



Aylesbury Vale District Council

**Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening
Report**

**For the Stewkley Neighbourhood Development
Plan**

November 2016

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This screening statement considers whether the contents of the Stewkley Neighbourhood Development Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 1.2 The screening process is based upon consideration of standard criteria to determine whether the plan is likely to have “significant environmental effects”. The result of AVDC’s screening process is detailed in this Screening Statement.
- 1.3 The legislative background set out below outlines the regulations that require the need for this screening exercise. Section 4, provides a screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the policies in the Stewkley Neighbourhood Development Plan and whether there is a need for a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

2. Legislative Background

- 2.1 The basis for SEA and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) legislation is the European Directive 2001/42/EC. This was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Detailed Guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication ‘A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’¹.
- 2.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 required SA to be produced for all Local Development Documents to meet the requirement of the EU Directive on SEA. It is considered best practice to incorporate requirements of the SEA Directive into an SA.
- 2.3 In some cases SEA will be required for Neighbourhood Plans, however a SA is not a requirement for a Neighbourhood Development Plan. Part of meeting the ‘Basic Conditions’ is to show how the plan achieves sustainable development. The Sustainability Appraisal process is an established method and a well recognised ‘best practice’ method for doing this. It is therefore advised, where an SEA is identified as a requirement, an optional SA should be incorporated with SEA, this is so not just the environmental aspects of sustainability are considered, but instead social and economic aspects of sustainability are also considered. This should be at a level of detail that is appropriate to the content of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

¹‘A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-directive-guidance> (ODPM 2005)

3. Criteria for Assessing the Effects of Neighbourhood Development Plans

3.1 Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below²:

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

- the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
- the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
- environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).

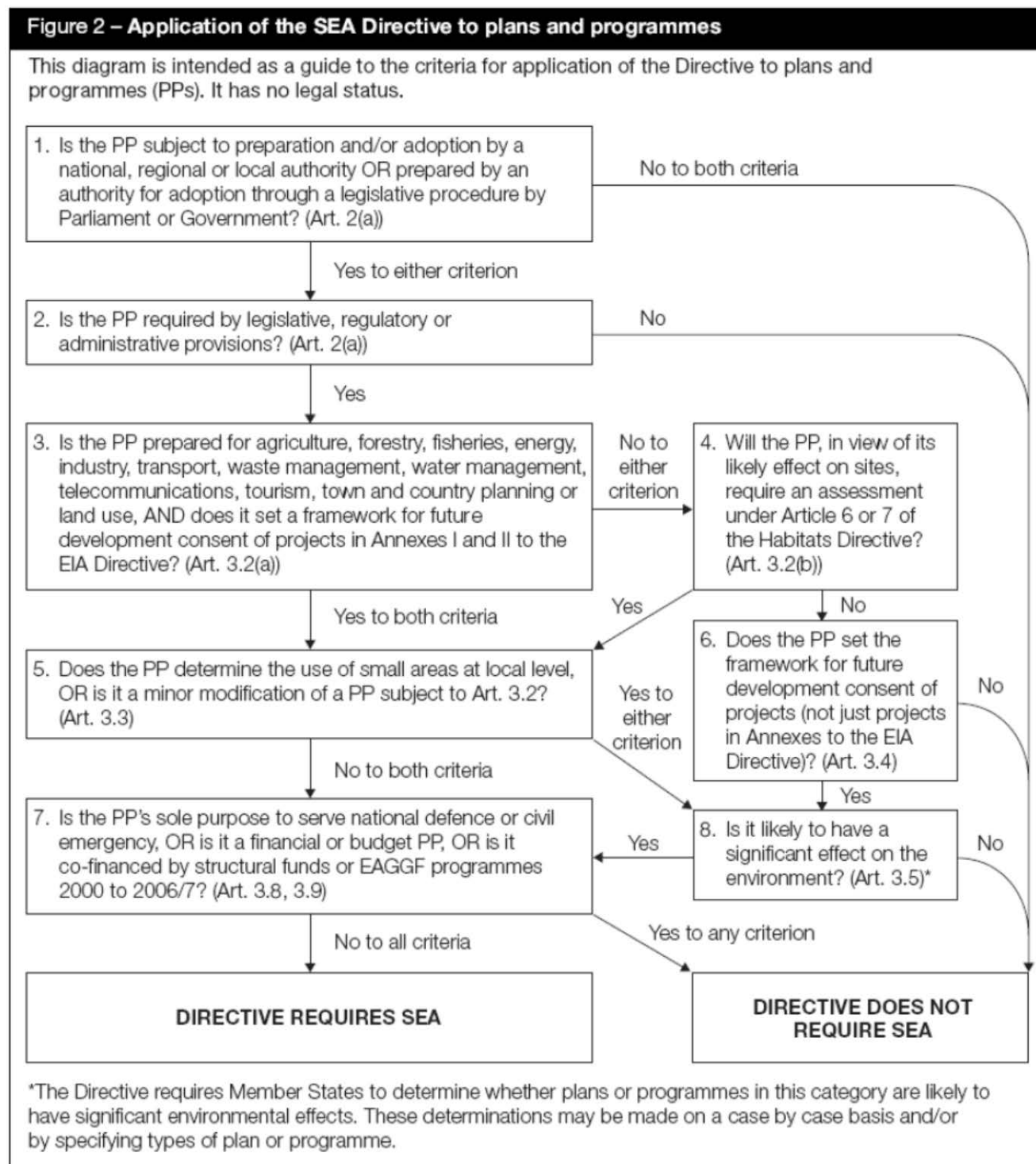
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
- the cumulative nature of the effects,
- the transboundary nature of the effects,
- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
 - intensive land-use,
 - the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

