



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**West Oxfordshire District Council  
Local Plan**

**Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) 2031:  
Submission Draft**

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)  
Screening Report**

**April 2017**

*enfusion*



# West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan

## Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) 2031: Submission Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Sustainability Appraisal (SA)**

- 1.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)<sup>1 2</sup> is a systematic process used during the preparation of plans and policies and it aims to provide a high level of protection for the environment; it contributes to the integration of environmental considerations in plan preparation with a view to promoting sustainable development. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a process that similarly investigates plans and policies, including consideration of socio-economic factors in the same way as environmental factors and to the same level of detail. SA incorporating SEA is a mandatory requirement for Local Plans in accordance with planning legislation<sup>3</sup> and paragraph 165 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Government advises<sup>4 5</sup> that an integrated approach is taken so that the SA process incorporates the requirements for SEA – and to the same level of detail.
- 1.2 There is no statutory requirement<sup>6</sup> for Neighbourhood Plans to be subject to SA. However, a qualifying body must demonstrate how its plan will contribute to achieving sustainable development. In some limited circumstances, where a Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require an SEA since the Localism Act 2011 requires neighbourhood plans to comply with EU legislation. This is determined through a SEA screening process by the responsible authority with regard to the SEA Directive & UK SEA Regulations – the West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC). In consideration of the interest in the emerging new Local Plan and the draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan, the local planning authority has commissioned independent SA/SEA specialists Enfusion Ltd to undertake the SEA screening on behalf of the Council.

### **The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031**

- 1.3 West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) is preparing a Local Plan to guide future development in the Local Authority area during the period up to 2031. In accordance with legislative and policy requirements<sup>7</sup>, the Council must carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of its Local Plan. The SA/SEA of the Local Plan has been on-going since 2007 and is being undertaken alongside the preparation of the

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<sup>1</sup> EU Directive 2001/42/EC

<sup>2</sup> Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, 2004

<sup>3</sup> Section 19(5) of the 2004 Act and Regulation 22(a) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

<sup>4</sup> DCLG - National Planning Practice Guidance' 2014, ODPM - 'A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive' 2005, Planning Advisory Service – 'The Principles of Plan Making Chapter 6 - The Role of Sustainability Appraisal' 2013

<sup>5</sup> DCLG, 2012 National Planning Policy Framework

<sup>6</sup> <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal/sustainability-appraisal-requirements-for-neighbourhood-plans/>

<sup>7</sup> Town & Country Planning Regulations (2011, 2012); National Planning Policy Framework (2012)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

plan. The Local Plan<sup>8</sup>, together with its accompanying SA Report and other evidence, was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in July 2015 for independent examination. The Main Modifications to the Local Plan were submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in March 2017 and the resumed Examination Hearings are scheduled for May and July 2017.

- 1.4 A neighbourhood plan attains the same legal status as the Local Plan once it has been agreed at a referendum and is adopted or “made” (brought into legal force) by the local planning authority. At this point it becomes part of the statutory development plan. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise<sup>9</sup>.

### **This SEA Screening Report**

- 1.5 This document provides a screening determination of the need to carry out a SEA of the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan 2031 (ENP). WODC, as the “Responsible Authority<sup>10</sup>” under the SEA Regulations, is responsible for undertaking this screening process that will determine if the NP is likely to have any significant environmental effects and therefore, whether an SEA is required.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/localplan2031>

<sup>9</sup> PCPA 2004 section 38(6)

<sup>10</sup> The organisation that adopts (“makes”) the neighbourhood plan

## 2.0 LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS & GUIDANCE; METHOD

2.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires neighbourhood plans to comply with EU legislation. Regulation 5 of the SEA Regulations requires an environmental assessment of plans which:

1. *are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use (Regulation 5, para. (2)(a), and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annex I or II to Council Directive 85/337/EEC (EIA Directive) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (Regulation 5, para. (2)(b)*

2. *in view of the likely effect on sites, have been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) (Regulation 5, para. (3)*

3. *set the framework for future development consent of projects<sup>11</sup> (Regulation 5, para. (4)(b)*

4. *are determined to be likely to have significant environmental effects as determined under regulation 9(1) (Regulation 5, para. (4)(c)*

