



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**West Oxfordshire District Council  
Local Plan 2031**

**Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan (BNNP) 2031:  
Pre-Submission Draft August 2023**

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) &  
Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)  
Screening Report**

**September 2023**

*enfusion*



# West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan 2031

## Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan (BNNP) 2031: Pre-Submission Draft (August 2023) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report

<i>date:</i>	<i>August 2023 v1 draft September 2023 v2 draft Updated November 2023 Final</i>	
<i>prepared for:</i>	<i>West Oxfordshire District Council</i>	
<i>prepared by:</i>	<i>Barbara Carroll</i>	<i>Enfusion</i>
<i>quality assurance:</i>	<i>Barbara Carroll</i>	<i>Enfusion</i>

*enfusion*  
environmental planning and management for sustainability



The Train Shed  
1 Ancliff Square, Avoncliff  
Bradford on Avon BA15 2HD  
[www.enfusion.co.uk](http://www.enfusion.co.uk)

## CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 Introduction</b>	
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Sustainability Appraisal (SA); Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)	1
The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031	2
This SEA & HRA Screening Report	2
<b>2 Legislative Requirements &amp; Guidance; Method</b>	
Legislative Requirements	4
Guidance on SA/SEA & HRA/AA	6
Method	7
<b>3 The Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan (BNNP) (Pre-Submission Draft, August 2023)</b>	
Context	8
Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan 2031 Draft August 2023	9
<b>4 SEA Screening Assessment</b>	
SEA Screening Assessment	11
<b>5 SEA Screening Decision</b>	
SEA Screening Decision	16
<b>6 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening</b>	
HRA Screening	17
<b>7 Statutory Consultation &amp; Overall Conclusion</b>	
Statutory Consultation & Overall Conclusion	18
<b>Tables &amp; Figures</b>	
2.1 Flow Diagram for Determining if a Plan is likely to have Significant Environmental Effects	
3.1 Boundary for the Area Designation of Brize Norton Neighbourhood Area	
4.1 SEA Screening Assessment of Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan	



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA); Sustainability Appraisal (SA) & Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

- 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.
- 1.2 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 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework (revised July 2021)<sup>4</sup>. Government advises<sup>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.
- 1.3 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 a 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 and UK SEA Regulations – for this Neighbourhood Plan, the West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC).
- 1.4 Plan-makers are also required to consider whether a Habitats Regulations<sup>7</sup> Assessment (HRA) is required. The aim of the HRA process is to assess the potential effects arising from a plan against the nature conservation objectives of any site designated for its nature conservation importance. The HRA process has its own legislative drivers and requirements and, while the different processes can inform each other, it is important that the HRA remains distinguishable from the wider SA/SEA process.

---

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

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

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made>

<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> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework-2>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal>

<sup>7</sup> The Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/contents/made>



- 1.5 It may be noted that under planning reform proposed through the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill (LURB) there are included proposed changes to environmental assessment requirements. A new system of environmental assessment – Environmental Outcomes Reports (EORs) – is proposed to replace the current processes of SEA and its associated project level environmental impact assessment (EIA). Between 17 March and 9 June 2023, these proposals<sup>8</sup> were consulted upon and at the time of writing, Government is reviewing responses.
- 1.6 EORs are proposed to include a new regime for screening plans and projects with clearer criteria for what requires assessment. As now, all projects in, or partly within, sensitive areas such as protected sites will require environmental assessment. However, it is likely that the BNNP will be prepared and consulted upon during the extant system and according to established procedures for SEA & HRA screening.
- 1.7 The local planning authority has commissioned independent SA, SEA, HRA specialists Enfusion Ltd to undertake the SEA and HRA screening on behalf of the Council.

### **The West Oxfordshire Local Plan (WOLP) 2031**

- 1.8 West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) has prepared a Local Plan<sup>9</sup> (adopted September 2018) to guide future development in the Local Authority area during the period up to 2031. In accordance with legislative and policy requirements<sup>10</sup>, the Council must carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of its Local Plan. The SA/SEA and HRA of the Local Plan was undertaken alongside the preparation of the plan with SA/SEA and HRA Reports published as evidence to support at each stage of plan-making. The WODC Local Plan to 2031 was adopted in September 2018 and accompanied by a SA Adoption Statement (September 2018).
- 1.9 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>11</sup>.

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/environmental-outcomes-reports-a-new-approach-to-environmental-assessment/environmental-outcomes-report-a-new-approach-to-environmental-assessment#background-to-environmental-assessment>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/localplan2031#>

<sup>10</sup> Town & Country Planning Regulations (2011, 2012); National Planning Policy Framework (2012, revised 2018, updated 2019 & 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework-2>

<sup>11</sup> PCPA 2004 section 38(6)

## **This SEA & HRA Screening Report**

- 1.10 This document provides a screening determination of the need to carry out an SEA and an HRA of the Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan 2031 (BNNP Pre-Submission draft August 2023). West Oxfordshire District Council, as the "Responsible Authority"<sup>12</sup> under the SEA Regulations, and the "Competent Authority"<sup>13</sup> under the HRA Regulations, is responsible for undertaking this screening process that will determine if the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have any significant environmental effects and therefore, whether an SEA and an HRA is required. This Screening Report was sent to the environmental consultation bodies (Environment Agency, Historic England & Natural England) for the statutory 5 weeks consultation period.

