



Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination Statement

**Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill Neighbourhood Plan
2019 – 2035**

February 2019

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Executive Summary

This statement sets out the reasons for the Council's determination that the Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill 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 Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill 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 intended to support Flitton & Greenfield and Pulloxhill Parish Councils in demonstrating that the Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill 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 14th January 2019. 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 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 Tom Price by email at tom.price@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

1. Introduction

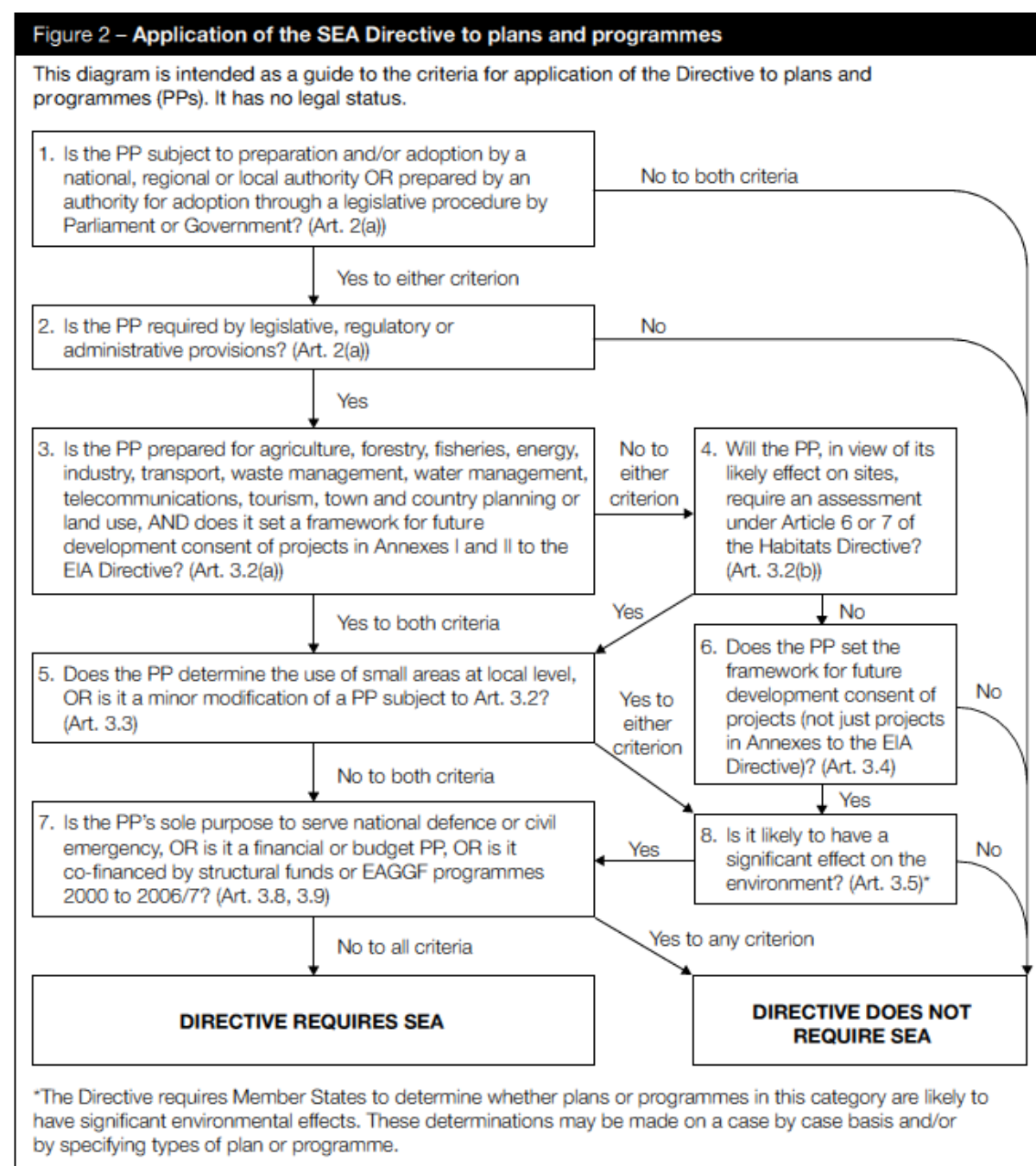
- 1.1 Flitton & Greenfield Parish Council and Pulloxhill Parish Council have requested a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening opinion of their joint Neighbourhood Plan (NP). Central Bedfordshire Council is legally required to determine whether the Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill NP will require SEA.
- 1.2 This document is a final Screening Determination Statement which is being issued to Flitton & Greenfield and Pulloxhill Parish Councils and the statutory bodies.
- 1.3 The Council undertook a screening exercise to determine whether or not the content of the Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill 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:
 - 1.3.1 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
 - 1.3.2 Plans which have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive.
- 1.4 Following the screening process, the Council determined that the Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill NP is unlikely to result in significant effects on the environment. The Council 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 summary of the Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill NP is provided in Section 4.
- 1.7 The screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the NP is set out in Sections 5 & 6 and the justification for the determination that the Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill NP does not require a full SEA with further recommendations is provided in Section 7.