2.2 An environmental assessment need not be carried out for:

a) *plans which determine the use of a small area<sup>12</sup> at local level (Regulation 5, para. (6)(a); or*

b) *plans which are a minor modification<sup>13</sup> to a plan or programme (Regulation 5, para. (6)(b) unless it has been determined under regulation 9(1) that the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects.*

2.3 Extant UK Government guidance provides a flow diagram with questions/criteria for the SEA Directive and its application to the plan-making process as follows:

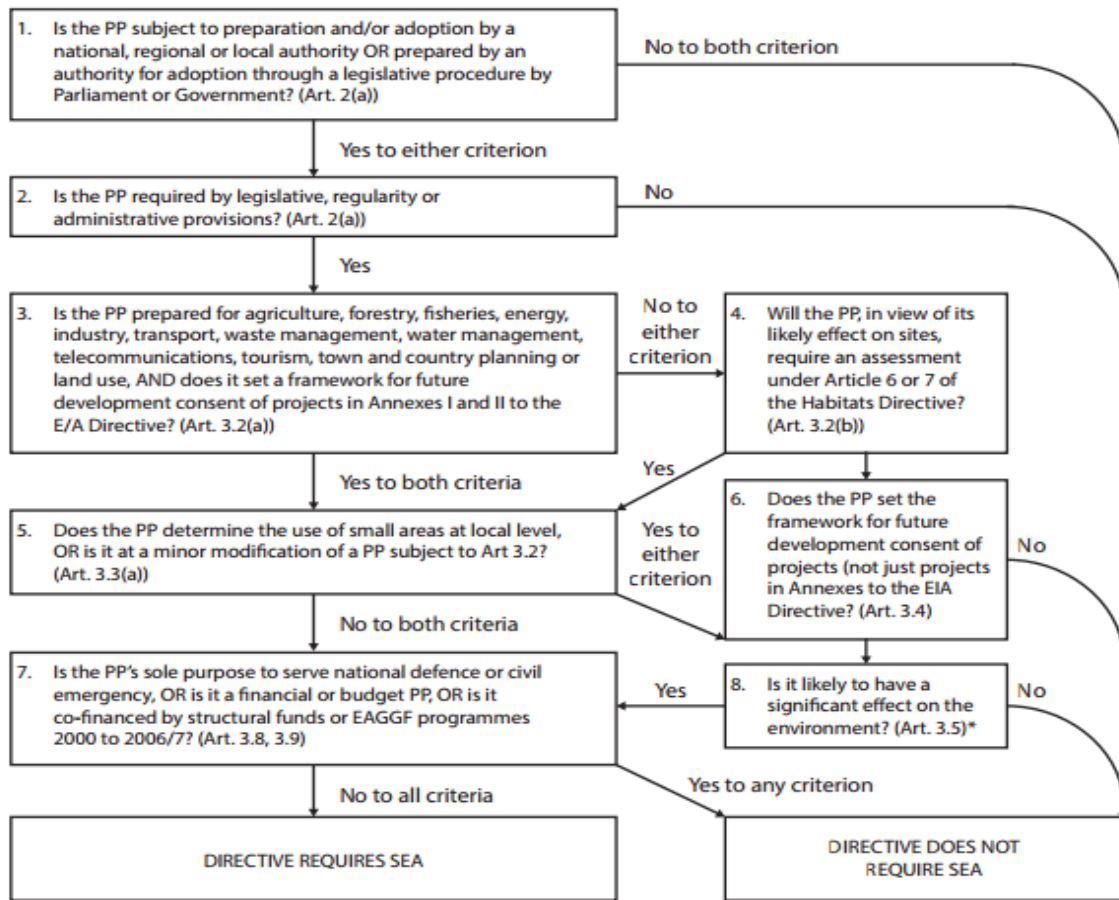
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<sup>11</sup> European Commission guidance states that plans and programmes which *set the framework for future development consent of projects* would normally contain 'criteria or conditions which guide the way a consenting authority decides an application for development consent'. *Development consent* is defined in the EIA Directive as "the decision of the competent authority or authorities which entitled the developer to proceed with the project" (Article 1(2) of the EIA Directive).

