Is the NP likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	<b>N</b>	See assessment 2: Likely significant effects on the environment.  <b>DIRECTIVE DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA</b>

5.2 The next step in the screening assessment is to establish whether the Fairfield NP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The criteria for determining the likely significance of effects are drawn from the Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC.

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
1a The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The NP will contribute to the framework for considering future development consents of projects: it makes Local Green Space designations and sets design policy to protect and enhance the character of Fairfield. However, it will sit within wider framework of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD (2009), the Site Allocation DPD (2011), therefore the projects for which this Neighbourhood Plan helps to set a framework are localised in nature and have limited resource implications.	<b>N</b>
1b The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The NP will be in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework. The policies within the NP are in general conformity with the Council's strategic policies and complement the Core Strategy, Development Management policies. The NP is unlikely to significantly influence other plans and programmes, but may have a limited degree of influence over the formation of future strategic policies of Central Bedfordshire new Development Plan.	<b>N</b>

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Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
1c The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	The NP makes designations for Local Green Spaces to protect and enhance natural environment. The Plan includes design policy to protect the character and historic setting of Fairfield. All potential development will need to comply with Central Bedfordshire Council planning documents policies and be in conformity with NPPF. Given the scope of the NP, it is considered that the Plan integrates environmental considerations and promotes sustainable development.	<b>N</b>
1d Environmental problems relevant to the plan.	The NP includes policies on protection and enhancement of natural environment, including two County Wildlife Sites and protection of the historic character and listed buildings. The Plan proposes one Local Green Space designation which will result in change of land use from agricultural to recreational, but effects arising from that are likely to be localised in nature and have limited resource implications. The Plan is not allocating sites for residential or commercial development, and therefore the Plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects. A small proportion of the parish is within area at risk from a 1% chance flood from rivers and partly covers the site of the former Pig Development Unit. This site has been allocated through the Central Bedfordshire Site Allocation Document (2011) and effects arising from that allocation have already been considered by the accompanying SA/SEA.	<b>N</b>
1e The relevance of the plan or programme for	The NP sits within the wider framework of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), the Core	<b>N</b>

## Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection or renewable energy generation)	Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD (2009), the Site Allocation DPD (2011), and is not directly relevant to the implementation of European legislation.	
2a Probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	The NP is likely to have short-term effects resulting from activity associated with the development of agricultural land to south of Fairfield for local community's recreational use. There may also be longer-term effects relevant to changes in land use but they are likely to be localised in their nature and not significantly negative for environmental factors.	<b>N</b>
2b The cumulative nature of the effects	Likely cumulative effects of the NP with other Plans in the hierarchy are likely to be positive in their nature; particularly for environmental factors such as biodiversity, human health and archaeological and historical material assets of Fairfield as the Plan proposes protection and enhancement of the current County Wildlife Sites, other local green spaces and the historical character of the settlement. However given the localised nature of the Plan, the effects are unlikely to be significant.	<b>N</b>
2c The trans boundary nature of the effects	Given the localised nature of the Neighbourhood Plan there are not expected to be any significant trans-boundary effects.	<b>N</b>
2d The risk to human health or environment (e.g. due to	The NP is unlikely to pose significant risks to human health or the environment. Indeed, the Plan is likely to improve human health and	<b>N</b>

## Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
accidents)	the environment through protection local green spaces.	
2e The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	There are no Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) located within or adjacent to the Plan area.	<b>N</b>
2f The magnitude spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The Fairfield NP covers the area of Fairfield Parish. As the Plan is not looking to allocate housing or employment sites, the plan is likely to affect a population of approximately 3,000 people over the life of the Plan.	<b>N</b>
2g The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</li> <li>• Exceeded environmental quality standards</li> <li>• Intensive land use</li> </ul>	<p>Within the Parish there are a number of historic buildings, some listed and other historic records. In terms of natural environment, there two CWS within the parish and one in close proximity. The Plan is looking to protect and enhanced the environmental and historic assets, although the effects of the Plan are unlikely to be beyond the effects assessed through the SA/SEA undertaken for the Central Bedfordshire North Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD (2009), the Site Allocation DPD (2011).</p> <p>The NP is not expected to exceed environmental quality standards or limit values.</p> <p>The NP does not propose development likely to result in intensive land use.</p>	<b>N</b>

## Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan

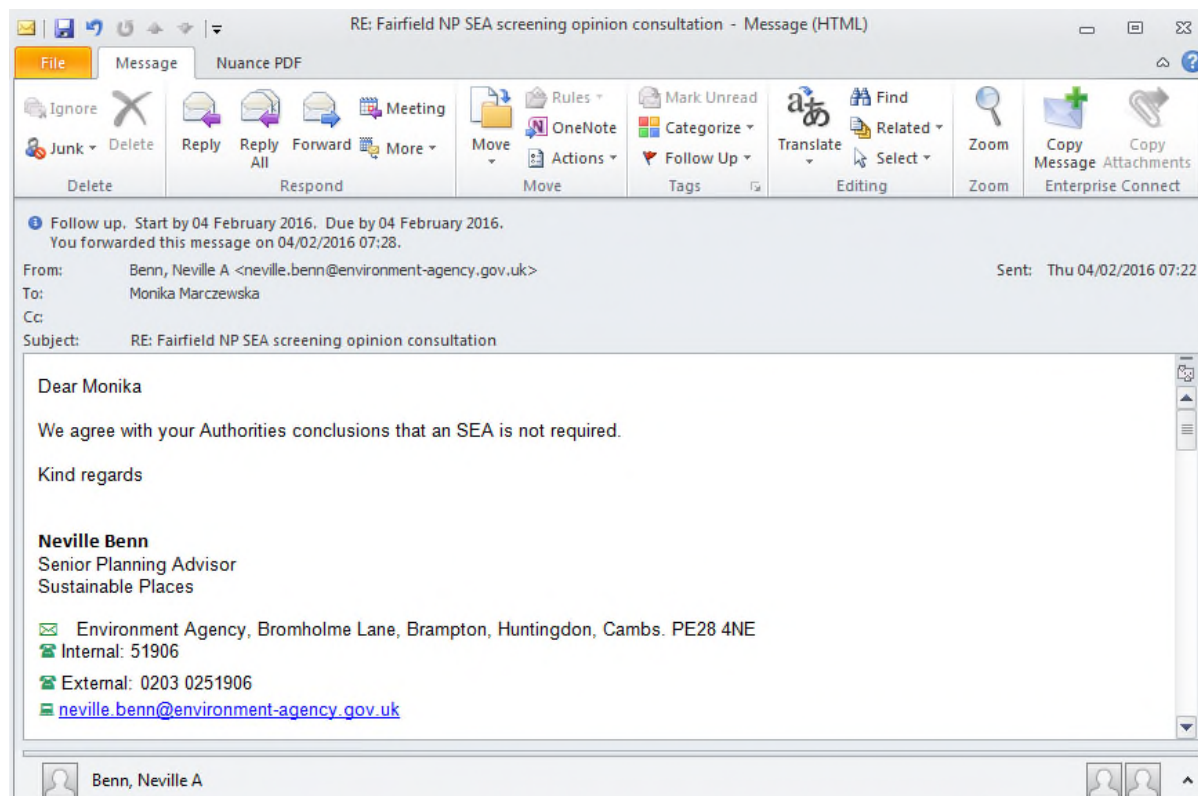
### 6 Screening and Consultation Outcome

- 6.1 The screening assessment undertaken in Section 5 concludes that, it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Fairfield NP that were not covered in the SA of the Central Bedfordshire North Core Strategy and Development Management Documents (2009); and Site Allocation Document (2011). As such, Fairfield NP does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.
- 6.2 The Council consulted on its findings with three statutory consultation bodies: the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England. The consultation period was 5 weeks; from 3<sup>rd</sup> February to 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016. The consultation e-mail stated that if response is not received it is assumed that the statutory consultee agrees with the Council findings and conclusions.
- 6.3 The Council received two responses from the Environment Agency and Natural England that agreed with the Council findings that Fairfield NP does not require a full SEA to be undertaken. Historic England chose not to respond to this consultation. The received consultation responses can be found in appendix 1.
- 6.4 Following the screening process and consultation the Councils determines that **Fairfield NP does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.**
- 6.5 As part of this SEA screening, Habitat Regulations screening was undertaken because plans that are likely to have significant impact on European Sites require a Strategic Environmental Assessment in addition to an Appropriate Assessment (Habitat Regulation Assessment). This screening concluded that the Fairfield NP is unlikely to have significant impact on European sites and therefore **Fairfield NP does not require a full HRA to be undertaken.**
- 6.6 Although SEA is not required, Fairfield Parish Council may wish to consider voluntarily undertaking a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) that covers all three aspects of sustainable development: environmental, social and economic. The advantage of undertaking a SA is that it can assess the impact of the NP on environmental, social and economic factors and therefore demonstrate to an examiner how sustainable development has been considered in the preparation of the Plan and that the Plan as prepared is the most sustainable compared with any reasonable alternatives.

# Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan

## Appendix: Consultation Responses

The Environment Agency's response by e-mail on Thursday 04/02/2016





# Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> March 2016

Our ref: 177982



Monika Marczevska

Sustainable Growth Officer

Central Bedfordshire Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

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T 0300 060 3900

Dear Monika

## Screening consultation: Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2016.

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.

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests are concerned (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.

## Strategic Environmental Assessment

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans in light of the SEA Directive is contained within the National Planning Practice Guidance<sup>1</sup>. 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/allocations contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

## Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Fairfield Neighbourhood Plan

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)

Natural England is in agreement with the conclusion of the screening report in relation to HRA as the location and scale of development included within the plan would not represent a likely significant effect to any European Site.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Ross Holdgate on 0300 060 4657. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

Yours sincerely

Ross Holdgate

Essex, Herts, Beds, Cambs and Northants Area Team

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For any further information please email  
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 **Fairfield**  
Parish Council