2. Legislative Background

- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessment legislation is the European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans & 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 & 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 NPs, but it must be demonstrated how the NP contributes to achievement of sustainable development in the area.
- 2.4 The Localism Act 2011 requires NPs to not breach and be otherwise compatible with EU and Human Rights obligations. Ambitious and complex NPs 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 effects 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.

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.



3.3 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 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 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

4. Summary of Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.1 Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill NP covers the administrative boundaries of Flitton & Greenfield Parish Council and Pulloxhill Parish Council. Flitton & Greenfield and Pulloxhill are small villages in Central Bedfordshire to the east of Flitwick, approximately nine miles south of Bedford and eight miles north of Luton. The two parishes are located near the A6 and the A507 and Flitton & Greenfield includes the hamlet of Wardhedges. Both parishes have a rich history, with medieval cores, several listed buildings and two Conservation Areas. The general landscape is characterised as farmland and woodland with rolling views across the countryside, the area is also a part of the Greensand Ridge.
- 4.2 Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill draft NP covers a range of land use and environmental issues that relate to the Parishes. These are addressed through a number of policies to guide development in the Parishes. The policies cover the following areas:
- Rural Character
 - New Development
 - Local Distinctiveness
 - Heritage
 - Design
 - Housing
 - Community Facilities
 - Recreation & Open Space
 - Traffic & Transport
 - Local Employment & Business
- 4.3 Rural Character policies aim to: protect and enhance the existing historic and natural landscape and the local character of the parishes; ensure any development proposals respect these features and local biodiversity; are appropriately designed and managed; incorporate suitable species-related measures and look to enhance sites and networks.
- 4.4 New Development policies aim to: direct development towards infill sites or sites inside the Settlement Envelope where there is no adverse impact on existing provision; support back-land development unless there is a harmful impact on amenity and support development adjacent to the Settlement Envelope if there is no impact on the proposed Important Countryside Gaps; if there is no adverse impact on the amenity of neighbours and if provision is made for appropriate boundary treatment to retain the area's rural character.
- 4.5 Local Distinctiveness policies aim to: retain existing and encourage new locally distinctive features through the preservation of views of particular importance; resist the loss, where possible, of hedgerows and structures made from local sandstone and ensure the provision of any new boundary treatments with native hedgerow species or sandstone walls.

- 4.6 Heritage policies aim to: protect heritage assets and their setting from development through high-quality design with locally typical details, ensuring that rural character is retained with development of an appropriate scale and mass. Non-designated heritage assets should also be respected and development to enhance such features will be encouraged. Archaeological sites should also be protected and enhanced, considering the potential impact of development through a suitable mitigation strategy.
- 4.7 Design policies aim to: support proposals for good quality new development where it relates well to the existing pattern of development; is of an appropriate scale and density; is no more than two storeys in height; incorporates materials appropriate to its context; is well integrated with its surroundings; enhances access routes; is designed with a locally inspired or distinctive character; takes advantage of the local topography, natural features and viewpoints; integrates car parking within landscaping and provides appropriate infrastructure.
- 4.8 Housing policies aim to: ensure a varied mix of house types and sizes in new developments and support Rural Exception Schemes subject to suitable sites.
- 4.9 Community Facilities policies aim to: protect community facilities from the impact of development proposals; encourage new community facilities and support the extension or re-development of buildings where it improves the viability of a community facility and is designed accordingly to respect the existing heritage, character and amenity.
- 4.10 Recreation & Open Space policies aim to: protect existing open spaces and recreation facilities from development; support proposals that reduce the quality or quantity of these facilities if facilities are re-provided to a better quality or quantity in an appropriate location and ensure new housing development provides on-site open space but off-site contributions to improve existing facilities will be preferred. Local Green Spaces will also be designated.
- 4.11 Traffic & Transport policies aim to: ensure development proposals that cause a significant amount of movement or impact a known traffic hazard are supported by realistic measures to maintain highway safety, including the consideration of off-site measures where required. Proposals for new road infrastructure should also be designed to complement the rural character of the village and reflect local heritage. New development proposals must make provision to reduce traffic speeds and volumes; improve the provision and connectivity of pavements; increase access for pedestrians and cyclists and provide adequate on-site parking to meet current and future needs.