---

<sup>12</sup> The organisation that adopts ("makes") the neighbourhood plan

<sup>13</sup> The organisation that ensures that the plan will not have any likely significant effects on the integrity of the designated nature conservation sites

## 2.0 LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS & GUIDANCE; METHOD

### Legislative Requirements

- 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>14</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>15</sup> at local level (Regulation 5, para. (6)(a); or*
  - b) *plans which are a minor modification<sup>16</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 UK Government guidance provides a flow diagram with questions/criteria for the SEA Directive and its application to the plan-making process as follows:

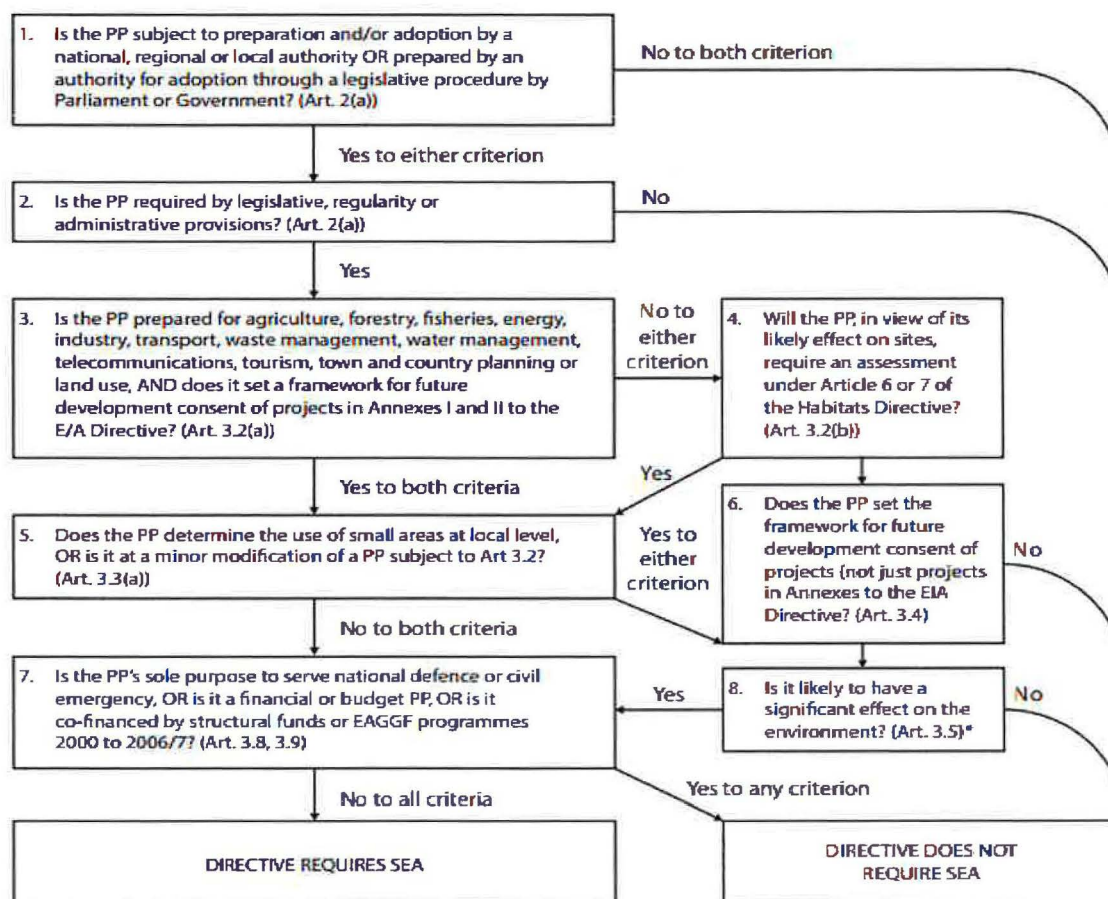
<sup>14</sup> European Commission guidance states that plans and programmes which set the framework for future development consent of projects would normally contain 'criteria or conditions which guide the way a consenting authority decides an application for development consent'. Development consent 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>15</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>16</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>17</sup> for Determining if 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 does not have legal status. Where a Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) must be carried out and an Environmental Report (ER) prepared.

- 2.4 There is no legal requirement for a Neighbourhood Plan (NP)<sup>18</sup> to have a Sustainability Appraisal as set out in section 19 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Government advises that in some limited circumstances, where a Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. In order to decide whether a draft NP might have significant environmental effects, it must be screened at an early stage according to the requirements set out in regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations. This includes a requirement to consult with the SEA consultation bodies (in England - Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural England); each body can advise on particular topics relevant to its specific area of expertise and responsibility.

