



# **Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination Statement**

**Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan  
2017 – 2035**

**October 2018**

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report  
for Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan

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## Executive Summary

This statement sets out the reasons for the Council's determination that the Silsoe 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 Silsoe 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 Silsoe Parish Council in demonstrating that the Silsoe 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 5<sup>th</sup> October 2018. 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](mailto:tom.price@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk).

## 1. Introduction

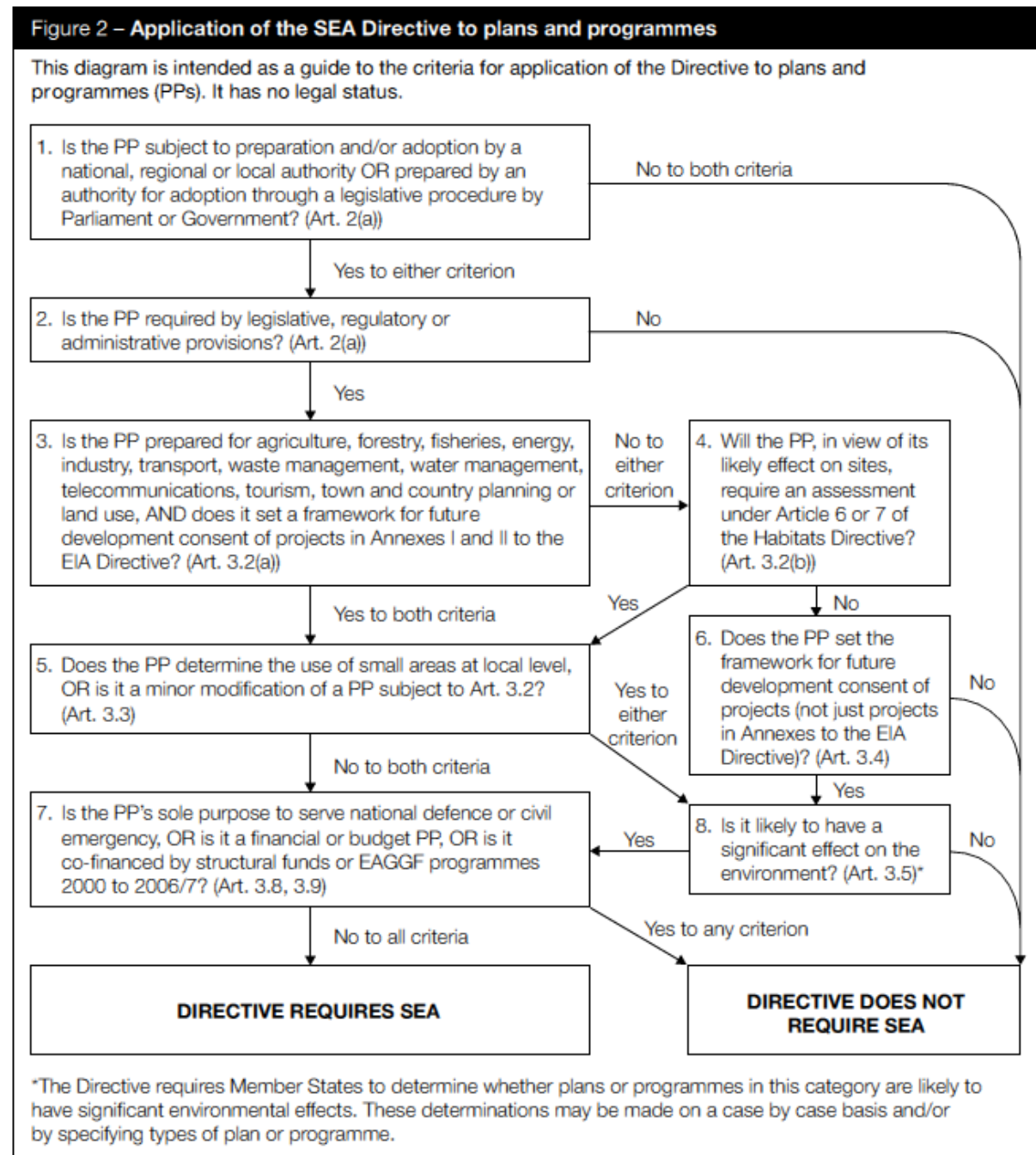
- 1.1 Silsoe Parish Council have requested a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening opinion of their Neighbourhood Plan (NP). Central Bedfordshire Council is legally required to determine whether the Silsoe NP will require SEA.
- 1.2 This document is a final Screening Determination Statement which is being issued to Silsoe Parish Council and the statutory bodies.
- 1.3 The Council undertook a screening exercise to determine whether or not the content of the Silsoe 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 Silsoe 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 Silsoe 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 Silsoe 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 Silsoe NP covers the administrative boundary of Silsoe Parish Council. Silsoe is a large village located midway between Bedford and Luton along the A6 and between Ampthill and Shefford along the A507. The parish has a long history and is home to several designated heritage assets, such as Wrest Park, a registered park and garden.
- 4.2 Silsoe NP covers a range of land use and environmental issues that relate to the Parish. These are addressed through a number of policies to guide development in the Parish. The policies cover the following areas:
- Historic Environment
  - Development
  - Retail
  - Housing
  - Design
  - Environment
  - Employment & Economy
  - Transport
- 4.3 Historic Environment policies aim to; protect the character and appearance of Historic Park and Garden designations, restrict development in Conservation Areas and consult all those living within, align with the CBC Design Guide and Silsoe Village Design Statement and incorporate suitable soft landscaping.
- 4.4 Development policies aim to; support small-scale development within the parish, prioritise retail, service and community facility development, particularly shops and healthcare facilities, avoid further development in the countryside and the erosion of the landscape, protect the open land that contributes to the shapes and character of Silsoe, avoid coalescence with adjacent settlements, limit development to the confines of the settlement envelope, restrict development in the Conservation Area to in-fill, restrict development in areas classed as Important Open Space and Registered Parks and Gardens and for development in the countryside; prioritise dwellings for those with a minimum 5 years proven of working in agriculture/forestry, support the re-use of existing dwellings/buildings if a minimum of 5 years of proven use in agriculture/forestry can be demonstrated, ensure the Parish Council notification for any proposal outside the settlement envelope and support proposals for tourism, leisure and community use where there is no harm to the character of the local area and restrict changes of use of these buildings to residential for 25 years.
- 4.5 Retail policies aim to; ensure development demonstrates a need for that service locally, be appropriately sited to ensure minimal impact on traffic and easily accessible with sufficient parking provision, resist development that changes a use from commercial to residential and resist development that generates significant noise or traffic movements past 10:30pm.