- 4.12 Local Employment & Business policies aim to: encourage the development of new small businesses and the expansion or diversification of existing businesses, provided that there would be no significant increase in large vehicles; it can be demonstrated there would be no adverse impact from the development; it would have an acceptable impact on the character and scale of the villages and their landscape and where possible, re-use redundant historic buildings. Proposals for extensions or part change of use of dwellings to enable flexible or home working within the Settlement Envelope would be supported, subject to appropriate parking and impact on amenity. Effective broadband services will also be encouraged as part of these developments.

5. Assessment (Part 1)

5.1 The first part of the assessment is to establish the need for the SEA. The table below shows the assessment determining whether the Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill 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)]	Y	The preparation and adoption of the NP is allowed under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Neighbourhood Plan will be prepared by Flitton & Greenfield Parish Council and Pulloxhill 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 GO TO STAGE 2
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? [Art. 2(a)]	Y	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 GO TO STAGE 3
3. Is the NP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? [Art. 3.2(b)]	Y	The NP is being prepared for town and country planning and land use. The plan supports small-scale development within the settlement envelopes of Flitton & Greenfield and Pulloxhill, but does not allocate any sites and does not set a framework for future development consent for projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive GO TO STAGE 4
4. Will the NP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? [Art. 3.2 (b)]	N	The plan supports small-scale Rural Exception Schemes (up to 11 dwellings) within the two parishes but does not allocate any sites. There are no Natura 2000 sites within close proximity of the parish boundaries, the closest is Chiltern Beechwoods, 20km away. Annex I of this report looked at the effects on these sites and concluded that there is no need for Appropriate Assessment GO TO STAGE 5

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report
for Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill Neighbourhood Plan

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
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]	N/A	NOT APPLICABLE
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]	Y	The NP will set the framework for future development of projects not included in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive GO TO STAGE 8
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 & 3.9]	N/A	NOT APPLICABLE
8. Is the NP likely to have a significant effect on the environment? [Art. 3.5]	N	See Assessment Part 2: Likely significant effects on the environment DIRECTIVE DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA

6. Assessment (Part 2)

- 6.1 The next step in the screening assessment is to establish whether the Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill NP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The criteria for determining the likely significance of effects are drawn from Annex II of the 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 sets out policies to guide future development, but it does not allocate sites for development. The Plan and its policies sit within a wider framework of the NPPF (2018), the Core Strategy (2009) and the emerging CBC Local Plan (2018). The Plan's policies must be compliant with policies within the above documents. This NP sets a framework for development that is localised in nature and has limited resource implications	N
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 NPPF. The policies within the NP are in general conformity with the Council's strategic policies and complement the adopted and emerging Local Plan's policies. The NP is unlikely to significantly influence other plans and programmes	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 Plan includes design policies to protect the character, rural and historic setting of Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill, protect and enhance local wildlife, biodiversity and green infrastructure, and ensure that development takes account of sustainability, the landscape and natural features. All potential development will need to comply with Central Bedfordshire Council planning 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	N
1d. Environmental problems relevant to the plan	The NP includes policies on the protection and enhancement of the natural environment; protection of the historic character; promotion of sustainable transport and the provision of community facilities. The Plan is not allocating sites for residential or commercial development, and therefore the Plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects	N

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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
1e. The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection or renewable energy generation)	The NP sits within the wider framework of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018), the Core Strategy (2009) and the emerging CBC Local Plan (2018), and is not directly relevant to the implementation of European legislation	N
2a. Probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	The NP is likely to have short-term effects resulting from activity associated with improvements to local infrastructure, but they are likely to be localised in their nature and not significantly negative for environmental factors	N
2b. The cumulative nature of the effects	The impacts of the NP are likely to be very localised and unlikely to contribute significantly to impacts of other Plans in the hierarchy	N
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	N
2d. The risk to human health or environment (e.g. due to accidents)	The NP is unlikely to pose significant risks to human health or the environment	N
2e. The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status	Straddling the periphery of the two parish boundaries is the Greensand Ridge Improvement Area and just south is the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Plan recognises the special landscape value and settlement identity of the area and is looking to protect them	N
2f. The magnitude spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The NP covers the areas of Flitton & Greenfield and Pulloxhill Parishes and it is unlikely to have impacts beyond its boundaries	N
2g. The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage • Exceeded environmental quality standards • Intensive land use 	<p>Within the Parish there are several natural and cultural heritage designations and the NP policies are looking to protect and enhanced them. However, impacts of the Plan are unlikely to have significant effects</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>	N