<sup>12</sup> European Commission guidance suggests that *plans which determine the use of small areas at local level* might include "a building plan which, for a particular, limited area, outlines details of how buildings must be constructed, determining, for example, their height, width or design"

<sup>13</sup> 'Minor modifications' should be considered in the context of the plan or programme which is being modified and of the likelihood of their having significant environmental effects. A modification may be of such small order that it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

Figure 2.1: Flow Diagram<sup>14</sup> for Determining is a Plan is likely to have Significant Environmental Effects



**Note:** The figure is intended as a guide to the criteria for application of the Directive to plans & programmes (PPs); it has not legal status. Where a Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, a strategic environmental assessment must be carried out and an Environmental Report (ER) prepared.

2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Guidance (NPPG) advises that a Neighbourhood Plan:

- would need SEA “...in limited circumstances...”
- should be screened early
- screening should consult with the consultation bodies
- if ‘screened out’, should have a ‘statement of reasons’ prepared
- might require a strategic environmental assessment where: a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development; and/or the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan; and

<sup>14</sup> Based on DCLG - National Planning Practice Guidance' 2014, ODPM - 'A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive' 2005; see also - Planning Advisory Service – 'The Principles of Plan Making Chapter 6 - The Role of Sustainability Appraisal' 2013

the neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan.

- 2.5 The qualifying body (ie WODC for the Eynsham NP 2031) is required to provide the following – to demonstrate that the basic condition<sup>15</sup> in the planning legislation has been met:
- “a statement of reasons for a determination... that the proposal is unlikely to have significant environmental effects; or
  - And environmental report”

### **Method**

- 2.6 In order to be able to decide whether an SEA will be required, the Council needs to know about the policies and proposals in the draft Neighbourhood Plan, and in particular, as follows:
- how they might affect the environment, community or economy
  - whether they propose a higher level of development than is already identified in WODC planning policies
  - whether any of the proposals are likely to affect a “sensitive area”, such as a Site of special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or European Site for nature conservation (SAC, SPA)
  - whether implementation of policies in the plan might lead to new development in the future
  - Whether the cumulative impact of the policies and proposals when assessed together may give rise to a likely significant effect, for example, several relatively small housing proposals may have cumulative significant effects on a nearby important wildlife habitat
- 2.7 Available information from the Council's evidence base for the WODC Local Plan and the evidence base for the draft ENP, together with professional judgment, was used to identify the sensitivity of the Eynsham area environment and whether significant effects are likely, such that an SEA would be required.

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<sup>15</sup> A Neighbourhood Plan should not breach, and must be compatible with, European Union obligations in order for it to be legally compliant