- 4.6 Housing policies aim to; ensure homes are designed in accordance with the LifeTime Homes Design Guide and meet the requirements of the Silsoe Village Design Statement, prioritise construction of bungalows and low-level access accommodation/low density flats, promote mixed tenures on development sites, provide 5% of housing suited to wheelchair accessible living, provide 35% housing suited to be adaptable for living, provide 20% housing suited to older living, withdraw permitted development rights on new bungalows and protect existing bungalows from conversion to two-storey dwellings.
- 4.7 Design policies aim to; meet the requirements of the Silsoe Village Design Statement, prioritise the use of sustainable transport and access, promote development layouts that provide adequate parking provision and suitable landscaping, agree standards of quality and a timetable of delivery for the transfer of social and community infrastructure between the developer and Silsoe Parish Council where applicable, prioritise the sharing of facilities, encourage community hubs with contributions made by developers on a price per household basis for ongoing maintenance and promotion, upgrade current communications infrastructure for new and existing residencies, provide where possible a superfast broadband connection to premises with a minimum 30mbps speed, provide services with minimum disruption and need for reconstruction, priorities and enhance indoor and outdoor telecommunications coverage, provide notice to Silsoe Parish Council if a radio mast is due to be decommissioned, prioritise sharing of radio/telecommunications rather than new masts, ensure new masts are sympathetically designed, resist development that goes against the existing pattern of development or detrimentally impacts the landscape, historic environment or character, resist development that contravenes Neighbourhood Plan policies and design standards, and support back-land development where appropriate and suitable.
- 4.8 Environment policies aim to; support the development of the Green Infrastructure Network, protect and enhance existing green space, designate Local Green Space, manage local flooding pressures and mitigate appropriately, promote and protect biodiversity, promote and protect trees and woodland, recognise the special landscape value of the area and protect the integrity of the settlement, protect areas of historic parkland and areas of permanent pasture, and ensure new development also links in with existing accesses and rights of way and promotes more sustainable travel.
- 4.9 Employment & Economy policies aim to; ensure any new commercial development provides towards improved accessibility and sustainable transport, follows current weight limits and time and route restrictions, demonstrates the suitability of Silsoe for the development and protects the conservation area and wider environmental and social context, resist change of use from residential to commercial where there is a likely increase in traffic, demonstrate a need for the service within the village, be appropriately sited and scaled within the village and Settlement Envelope, conform to VDS design requirements and promote the retention or reinstatement of village pubs and multi-use facilities.

