



SCREENING OPINION ON:

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF A
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

HABITAT REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT

ABBOTS BROMLEY

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

November 2022

Introduction

1. Each Neighbourhood Development Plan (NP) must meet the Basic Conditions in accordance with para. 8 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Act, which was inserted by the Localism Act 2011. The local planning authority needs to be satisfied that the Basic Conditions are met. Amongst these Basic Conditions are the following:

- a) The NP contributes to sustainable development;
- b) The NP does not breach or is otherwise compatible with EU obligations – this includes the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive of 2001/42/EC; and
- c) The making of the NP is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) regulations 2007 (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) (inserted by Regulation 32 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012).

2. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) contains specific assistance on sustainability appraisal/SEA requirements for NPs. Whilst a Local Plan-style sustainability appraisal is not required, the PPG advises that, by producing a specific statement of how the Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development, the requirement under criterion (a) above would be demonstrated. A sustainability appraisal may be a useful way of producing this statement, the PPG advises. (Ref ID: 11-026-20140306)

3. An NP meets the criteria for an SEA as set out in The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 if any of its proposals or policies could have 'significant environmental effects'. Defining what are 'significant environmental effects' is not straightforward, but PPG offers the following examples:

"An SEA may be required, for example, where:

- (a) a NP allocates sites for development;
- (b) the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan; or
- (c) 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."

(Ref ID: 11-046-20150209)

4. Schedule 1 of the 2004 Regulations sets out criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment. The criteria are:

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:

(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,

(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,

(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,

(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,

(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to

(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,

(b) the cumulative nature of the effects,

(c) the transboundary nature of the effects,

(d) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),

(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),

(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,

(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,

(iii) intensive land-use, and

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

5. It is the responsibility of the local authority to decide whether or not any of the proposals of the NP are significant enough for the Plan to require an SEA. The Parish Council submits their NP (and any subsequent version where there have been significant additions or deletions) to the local authority and the latter produces this screening report, with a statement as to whether or not it considers that an SEA needs to be prepared.

6. The Council will also state whether it considers that there will be a significant effect on a nature conservation site of European significance, as in paragraph 1(c) above.

7. The Council has analysed the early draft NP's policies and proposals against the criteria above, and the results are set out in the chart below.

2. ASSESSMENT OF ABBOTS BROMLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN, SUBMISSION DRAFT, (REGULATION 16) FOR SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS.

Planning Practice Guidance Criterion or Environmental Regulation Criterion	Significant Effect Identified	Comment
PPG Criteria (1) NP allocates sites for development	No	The Plan generally supports development within the settlement boundary, but does not specifically allocate any specific sites for development.
(2) The neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan	No	<p>The conservation of the parish's built heritage, and the protection and enhancement of the parish's landscape setting, green spaces, natural features and wildlife are identified within the plan's aims.</p> <p>The Abbots Bromley Conservation Area is covered under Policy DAH3. The Natural Environment is covered under Policy NGE1, and the Abbots Bromley School site (and associated playing fields are covered under Policy DEC3.</p>
(3) the NP may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan	No	There are no proposals that would have significant environmental effects.
Environmental Regulation Criteria <i>The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</i> (4) the degree to which the NP sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	No	The Neighbourhood Plan does set a framework for projects in the parish, some of which will have environmental effects, but the scale of these is small, they are of a positive nature and their location is not sensitive. The Abbots Bromley School Site and its associated playing fields are identified.