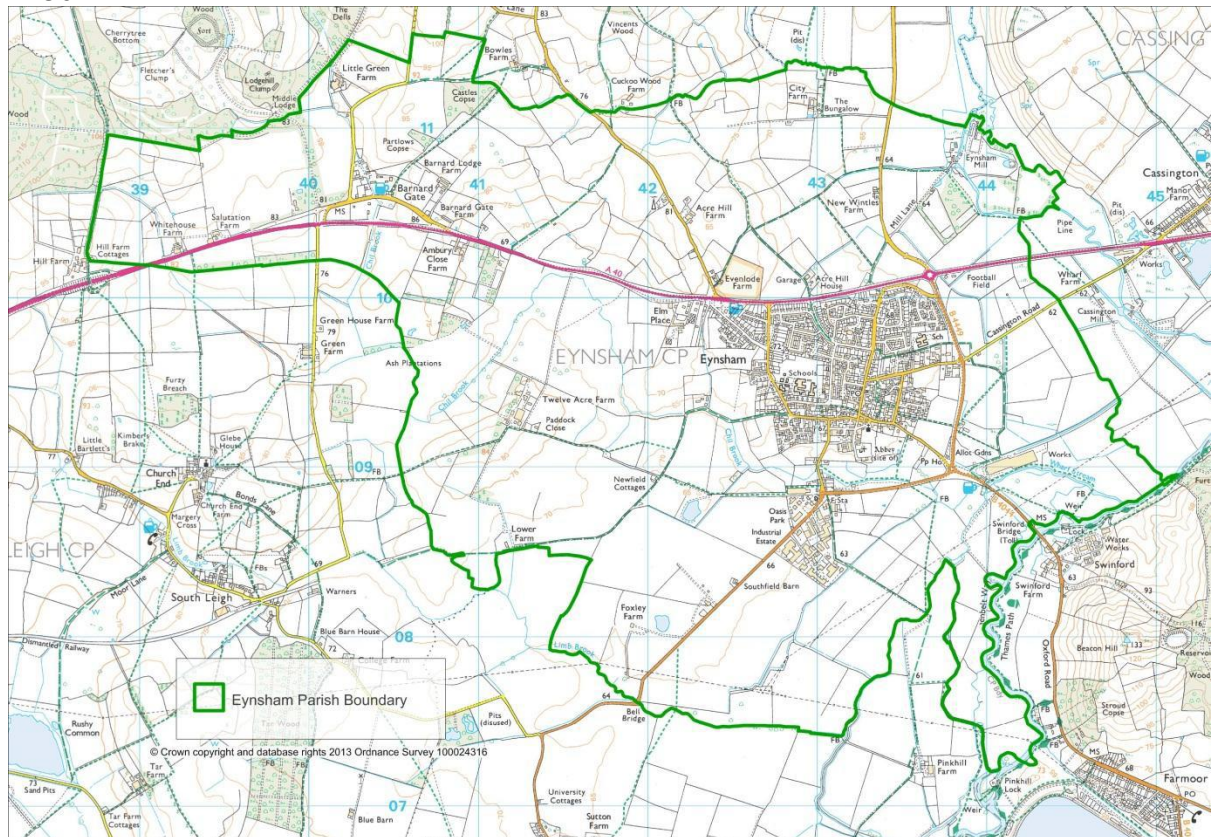


### 3.0 THE EYNSHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2031 (ENP)

#### Context

- 3.1 The Eynsham Futures Steering Group (EFSG) is preparing the ENP on behalf of the Eynsham Parish Council (EPC) who are the qualifying body designated for the purpose of preparing the ENP and will approve the plan before formal submission. The EFSG has three Parish Council Members and other village residents and representatives of the local community. The neighbourhood planning process was launched by the EPC and the newly formed EFSG in March 2015. Village opinions were collected and consultation continued with local residents and other stakeholders such as schools and businesses using public events and survey. The consultation process is reported in the ENP Consultation Statement <sup>16</sup>(March 2017).
- 3.2 After public consultation, the whole Parish of Eynsham was designated<sup>17</sup> as a Neighbourhood Area by the West Oxfordshire District Council on 2 December 2014 and the boundary is shown in the figure following:

**Figure 3.1: Boundary for the Area Designation of Eynsham Neighbourhood Area**



<sup>16</sup> <http://eynsham-pc.gov.uk/org.aspx?n=Neighbourhood-Planning&id=1010>

<sup>17</sup> section 61G of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

- 3.3 The development of the ENP has been led by the EPC as the qualifying body<sup>18</sup> but the draft plan has been prepared by the EFSG on their behalf and with technical planning support and information provided by Officers from WODC and the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). The ENP process has been recorded and is available through Eynsham Online <http://eynsham-pc.gov.uk/org.aspx?n=Neighbourhood-Planning>.
- 3.4 The ENP must be in conformity with the West Oxfordshire Local Plan that has been submitted but still being examined and has not yet been adopted. The independent Examination commenced in July 2015 and the Inspector initially found that the Local Plan's housing requirement of 10,500 dwellings was not justified. The Examination was suspended and further work undertaken by the Council that identified an increase of the overall number of homes to 15,950. Most of these are to meet West Oxfordshire's housing needs but a proportion (2,750 homes 2012-2031) are proposed to assist the neighbouring Oxford City Council under the duty to cooperate. As part of this further work, two new strategic directions of growth were investigated at Eynsham – a new garden village to the north and an urban extension to the west.
- 3.5 The proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan were published for consultation in December 2016 and the resumed Examination Hearings are scheduled in May and July 2017. Thus, the ENP was being prepared during a period of uncertainty with regard to the strategic site allocations to be made through the modifications to the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, arising as a result of the Inspector's initial findings. It is understood that the EFSG & EPC were concerned that the preparation of the ENP should continue but decided that they would not include proposed site allocations in this draft of the ENP 2031.