<sup>17</sup> Based on ODPN 2005 - 'A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive' 2005

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal#neighbourhood-plan-require-sustainability-appraisal>

## Guidance on SA/SEA & HRA

- 2.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) have advised 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
- 2.6 Whether a Neighbourhood Plan proposal requires a SEA, and (if so) the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed. An SEA may be required, for example, 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 is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.
- 2.7 Government planning guidance further advises that before deciding whether significant environmental effects are likely, the local planning authority should take into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1<sup>19</sup> to the SEA Regulations (2004) and consult the statutory environmental consultation bodies. Schedule 1 sets out the criteria for determining likely significant effects on the environment taking into account the characteristics of plans and the characteristics of the effects and the area likely to be affected.
- 2.8 The qualifying body (ie WODC for the BNNP 2031) is required to provide the following – to demonstrate that the basic condition<sup>20</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
  - An environmental report"
- 2.9 Planning practice guidance<sup>21</sup> also provides advice on HRA screening and the subsequent appropriate assessment stage of the process for neighbourhood planning. An appropriate assessment for a more strategic plan, such as the Local Plan, can consider the impacts on sites and confirm the suitability or likely success of mitigation measures for associated non-strategic policies and projects. An individual assessment of non-strategic policies and projects may not be necessary in some limited cases where the strategic appropriate

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/schedule/1/made>

<sup>20</sup> A Neighbourhood Plan should not breach, and must be compatible with, European Union obligations in order for it to be legally compliant.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appropriate-assessment>



assessment is sufficiently robust. This needs to contain conclusions capable of removing all reasonable scientific doubt on the impacts of non-strategic policies, such as in neighbourhood plans.

## Method

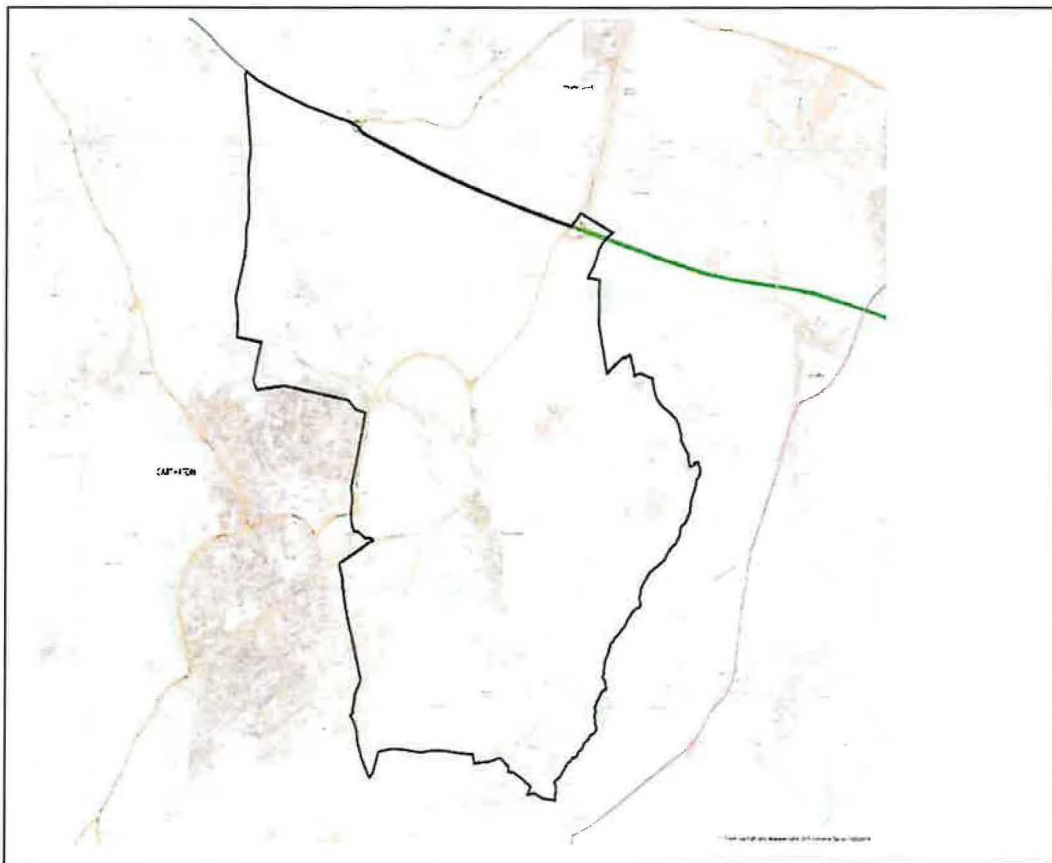
- 2.10 In order to be able to decide whether a SEA will be required, the Council needs to know about the policies and proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan, and in particular, as follows:
- how they might affect the environment, community, or economy
  - whether they propose a higher level of development than is already identified in WOLP planning policies
  - whether any of the proposals are likely to affect a "sensitive area", such as a Site of special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or designated European Site for nature conservation (Special Area of Conservation SAC, Special Protection Area 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
- 2.11 Available information, for example, from Defra MAGIC maps, Environment Agency flood risk maps, the Council's evidence base for the WODC Local Plan, and the evidence base for the BNNP, together with professional judgment, was used to identify the sensitivity of the Brize Norton area environment and whether significant effects are likely that have not been previously assessed through SA/SEA, such that an SEA would be required, and whether an HRA/Appropriate Assessment is necessary.