7. Screening Outcome

- 7.1 The screening assessment undertaken in Sections 5 & 6 concludes that, it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill NP. **As such, Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill NP does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.**
- 7.2 The Council consulted on its findings with three statutory consultation bodies: Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency. The consultation period was from 13th December 2018 to 10th January 2019. The consultation email stated that if a response was not received it would be assumed that the consultee agrees with the Council's findings and conclusions.
- 7.3 The Council received a response from each statutory consultee, noting that they agreed with the Council findings that the Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill NP does not require a full SEA to be undertaken. The received consultation responses can be found in Appendix 1.
- 7.4 Following the screening process and consultation, the Council determines that **Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill NP does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.**
- 7.5 As part of this 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 Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill NP is unlikely to have significant impact on European sites and therefore the **Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill NP does not require a full HRA to be undertaken.**
- 7.6 Although SEA is not required, Flitton & Greenfield and Pulloxhill Parish Councils 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 an SA is that it can assess the impact of the NP on the 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.

Appendix 1: Consultation Responses



Historic England

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Mr Tom Price
Central Bedfordshire Council
Priory House, Monks Walk
Chicksands
Shefford
Bedfordshire
SG17 5TQ

Direct Dial: 01223 582746

Our ref: PL00522702

2 January 2019

Dear Mr Price

RE: FGP Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening

Thank you for your email of 13 December 2018 regarding the above 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 Flitton and Greenfield and Pulloxhill Joint 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 FGP Neighbourhood Plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We note that it does not allocate any sites for development purposes.

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 dated 13 December 2018. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the SA/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/guidance) where



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Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.

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Historic England

EAST OF ENGLAND OFFICE

we consider that, despite the SA/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.

Yours sincerely,

Edward James
Historic Places Advisor, East of England
Edward.James@HistoricEngland.org.uk

cc:



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for Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill Neighbourhood Plan



Mon 17/12/2018 13:17

Benn, Neville A <neville.benn@environment-agency.gov.uk>

RE: Flitton & Greenfield and Pulloxhill Joint Neighbourhood Plan

To Tom Price

Dear Tom

We agree with the conclusion that your Authority has reached.

Kind regards

Neville Benn
Senior Planning Advisor
Sustainable Places
East Anglia Area (West)

✉ Environment Agency, Bromholme Lane, Brampton, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE28 4NE

☎ Internal: 51906

☎ External: 0203 0251906

✉ neville.benn@environment-agency.gov.uk



Does Your Proposal Have Environmental Issues or Opportunities? Speak To Us Early!

If you're planning a new development, we want to work with you to make the process as smooth as possible. We offer a bespoke advice service where you will be assigned a project manager who be a single point of contact for you at the EA, giving you detailed specialist advice within guaranteed delivery dates. This early engagement can significantly reduce uncertainty and delays to your project. More information can be found on our website [here](#).

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for Flitton, Greenfield & Pulloxhill Neighbourhood Plan

Date: 25/01/2019

Our ref: 267598

Your ref: N/A.



BY EMAIL ONLY

Customer Services
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Dear Tom Price,

Screening consultation: SEA Screening opinion for Flitton, Greenfield and Pulloxhill Joint Neighbourhood Plan

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 13/12/19.

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 and Habitats Regulations Assessment

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), that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's)

Although we agree with the conclusion of no potential effects to protected sites, based on there being no housing allocations within the plan, there are two SSSI's at least partially within the Parish boundary:

- Flitwick Moor SSSI
- Pulloxhill Marsh SSSI

Natural England would expect to see these SSSI's mentioned in the Neighbourhood plan so that the authority is aware of their presence and protected nature.

Flitwick Moor SSSI is one of the most notable and important SSSI's in Bedfordshire and has previously come under pressure from proposals for nearby developments. **The Neighbourhood plan should include a policy to highlight the importance of maintaining an appropriate buffer to the site.**

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Flitton Moor, downstream from Flitwick Moor SSSI, although not a protected site is notable in its own right and Natural England takes this opportunity to highlight its importance and value.

Natural England would also like to remind the Local Authority that Pulloxhill Marsh SSSI relies on the springs/hydrology that feed the wetland habitat present, however no proposals within the neighbourhood plan appear to potentially affect this.

Neighbourhood 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/HRA 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.

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

Yours sincerely,

Tom Borges

Sustainable Development Officer