### **The draft Eynsham NP 2031**

- 3.6 The Vision & Objectives for the ENP 2031 have been proposed as follows:

***“Our vision for the Parish of Eynsham at the end of the plan period is that both new and existing residents will be enjoying the same benefits of living in the village as current residents do in 2017 and that the area will be an even more attractive community in which to live and work”.***

The vision will be made reality through meeting eight primary objectives:

**ENV1 Housing: New development shall ensure a mix of housing types and tenures to make a balanced community suitable for this area of West Oxfordshire close to the city of Oxford.**

**ENV2 Design: New development shall be visually attractive and in harmony with its immediate setting and character. It shall provide a pleasant and safe place for all residents to live.**

**ENV3 Community Facilities: New development shall ensure that new residents**

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<sup>18</sup> section xx of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

**have at least the same access to community facilities as existing residents and new developments shall, as far as reasonably practicable, contribute to the facilities of the entire community.**

**ENV4 Natural Environments: New developments shall bring together all aspects of design, connectivity and natural environment that constitute the landscape setting of the new (and existing) development, closely linking village and countryside.**

**ENV5 Transport & Parking: New development shall be planned and constructed to ensure that all residents have ready access to local transport networks by private car, bicycle or public transport and that excellent paths are created for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility vehicles.**

**ENV6 Economy: New development shall ensure that Eynsham continues to offer a range of employment opportunities that reflects its location on the edge of the 'knowledge spine' around Oxford city and that potentially utilises a full range of skills from manual through to post-graduate levels.**

**ENV7 sustainability & Climate Change: New development shall be sustainable now and in the long term without compromising one for the other.**

**ENV8 A New Garden Village: ENV1-7 shall be shared by the new settlement, which shall be built according to Garden Village principles as a new, separate, community.**

3.7 The draft ENP 2031 proposes 13 Policies to guide potential development in Eynsham as follows:

- ENP 1 Housing
- ENP2 Design
- ENP3 Community Facilities
- ENP4 Green Infrastructure
- ENP5 Sustainability: Climate Change
- ENP6 Education
- ENP7 Sustainable Transport
- ENP8 Connected Place
- ENP9 Parking
- ENP10 Sustainable Economy
- ENP11 Retail
- ENP12 Green Space
- ENP13 Trees

3.8 The draft ENP 2031 proposes a further 5 Spatial Policies as follows:

- ENP14 Sustainable Growth
- ENP15 Eynsham Village Centre
- ENP16 North of the A40
- ENP17 Development of a Western Extension to the Village
- ENP18 Southern Industrial Area

- 3.9 In Appendix A, the draft ENP 2031 asserts that the plan does not seek to preempt the WODC by allocating sites. However, Appendix A does discuss the attributes of each site included in the WODC map of sites in the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan published for public consultation December 2016.
- 3.10 Due to uncertainty over plans and timings for improving the A40, for meeting Oxford's city unmet housing need, and the lack of an adopted Local Plan with confirmed site allocations, the EPC has proposed to submit their ENP 2031 without allocating any sites. However, it is stated that "*in preparing the plan a number of possible sites have been evaluated and the results used to inform the policies included in the plan as set out here*"<sup>19</sup> (Site Options Assessment). It is further asserted that the Sites Assessment and the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) are presented in support of the ENP when it is subject to independent examination and referendum.
- 3.11 In 2015, the EFSG prepared a SA Scoping Report in accordance with Stage A of the SA/SEA process for spatial plans and as set out in Government Guidance<sup>20</sup>. The SA Scoping Report considered the objectives of other relevant plans and programmes (the PP Review) and the baseline conditions. It identified sustainability issues and problems, and it developed an SA Framework of objectives and criteria/decision-aiding questions based on the SA Framework used for testing the emerging Local Plan. It is understood that this SA Scoping Report was published on the ENP website but was not formally submitted to the statutory environmental bodies (Environment Agency, Historic England, & Natural England) for statutory scoping consultation in accordance with the SEA Regulations.
- 3.12 The SA Framework was used to investigate possible sites and it is stated that the results were used to inform the policies in the draft ENP. Whilst site allocations are not explicitly set out in the draft ENP, it does include five Spatial Policies, including ENV16 (North of A40) & ENV17 Western Extension to the Village that seek to guide development and are aligned with the Proposed Modifications to the WODC LP. The strategic scale of such proposed development sites is such that they are likely to have significant effects on the environment. These strategic site options have been subject to SA/SEA<sup>21</sup> in accordance with planning and environmental assessment regulations. Likely significant effects were identified but some uncertainty was reported until further project level studies are completed. Therefore, it is possible that the draft ENP could have significant effects on the environment, especially through the provision of Spatial Policies that support major development to the north and west of the Village.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://eynsham-pc.gov.uk/variable/organisation/173/attachments/SiteAssessmentOptionsV1.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal> and <http://www.pas.gov.uk/chapter-6-the-role-of-sustainability-appraisal>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/1572188/CD10-Sustainability-Appraisal-Addendum-Report.pdf> and <http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/localplan2031>