### 3.0 THE BRIZE NORTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2031 (BNNP)

#### Context

- 3.1 The Brize Norton Parish Council (BNPC)<sup>22</sup> is the qualifying body designated for the purpose of preparing the BNNP and who have approved the draft plan for submission to WODC for SEA/HRA screening. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) on behalf of the BNPC has progressed the draft BNNP.
- 3.2 The village and civic parish of Brize Norton is located in Oxfordshire between the towns of Carterton to the west and Bampton to the south, and the villages of Curbridge to the east and Minster Lovell to the north. The Brize Norton Parish was formally designated<sup>23</sup> as a Neighbourhood Area by the West Oxfordshire District Council<sup>24</sup> on 8 May 2017 and the boundary is shown in the figure following:



**Figure 3.1: Boundary for the Area Designation of the Brize Norton Neighbourhood Area**

<sup>22</sup> <https://brizenortonplan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/REG-14-Version-8-lr.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Localism Act 2011

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-plans-in-development/>

- 3.3 The BNNP must be in general conformity with the strategic policies set out in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan WOLP, 2031<sup>25</sup>(adopted September 2018). Brize Norton is located within the Carterton sub-area. The strategy for the sub-area, as set out in Policy CA5, focuses new housing, supporting facilities and additional employment opportunities at Carterton. New development in the rest of the sub-area will be limited to meeting local community and business needs. The delivery figure of 2,680 new homes for the sub-area includes a 700 unit housing development on land east of Carterton, in the Parish of Brize Norton, on which building has commenced.
- 3.5 The BNNP must also be in general conformity with the Oxfordshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan 2031 (Core Strategy<sup>26</sup> adopted 2017). A Mineral Strategic Resource Area for crushed rock (Policy M3) is shown in the northern part of the parish area and also designated as a Minerals Safeguarding Area (Policy M8) for crushed rock. The A40 is defined as a Strategic Lorry Through Route (Policies W4 and C10). The Minerals & Waste Local Plan Site Allocations is still being prepared.
- 3.6 The new Oxfordshire Joint Plan 2050<sup>27</sup> was at early stages of preparation with consultation in 2021 on a range of planning policy options and a series of spatial strategy options for Oxfordshire. However, recently (August 2022) it was reported<sup>28</sup> that the five local planning authorities were unable to reach agreement on the approach to planning for future housing needs and each authority, including WODC, will now focus on individual Local Plans.
- 3.7 This SEA & HRA screening has been carried out on the pre-submission draft BNNP dated August 2023. This Report sets out the screening assessments and decisions to demonstrate that due processes have been followed in line with regulatory requirements.

### **The draft Brize Norton NP 2031 (Pre-Submission Draft August 2023)**

- 3.8 The overall vision for the BNNP is:

*"To support sustainable development that meets the needs of residents now and in the future, while retaining Brize Norton's separate identity as a rural parish adjacent to, but separate from, the town of Carterton. To protect and where possible enhance our rural environment whilst also acknowledging that RAF Brize Norton will have an ongoing influence over certain elements of our lifestyle."*

---

<sup>25</sup><https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/localplan2031#>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/minerals-and-waste-policy/core-strategy#>

<sup>27</sup><https://oxfordshireplan.org/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/uncategorised/joint-statement-from-the-leaders-of-south-oxfordshire-district-council-vale-of-white-horse-district-council-cherwell-district-council-oxford-city-council-and-west-oxfordshire-district-council/>



- 3.9 The BNNP Objectives are grouped within four themes, as follows:

**CHARACTER, HERITAGE, AND LANDSCAPE**

- *To conserve and, where possible, enhance the intrinsic character of the Parish of Brize Norton.*
- *To avoid coalescence with RAF Brize Norton and Carterton*
- *To preserve the high-quality and accessible countryside setting of the village, open landscapes and key views*

**ENVIRONMENT**

- *To protect important green spaces from development*

**FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

- *To protect community facilities and services from unnecessary loss and encourage proposals to sustain and improve their viability.*

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

- *To support sustainable development that meets the needs of residents now and in the future*

- 3.10 The BNNP comprises eight sections with the first four sections providing an introduction and contexts. Section 5 presents the sustainability challenges. Sections 6-7 set out the Vision, Objectives & Policies (CLH1-4, ENV1, CF1, SD1), as follows:

- CLH1 Landscape Character
- CLH2 Key Local Views
- CLH3 Strategic Buffer Zone & Settlement Areas
- CLH4 Village Character & Design
- ENV1 Local Green Spaces
- CF1 Community Facilities & Infrastructure
- SD1 Sustainable Development

- 3.11 Section 8 provides the commitments to implementation and monitoring. The plan is supported by maps and appendices. The BNNP has not identified or allocated sites for future housing development because there is no specific expectation or requirement in the WOLP to allocate additional housing in the parish. Paragraph 4.2 of the draft BNNP sets out the spatial planning scenario with currently 383 existing dwellings in Brize Norton (360 within the village boundary) and the new 700 home development on the western boundary of Brize Norton that has commenced development. Paragraph 4.3 thus explains further that the BNNP does not identify or allocate further sites for future development.