- 4.10 Transport policies aim to; ensure any new commercial development promotes the provision of a link road for commercial traffic, ensures commercial vehicles follow current weight limits and time and route restrictions and provides a Transport Assessment for the whole parish and the wider area to understand traffic movements, prioritises the upgrade of local rights of way and further networks connecting to surrounding villages and towns, and informs the Parish Council of proposed increases in HGV traffic and evaluate the impact of increased HGV traffic on the local environment.

## 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 Silsoe NP falls into a category of plans requiring SEA.

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
<b>1.</b> 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 the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Neighbourhood Plan will be prepared by Silsoe 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>
<b>2.</b> 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>
<b>3.</b> 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)]	<b>Y</b>	The NP is being prepared for town and country planning and land use. The plan supports small-scale development within the settlement envelope of Silsoe, 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 <b>GO TO STAGE 4</b>
<b>4.</b> 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>	The plan supports small-scale windfall development (up to 12 dwellings) within the settlement envelope of Silsoe but does not allocate any sites. There are no Natura 2000 sites within close proximity of the parish boundary, the closest is Chiltern Beechwoods, 24km away. Annex I of this report looked at the effects on these sites and concluded that there is no need for Appropriate Assessment <b>GO TO STAGE 5</b>

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Stage	Y/N	Reasons
<b>5.</b> 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>N/A</b>	<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>
<b>6.</b> 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>	The NP will set the framework for future development of projects not included in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive <b>GO TO STAGE 8</b>
<b>7.</b> 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]	<b>N/A</b>	<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>
<b>8.</b> Is the NP likely to have a significant effect on the environment? [Art. 3.5]	<b>N</b>	See Assessment Part 2: Likely significant effects on the environment <b>DIRECTIVE DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA</b>

## 6. Assessment (Part 2)

6.1 The next step in the screening assessment is to establish whether the Silsoe 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
<b>1a.</b> 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
<b>1b.</b> 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
<b>1c.</b> 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 Silsoe, protect and enhance local wildlife, biodiversity and green infrastructure, and ensure that development takes account of climate change and sustainability. 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
<b>1d.</b> Environmental problems relevant to the plan	The NP includes policies on the protection and enhancement of the natural environment; protection of the historic character, scheduled monuments and listed buildings; alleviating localised flooding; promoting sustainable transport, providing local services i.e. healthcare and community multi-use 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
<b>1e.</b> 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	<b>N</b>
<b>2a.</b> 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	<b>N</b>
<b>2b.</b> 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	<b>N</b>
<b>2c.</b> 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>
<b>2d.</b> 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	<b>N</b>
<b>2e.</b> The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status	Within the parish boundary there is registered historic parkland and outside the boundaries there is the Greensand Improvement Area and 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	<b>N</b>
<b>2f.</b> The magnitude spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The NP covers the area of Silsoe Parish and it is unlikely to have impacts beyond its boundaries	<b>N</b>
<b>2g.</b> 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 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>	<b>N</b>

## 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 Silsoe NP. **As such, Silsoe 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 7<sup>th</sup> August to 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018. 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 Silsoe 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 **Silsoe 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 Silsoe NP is unlikely to have significant impact on European sites and therefore the **Silsoe NP does not require a full HRA to be undertaken.**
- 7.6 Although SEA is not required, Silsoe 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 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

EAST OF ENGLAND OFFICE

Mr Tom Price

Direct Dial: 01223 582746

Central Bedfordshire Council

Priory House, Monks Walk

Our ref: PL00469683

Chicksands

Shefford

Bedfordshire

SG17 5TQ

5 September 2018

Dear Mr Price

### **Re: Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening**

Thank you for your email of 07 August 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 Silsoe 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 Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We note that the plan does not 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



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Historic England

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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 07 August 2018. 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/guidance) 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.

Yours sincerely,

Edward James  
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Edward.James@HistoricEngland.org.uk




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# Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan




Tue 14/08/2018 05:29

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

RE: Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan

To: Tom Price





 You replied to this message on 14/08/2018 10:07.


Dear Tom

We agree with your conclusions.

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](mailto: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](#).

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report  
for Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan

Date: 30 August 2018  
Our ref: 254704



Central Bedfordshire Council

Tom.price@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

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T 0300 060 3900

Dear Sir/Madam

**SILSOE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 7 August 2018.

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.

*We note that your Neighbourhood Plan is in the setting of Chilterns AONB, therefore we recommend that you include a policy which ensures that should any development come forward, a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment will be undertaken.*

**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 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.

**Neighbourhood Plan**

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans in light of the SEA Directive 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.

## Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan

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.

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 faithfully  
Dawn Kinrade  
Consultations Team