## 4.0 SEA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

4.1 West Oxfordshire District Council, as the responsible authority, consider that the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) 2031 is within the scope of the SEA Regulations since it is a plan that:

- is subject to preparation or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level (Regulation 2)
- is prepared for town and country planning or land use and it is a plan that sets the framework for future development consent of projects generally (Regulation 5, para. 4)
- will apply to a wider area other than a small area at local level and is not a minor modification to an existing plan or programme (Regulation 5, para. 6).

A determination under Regulation 9 is therefore required as to whether ENP 2031 is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

4.2 The screening requirements set out in Regulation 9 and Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations include two sets of characteristics for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment:

- the characteristics of the plan itself and
- the characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected by the plan

Therefore, this screening assessment is structured in the following table according to the criteria specified in Schedule 1 of the Regulations:

**Table 4.1: Screening Assessment of the draft ENP 2031 (March 2017)e)**

Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regulations)	Are significant environmental effects likely? Yes/ No	
	Justification and evidence	
<b>1.The characteristics of plans, having regard, in particular, to:</b>		
(a) the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	Yes?	The NP does not allocate sites explicitly but it does propose 5 spatial policies including ENP16 North of A40 & ENP17 Western Extension to Village. These are strategic level developments (around 2,200 & 1,000 new homes respectively) that have the possibility for significant environmental effects. The relevant Local Plan Policies (EW2, EW1a & EW1b) proposed in the Main Modifications to the Local Plan were subject to SA/SEA & public

Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regulations)	Are significant environmental effects likely? Yes/ No Justification and evidence	
		<p>consultation in December 2016<sup>22</sup> – but have not yet been considered by the independent Inspector at Examination (scheduled for July 2017). The SA/SEA found positive or neutral effects for most SA objectives (details in Appendix IV of the SA/SEA Report October 2016) with strong mitigation provided by other LP Policies. However, some uncertainty was reported for SA objectives on landscape/visual amenity &amp; road transport/accessibility, particularly for cumulative effects. The scale &amp; scope of major development offers opportunities for creative masterplanning with potential for environment enhancement but this is uncertain until more detailed project level studies are completed.</p> <p>The draft ENP Policies include criteria requirements that seek to guide this major development. The draft ENP further asserts that SA was used to test site options and the results used to inform policy preparation. Thus, the ENP does seek to influence the framework for projects and other activities; and there is the potential for significant environmental effects – but some uncertainty of application here since higher level SA/SEA has been undertaken.</p>
(b) the degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	No	The NP is prepared by the local community to influence development at the parish level. It does not strongly influence strategic plans higher up in the spatial planning hierarchy, although the District Council does need to consider the proposals in the NP during preparation of the Local Plan.
(c) the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	No	The NP is a spatial/land-use plan that seeks to promote the objectives of sustainable development. It is not specifically relevant as a plan for integrating environmental considerations. Any development proposed must be in accordance with the environmental protection policies in the emerging WOLP and the NPPF.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan	No	There are no specific environmental problems relevant to this plan that have not been identified and assessed through the higher level Local Plan and its accompanying SA/SEA.
(e) the relevance of the plan for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	No	The NP is not relevant as a plan for implementing community legislation.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/localplan2031>

Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regulations)	Are significant environmental effects likely? Yes/ No  Justification and evidence	
<b>2.Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b>		
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	Yes	This has been tested through SA/SEA at the Local Plan level & whilst strong mitigation measures for potential negative effects for such major development are provided by other LP policies, some uncertainty was reported for SA objectives on landscape/visual amenity & road transport/accessibility, particularly for cumulative effects. It is these factors that draft ENP16 & 17 seek to influence – and therefore, are likely to have significant environmental effects.
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects	Yes	As above in 2(a)
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects	No	No significant transboundary effects with other EU countries are likely from the proposals.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	No	No significant environmental effects are considered likely to risk human health or the environment.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	Yes	The geographical size and numbers of dwellings proposed for both strategic developments are likely to have some significant environmental effects that should be investigated through SEA. Whilst these strategic sites have been investigated through SA (as explained above in 1(a)) for the higher level Local Plan, these are still the subject of independent examination & their soundness not yet confirmed.
(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; or (iii) intensive land-use;	Yes?	The strategic development sites in the NP policies (ENP16 & 17) are of a significant scale that there is the possibility of significant environmental effects due the number of dwellings proposed.  The SA of the LP Modifications considered that there should be sufficient mitigation provided by other LP Policies to reduce any potential negative effects to at least neutral. However, this is still the subject of independent examination & its' soundness not yet confirmed.
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	Yes?	The strategic development sites are not within or adjacent to any internationally or nationally designated areas. There is no AONB nearby. The Oxford Meadow internationally protected SAC to the east is approximately 3 km from the centre of the village. The HRA <sup>23</sup> investigated the proposed Main Modifications for the LP (EW1 a&b) and concluded that likely significant effects will not occur, either alone, or in combination. However, as with the SA Report, this has

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/1504778/West-Oxfordshire-Local-Plan-Main-Modifications-2016-Habitats-Regulations-Assessment-Report.pdf>

Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regulations)	Are significant environmental effects likely? Yes/ No Justification and evidence	
		<p>not yet been tested through public examination for soundness.</p> <p>The statutory SEA &amp; HRA consultation body Natural England has commented<sup>24</sup> on the SA/HRA of the Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan for the 2 SDAs at Eynsham that the impacts of these new allocations on traffic levels on A34 &amp; air pollution impacts on the Oxford Meadows SAC needs to be addressed.</p> <p>There are 3 SSSIs (nationally designated for woodland, ditch &amp; grassland habitats)- the SA of the LP Modifications considered that there should be sufficient mitigation provided by other LP Policies to reduce any potential negative effects to at least neutral.</p> <p>The village has a nationally designated Conservation Area with Listed Buildings &amp; Scheduled Monuments – but these are avoided by the 2 strategic sites &amp; the SA of the LP Modifications considered that there should be sufficient mitigation provided by other LP Policies to reduce any potential negative effects to at least neutral.</p>

<sup>24</sup> Natural England representation on Submission Draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan Proposed Modifications consultation (December 2016)



## 5.0 SEA SCREENING DECISION

- 5.1 Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations requires that the responsible authority shall determine whether or not a plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. The responsible authority shall:
- (a) take into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 to these Regulations, and
  - (b) consult the consultation bodies
- 5.2 Where the responsible authority determines that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), it shall prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.
- 5.3 West Oxfordshire District Council considers that the proposed draft Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (ENP 2031) is likely to have significant environmental effects and thus does require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This decision is made for the following key reasons:
1. The draft ENP proposes 5 spatial policies including ENP16 (North of A40) & 17 (Western Extension to the Village). Whilst these two policies do not allocate numbers of housing and any other supporting development explicitly, they do seek to influence the relevant policies in the Local Plan – EW1a (Tilgarsley Garden Village) and EW1b (West Eynsham SDA) – particularly for concerns about implementation of new supporting infrastructure and the capacity of existing services and facilities. Further concerns are set out for ENP17 for access, landscape, and heritage assets.
  2. The new Policies EW1a (Tilgarsley Garden Village) and EW1b (West Eynsham SDA) have been subject to SA/SEA. This found positive effects for most SA objectives with potential negative effects mitigated through avoidance of sensitive/important environmental assets or through strong protection provided by other WODC Local Plan Policies. Some uncertainty of cumulative effects with regard to landscape/visual impacts and locally important assets until detailed masterplanning and further project level studies are completed.
  3. The SA (and HRA) of the proposed Main Modifications to the Submitted Local Plan are still the subject of independent Examination scheduled for resumption in May and July 2017. Therefore, to date, their soundness has not been determined.