## 4.0 SEA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 West Oxfordshire District Council, as the responsible authority, consider that the Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan (BNNP) 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 BNNP 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 BNNP 2031 (Pre-Submission Draft August 2023)**

Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regulations)	Are significant environmental effects likely? Yes/ No	
	Justification and evidence	
1.The characteristics of plans, having regard, in particular, to:		
(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	No	The NP does not propose allocation of sites for development projects & thus, the degree to which the plan sets a framework for new development projects is limited. However, the BNNP does seek to influence housing development through requirements for preserving landscape character, avoiding coalescence, and conserving village character and design (Policies CLH1-4);

Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regulations)	Are significant environmental effects likely? Yes/ No  Justification and evidence
conditions or by allocating resources	<p>protecting green spaces (Policy ENV1); protecting community facilities &amp; services (Policy CF1); and delivering sustainable development (Policy SD1).</p> <p>Policy CLH1 supports residential development proposals that relate well and seek to enhance the distinctive character and identity of the village. Policy CLH2 aims to protect local landscape character paying special attention to long distance views including towards the Area of Landscape Value and key views into and out of the village of Brize Norton. Policy CLH3 seeks to avoid adverse impacts &amp; coalescence between Brize Norton, RAF Brize Norton, &amp; Carterton – local green spaces are designated within the Green Corridor/Strategic Buffer Zone. Policy CLH4, together with the Brize Norton Design Code, supports new residential development that relates well and seeks to enhance the distinctive character &amp; identity of the village.</p> <p>Policy ENV1 seeks to protect important green spaces, and designates 5 areas as locations for Local Green Space (LGS) where new development will not be supported except in very special circumstances. Some of these LGSs include the Strategic Buffer Zone areas between Brize Norton, RAF Brize Norton, and Carterton.</p> <p>Policy CF1 seeks to protect community facilities &amp; services from unnecessary loss and encourage proposals to sustain &amp; improve their viability.</p> <p>Policy SD1 sets out a list of matters that will be used to guide the acceptability of planning applications, with regard to other policies in the BNNP and the Brize Norton Design Code. Matters relate to flood risk, water efficiency, the historic environment, 20% biodiversity net gain, sustainable transport modes, communication services, application of the net zero carbon target, and avoidance of increases in traffic flows – notably along Station Road.</p> <p>The Local Plan was subject to SA/SEA, including the strategic policy for the Carterton sub-area, and this concluded that there were no significant negative residual effects arising from Policies in the Plan.</p> <p>The BNNP does seek to influence the framework for development projects and other activities; and there could be the potential for environmental effects. However, the BNNP is not located within any particularly significant environmental sensitivity, for example, it is not located within the AONB nor the Green Belt. The higher-level SA/SEA has been undertaken during the preparation of the WOLP.</p>



Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regulations)	Are significant environmental effects likely? Yes/ No  Justification and evidence	
		Thus, the extent of such influence from the BNNP is limited as it is very localised and no sites are proposed.
(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 adopted 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.
<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	No	This has been tested through SA/SEA at the Local Plan level & with strong mitigation measures through LP policies, the SA/SEA concluded that there will be no significant residual negative environmental effects. The BNNP does not propose allocation of sites for development projects.
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects	No	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 (eg. due to accidents)	No	No significant negative 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	No	The BNNP does not propose allocation of sites for development projects. The geographical size of the plan area is small, and the number of dwellings is small at 383 – to be increased to 1181 upon completion of the



Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regulations)	Are significant environmental effects likely? Yes/ No  Justification and evidence	
population likely to be affected);		development on the western boundary of the village. Therefore, no likely significant adverse effects.
(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;	No	<p>As above. No likely significant negative effects on locally important characteristics – the BNNP does not propose allocation of sites for development projects.</p> <p>The BNNP has identified the vulnerability of the local area's character &amp; identity to coalescence between Brize Norton, RAF Brize Norton, and Carterton.</p> <p>The BNNP has identified locally important landscape characteristics that contribute to the character of this part of West Oxfordshire – the rolling arable landscape with hedgerows, woodlands, and views. It has also identified the ecologically diverse Brook Furlong area.</p> <p>The BNNP has identified locally important green spaces, including allotments, Thames Water SuDS area, sports pitches, and a country park that are of local value such that the BNNP seeks formal designation.</p> <p>The BNNP is not within any area that has exceeded environmental quality standards, for example, it is not within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).<sup>29</sup></p> <p>The watercourses through and around the BNNP area are subject to low flood risk from rivers<sup>30</sup>.</p>
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	No	<p>The BNNP area is not within the Green Belt that is located over 14km to the east, nor within/near the Cotswolds AONB located approx. 2.5 km to the north and approx.. 9 km to the west.</p> <p>There are some 26 Listed Buildings<sup>31</sup> and one Scheduled Monument within the BNNP area. Historic assets and their settings are protected by LP Policy EH9 Historic Environment, supported by other policies such as OS4 that provide clear mitigation measures. The SA of the Local Plan considered that there should be sufficient mitigation provided by the LP Policies to reduce any potential negative effects to at least neutral.</p> <p>There are no Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites within or nearby to the Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan boundary<sup>32</sup>. The nearest internationally protected Special Area of Conservation (SAC)<sup>33</sup> is Oxford Meadows located over 15 km to the east of the BNNP area. WOLP Policy EH3 Biodiversity &amp; Geodiversity specifically refers to</p>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/noise-pests-pollution-and-air-quality/air-quality/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk/map>