(5) the degree to which the NP influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	No	The East Staffordshire Local Plan 2013 – 2031 makes provision for Neighbourhood Plans to influence decision making in the Neighbourhood Plan area. (See Local Plan Policy NP1).
(6) the relevance of the NP for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	The NP is very relevant, and policies adequately promote sustainable development	<p>The Abbots Bromley NP contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.</p> <p>Policies DAH1 sets out that new development must be well-designed, sustainable and add to the distinctive identity of Abbots Bromley. Policies DEC2 and DEC3 state that development on brownfield land will be supported. Policy NGE1 requires that new development does not have a significant adverse impact on the natural environment. Policy NGE2 sets out policy relating to drainage. Policy TIN1 sets put the policy for sustainable transport provision.</p> <p>Failure to meet this criterion would mean that one of the basic conditions could not be met, and the plan would not be able to proceed further.</p>
(7) environmental problems relevant to the NP;	The NP recognises potential environmental problems and proposes policies to mitigate them when development is proposed.	The Abbots Bromley NP recognises a range of potential environmental problems which may arise from future proposals; such as harm to mature trees and hedges from development, harm or loss to buildings and structures that contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of the area and loss of habitats and others. It includes policy to seek to ensure these are mitigated or eliminated (DAH3, NGE1)
(8) the relevance of the NP for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).	No	The NP is in general conformity with the Waste Management and Minerals Local Plans produced by Staffordshire County Council and with the Water Framework Directive.
<i>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</i>	No	It is unlikely that, as a result of the policies within the Neighbourhood Plan, that there will be any significant environmental impacts that are highly likely, long-term, of frequent occurrence or irreversible.

(9) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;		
(10) the cumulative nature of the effects;	No	The types of development which can be accommodated in the parish – and which are covered in the policies - are unlikely to give rise to any significant cumulative effects.
(11) the transboundary nature of the effect;	No	It is not considered that there are any transboundary effects.
(12) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);	No	None of the policies will create hazards to human health. Health and safety standards on developments arising within the plan areas will also be governed by Local Plan policies such as SP1, DP7, relevant statutory codes such as the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007, and likewise any highway proposal will meet the relevant national regulations.
(13) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	No	The magnitude and spatial extent of all the proposals is likely to be limited.
(14) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, (iii) intensive land-use	No	Local built heritage assets are referenced in the plan and there is a policy relating to flood risk. No intensive land uses are proposed.
(15) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status;	No	NP Policy DAH3: Abbots Bromley Conservation Area provides policy to (together with local plan and national policy on Heritage issues) to preserve and enhance the conservation area. Blithfield Reservoir SSSI is also under two miles from Abbots Bromley, but none of the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan are likely to cause direct or indirect harm to this designated area, especially given NGE1, protection in the Local Plan and through relevant planning and environmental law. None of the policies in the NP are likely to have significant negative effects on areas

		or landscapes that have a recognised national, community or international protection status.
Additional specific environmental criterion from Basic Conditions: (16) The NP would have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. 'Appropriate' Habitat Regulations Assessment required?	No	Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation lies approximately 8k from Abbots Bromley. The impact of new development on the SAC has been considered as part of the Local Plan Habitat Regulations Assessment and there is a mitigation strategy in place. It is not considered that the Neighbourhood Plan alters the level of impact.

8. The Government's PPG advises that the local planning authority should consult the statutory consultation bodies. The three statutory consultation bodies whose responsibilities cover the environmental considerations of the Regulations (Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England) will be consulted on this document and the SEA Screening Opinion will be updated if necessary. It may also be necessary to update the Screening Opinion should the draft Neighbourhood Plan change.

9. As a result of the above, East Staffordshire Borough Council believes that the above Neighbourhood Plan would not have significant environmental effects and, as a result, a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan will not be required.

Habitat Regulations Assessment

10. An 'appropriate assessment' is required if a policy or plan is likely to have a 'significant effect' on a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area (SPA) or Ramsar site. The Borough Council is not aware of any such site within a critical distance of the Parish other than Cannock Chase SAC mentioned on pg. 7 of this document, Local Plan impacts on which have already been assessed, and which the policies, plans and proposals in this NP will not have a significant effect on.

11. East Staffordshire Borough Council therefore concludes that a Habitat Regulation Assessment **would not** need to be carried out as it is not considered to be a large enough plan area or involve any policies which are likely to lead to a level of development significant enough to have a negative impact on a SAC, SPA or Ramsar site. The Habitat Regulations Assessment for the Local Plan has taken into account the impact on all relevant protected sites and the Plan's policies reflect the actions that will need to be taken.