<sup>31</sup> <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

<sup>32</sup> <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

<sup>33</sup> <https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0012845>

Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regulations)	Are significant environmental effects likely? Yes/ No  Justification and evidence
	<p>the Oxford Meadow SAC &amp; ensures that there is embedded policy mitigation in place.</p> <p>The HRA (June 2018)<sup>34</sup> of the Local Plan concluded that likely significant effects will not occur, either alone, or in combination, on the integrity of any European designated site. HRA screening of the draft BNNP concluded that there will not be any adverse effects on the integrity of designated sites due to the limited size and extent of any likely development in Brize Norton and the distance from and/or absence of identified environmental pathways to any sites.</p> <p>There are no National or Local Nature Reserves<sup>35</sup> (LNR or NNR) located within or near to the Brize Norton area. There are two nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest SSSI<sup>36</sup> outside the BNNP but nearby with Worsham Lane SSSI some 2 km to the north-east of the centre of the village, and Alvescot Meadows SSSI approx. 4km to the south-west; the BNNP area is within the outer impact risk zone for these SSSIs.</p> <p>WOLP Policy EH3 Biodiversity &amp; Geodiversity avoids loss, deterioration, or harm to locally important wildlife &amp; habitats and net gain in biodiversity is sought from new development. WOLP Policies to protect water quality &amp; resources are provided through Policy EH8 Environmental Protection &amp; EH7 Flood Risk.</p> <p>The SA of the Local Plan considered that there should be sufficient mitigation provided by LP Policies to reduce any potential negative effects on important biodiversity to at least neutral. Policy EH3 Biodiversity &amp; Geodiversity requires an overall net gain in biodiversity and impacts on geodiversity to be minimised. LP Policy EH6 Environmental Protection and Policy OS3 Prudent Use of Natural Resources also apply.</p> <p>The Local Plan was adopted in September 2018; it was subject to iterative SA/SEA and HRA that independent examination found to be sound. Therefore, the approach &amp; policies in the BNNP refer to Policies in the Local Plan that have been previously subject to SA/SEA (and HRA), found sound, and adopted.</p> <p>It is considered that the WOLP SA/SEA (&amp; HRA) remain valid &amp; that there is no new material or relevant information that should be considered.</p>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/localplan2031#>

<sup>35</sup> <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

<sup>36</sup> <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>



## 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 draft Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan (BNNP2031, August 2023) is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and thus does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This decision is made for the following key reasons:
- The likely significant effects on the environment in the NP area were identified at an early stage of plan development during initial investigations for strategic options for the Local Plan – all subject to SA incorporating SEA. Mitigation measures for negative effects have been embedded in the Local Plan to 2031 (adopted September 2018) through the Carterton sub-area strategy. Further mitigation measures are provided through other Local Plan Policies such as H1, EH1, EH2, EH9 & OS4 - ensuring that there will be no residual significant negative effects. The BNNP does not propose to allocate any sites for development projects.
  - There will be no significant negative effects on the nationally designated and locally important environmental and cultural heritage assets and settings of the village.
  - Likely significant effects have been previously assessed through SA incorporating SEA and therefore, further SEA of the BNNP is not required.
  - There will not be any adverse effects on the integrity of European sites designated for nature conservation due to the limited size and extent of any likely development in Brize Norton and the distance from and/or absence of identified environmental pathways to any designated sites.



## 6.0 HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT (HRA) SCREENING

- 6.1 There are no Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites within or nearby to the Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan boundary<sup>37</sup>. The nearest European designated site Oxford Meadows SAC is over 1.5km to the east of the village at its nearest boundary edge. It is unlikely that there would be environmental pathways indicated through the drains, ponds, and watercourses in the BNNP area. There is the extant protection provided by the WOLP Policies – including Policy EH3 that specifically refers to the Oxford Meadows SAC and thus ensures protection.
- 6.2 The HRA Report that accompanied the West Oxfordshire Local Plan to 2031 concluded that the development proposed in the Local Plan will not lead to likely significant effects either alone or in-combination with other plans or programmes. The HRA studies<sup>38</sup> were updated in line with recent EU Court Judgments in 2018 and confirmed that the development proposed through the WODC Local Plan in the Carterton sub-area and through implementation of the Local plan as a whole would not lead to likely significant effects either alone or in-combination with other plans or programmes. The updated HRA Report concluded that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site.
- 6.3 In consideration of the small geographical area of the BNNP, and its distance from European sites outside the BNNP and Local Plan boundaries, this HRA screening considers that the BNNP is not likely to have significant effects on EU designated sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. The implications of effects from planned development on the integrity of European sites has been previously tested through HRA of the Local Plan 2031. The HRA of the Local Plan remains valid and there is no new material and relevant information that should be considered.

<sup>37</sup> <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/1867474/West-Oxfordshire-Local-Plan-2018-HRA-June-2018.pdf>

## 7.0 STATUTORY SCREENING CONSULTATION & OVERALL CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This Screening Report was sent to the statutory environmental bodies (Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural England) for the formal five weeks consultation to demonstrate that due processes have been undertaken to screen the draft Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan 2031 (August 2023) with regard to HRA and SEA.
- 7.2 No comments were received from the Environment Agency. Historic England advised that they concur with the Council that the preparation of a SEA is not required. Natural England advised that they do not have any specific comments on the SEA & HRA screening report. Therefore, the statutory environmental bodies have been formally consulted with and the SEA and HRA screening decision has been confirmed. The draft Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan (BNNP2031, August 2023) is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and thus does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).







Historic England

By email only to: [Astrid.Harvey@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:Astrid.Harvey@westoxon.gov.uk)

Our ref: PL00794243

Your ref: Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan SEA

Main: 020 7973 3700

[e-seast@historicengland.org.uk](mailto:e-seast@historicengland.org.uk)

[louise.dandy@historicengland.org.uk](mailto:louise.dandy@historicengland.org.uk)

Date: 30/09/2024

Dear Sir or Madam

## Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan Review SEA Screening Opinion

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on this 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. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Brize Norton Neighbourhood Plan ) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied.

The information supplied indicates that the plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We also note that the plan does not propose to 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 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.



Historic England, 4th Floor, The Atrium, Cannon Bridge House, 25 Dowgate Hill, London EC4R 2YA

Telephone 020 7973 3700 [HistoricEngland.org.uk](http://HistoricEngland.org.uk)

Please note that Historic England operates an access to information policy.

Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available.





Historic England

We should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by you with your correspondence. 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) 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.

Please do contact me, via email if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

**Louise Dandy**  
Historic Places Adviser



Historic England, 4th Floor, The Atrium, Cannon Bridge House, 25 Dowgate Hill, London EC4R 2YA

Telephone 020 7973 3700 [HistoricEngland.org.uk](http://HistoricEngland.org.uk)

Please note that Historic England operates an access to information policy.

Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available.



Date: 20 November 2023  
Our ref: 453147  
Your ref: Brize Norton NDP SEA/HRA screening



Astrid.Harvey@westoxon.gov.uk

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Hornbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
Electra Way  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Astrid

**Brize Norton Neighbourhood Development Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment & Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 12 October 2023

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.

Natural England is a statutory consultee in neighbourhood planning and must be consulted on draft neighbourhood development plans by the Parish/Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums where they consider our interests would be affected by the proposals made.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment - Screening**

Where Neighbourhood Plans could have significant environmental effects, they may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended). Further guidance on deciding whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects and the requirements for consulting Natural England on SEA are set out in the [planning practice guidance](#).

Planning practice guidance also outlines that if an appropriate assessment is required for your neighbourhood plan this will also engage the need for a SEA. One of the basic conditions that will be tested by the independent examiner is whether the neighbourhood plan is compatible with European obligations, including those under the SEA Directive. Where a SEA is required it should be prepared in accordance with [regulation 12](#) of the SEA Regulations.

**Habitats Regulations Assessment – screening and appropriate assessment requirements**

Where a neighbourhood plan could potentially affect a '[habitats site](#)', it will be necessary to screen the plan in relation to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017), as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations'). Where likely significant effects are identified, it will be necessary to undertake an appropriate assessment of the neighbourhood plan and, if needed, identify and secure appropriate mitigation measures to ensure the plan does not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the habitats site.

**In accordance with Schedule 2 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as**



**amended), a neighbourhood plan cannot be made if it breaches the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).**

A screening exercise should be undertaken if there is any doubt about the possible effects of the plan on the habitats site(s). This will be particularly important if a neighbourhood plan is to progress **before** a local plan and/or the neighbourhood plan proposes development which has not been assessed and/or included in the Habitats Regulations Assessment for the local plan. Where mitigation is necessary to ensure no effects then this will need to be properly assessed via an appropriate assessment.

**Natural England does not have any specific comments on the Brize Norton SEA/HRA draft screening report or the regulation 14 draft neighbourhood plan.**

However, we refer you to the attached annex which covers the issues and opportunities that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

For any further consultations on your plan, please contact: [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

Yours sincerely

Laura Elphick  
Consultations Team

## Annex 1 - Neighbourhood planning and the natural environment: information, issues and opportunities

### Natural environment information sources

The [Magic](http://magic.defra.gov.uk/)<sup>1</sup> website will provide you with much of the nationally held natural environment data for your plan area. The most relevant layers for you to consider are: **Agricultural Land Classification**, **Ancient Woodland**, **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**, **Local Nature Reserves**, **National Parks (England)**, **National Trails**, **Priority Habitat Inventory**, **public rights of way (on the Ordnance Survey base map)** and **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (including their impact risk zones)**. Local environmental record centres may hold a range of additional information on the natural environment. A list of local record centres is available from [the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres](http://www.localrecordscentres.org.uk/).

**Priority habitats** are those habitats of particular importance for nature conservation, and the list of them can be found [here](#)<sup>2</sup>. Most of these will be mapped either as **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**, on the Magic website or as **Local Wildlife Sites**. Your local planning authority should be able to supply you with the locations of Local Wildlife Sites.

**National Character Areas** (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each character area is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. NCA profiles contain descriptions of the area and statements of environmental opportunity, which may be useful to inform proposals in your plan. NCA information can be found [here](#)<sup>3</sup>.

There may also be a local **landscape character assessment** covering your area. This is a tool to help understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify the features that give it a sense of place. It can help to inform, plan and manage change in the area. Your local planning authority should be able to help you access these if you can't find them online.

If your neighbourhood planning area is within or adjacent to a **National Park** or **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (AONB), the relevant National Park/AONB Management Plan for the area will set out useful information about the protected landscape. You can access the plans on from the relevant National Park Authority or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty website.

General mapped information on **soil types** and **Agricultural Land Classification** is available (under 'landscape') on the [Magic](http://magic.defra.gov.uk/)<sup>4</sup> website and also from the [LandIS website](http://www.landis.org.uk/)<sup>5</sup>, which contains more information about obtaining soil data.

### Natural environment issues to consider

The [National Planning Policy Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2)<sup>6</sup> sets out national planning policy on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. [Planning Practice Guidance](http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/)<sup>7</sup> sets out supporting guidance.

Your local planning authority should be able to provide you with further advice on the potential impacts of your plan or order on the natural environment and the need for any environmental assessments.

### Landscape

Your plans or orders may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes. You may want to consider identifying distinctive local landscape features or characteristics such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls and think about how any new development proposals can respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making>

<sup>4</sup> <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.landis.org.uk/index.cfm>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

<sup>7</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/>



If you are proposing development within or close to a protected landscape (National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or other sensitive location, we recommend that you carry out a landscape assessment of the proposal. Landscape assessments can help you to choose the most appropriate sites for development and help to avoid or minimise impacts of development on the landscape through careful siting, design and landscaping.

### Wildlife habitats

Some proposals can have adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites or other priority habitats (listed [here](#)<sup>8</sup>), such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or [Ancient woodland](#)<sup>9</sup>. If there are likely to be any adverse impacts you'll need to think about how such impacts can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

### Priority and protected species

You'll also want to consider whether any proposals might affect priority species (listed [here](#)<sup>10</sup>) or protected species. To help you do this, Natural England has produced advice [here](#)<sup>11</sup> to help understand the impact of particular developments on protected species.

### Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services for society. It is a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution. If you are proposing development, you should seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of a higher quality in line with National Planning Policy Framework para 112. For more information, see [Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land](#)<sup>12</sup>.

## **Improving your natural environment**

Your plan or order can offer exciting opportunities to enhance your local environment and should provide net gains for biodiversity in line with the [National Planning Policy Framework](#). If you are setting out policies on new development or proposing sites for development, you should follow the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy and seek to ensure impacts on habitats are avoided or minimised before considering opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. You may wish to consider identifying what environmental features you want to be retained or enhanced or new features you would like to see created as part of any new development and how these could contribute to biodiversity net gain and wider environmental goals.

Opportunities for environmental enhancement might include:

- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Think about how lighting can be best managed to reduce impacts on wildlife.
- Adding a green roof to new buildings.
- Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-land-assess-proposals-for-development/guide-to-assessing-development-proposals-on-agricultural-land>

[Defra's Biodiversity Metric](#) should be used to understand the baseline biodiversity value of proposed development sites and may be used to calculate biodiversity losses and gains where detailed site development proposals are known. For small development sites the [Small Sites Metric](#) may be used. This is a simplified version of [Defra's Biodiversity Metric](#) and is designed for use where certain criteria are met.

Where on site measures for biodiversity net gain are not possible, you should consider off site measures.

You may also want to consider enhancing your local area in other ways, for example by:

- Setting out in your plan how you would like to implement elements of a wider Green Infrastructure Strategy (if one exists) in your community.
- Assessing needs for accessible greenspace and setting out proposals to address any deficiencies or enhance provision. Natural England's [Green Infrastructure Framework](#) sets out further information on green infrastructure standards and principles
- Identifying green areas of particular importance for special protection through Local Green Space designation (see [Planning Practice Guidance](#)<sup>13</sup>).
- Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks or on verges, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).
- Planting additional street trees.
- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition, or clearing away an eyesore).

Natural England's [Environmental Benefits from Nature tool](#) may be used to identify opportunities to enhance wider benefits from nature and to avoid and minimise any negative impacts. It is designed to work alongside [Defra's Biodiversity Metric](#) and is available as a beta test version.

---

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space>