² Source: Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC

4. Assessment

4.1 The diagram below illustrates the process for screening a planning document to ascertain whether a full SEA is required.



4.2 The table below shows the assessment of whether the Stewkley Neighbourhood Development Plan will require a full SEA. The questions below are drawn from the above diagram which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

Stage	Y/ N	Reason
1. Is the plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Y	The Neighbourhood Development Plan will be 'made' by a Local Planning Authority, Aylesbury Vale District Council. The Plan is prepared by the relevant Qualifying Body, although modifications to the plan can be carried out by the Local Planning Authority once the Plan has been submitted, if necessary to meet the basic conditions.
2. Is the plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	N	The Neighbourhood Development Plan is an optional plan produced by Stewkley Parish Council.
3. Is the plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	N	The Neighbourhood Development Plan is prepared for town and country planning purposes, but it does not set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive (Art 3.2(a)).
4. Will the plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	N	The neighbourhood plan area does not include and is not close to any Natura 2000 sites (Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas). There may be Great Crested Newt (s) in the vicinity of High Street/ fields east or west but their presence has not been confirmed (the last recorded sighting was 2005).
5. Does the plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a plan subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Y	The Neighbourhood Development Plan is proposing to make allocations to accommodate potentially around 120 dwellings. It is possible areas of land might be allocated for commercial use and local green space designations could be identified. Local Green Space designation would not change the current use of the land.
6. Does the plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Y	The Neighbourhood Development Plan will set a framework for future development consents of projects, including land allocated for housing and employment.
7. Is the plans sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	N	The purpose of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is not for any of the projects listed in Art 3.8, 3.9.

8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	Y	The Neighbourhood Development Plan has the potential to have a significant effect on the environment as the policies will determine the future use of land and will guide development in the area.
1 (a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	Y	The Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan will set out a spatial vision for the designated Neighbourhood Area and provide a framework for proposals for development such as housing, community facilities employment and the protection of valued open space.
1 (b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	N	<p>The Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan, where possible, will respond to rather than influence other plans or programmes. A Neighbourhood Plan can only provide policies for the area it covers while the policies at the District and National level provide a strategic context for the Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan to be in general conformity with.</p> <p>None of the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan have a direct impact on other plans in neighbouring areas.</p>
1 (c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	N	<p>Proposals to be set out in the Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan will look to balance environmental, social and economic considerations of sustainable development. However the Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan recognises that for rural communities such as Stewkley, the importance of the surrounding environment is particularly acute.</p> <p>It is considered that the Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan will have a positive impact on local environmental assets and places valued by local people in the Neighbourhood Area.</p>
1(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan	N	Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan will allocate housing and potentially employment sites. The housing allocations will be for potentially around 120 dwellings spread over the plan period and on more than one site. It is likely these will have to be built on greenfield land. The impact on traffic flow from the proposed developments is not expected to be a concern given that the overall levels of residential growth proposed are unlikely to give rise to significant additional car movements. Employment provision could potentially create more of an impact on highways and air quality but if

		<p>employment provision is allocated in Stewkley it is likely to be too smaller scale to be of particular concern.</p> <p>The Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan could potentially look to address transport problems through policies in the plan which would have a positive impact on the environment.</p> <p>There are no Air Quality Management Areas within or near to the Neighbourhood Area.</p>
1 (e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	N	The Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan is to be developed in general conformity with the AVDLP, the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Plan and national policy. The plan has no relevance to the implementation of community legislation.
2 (a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	N	<p>As the Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan is proposing development there will be some element of environmental change involved in meeting the needs of people living and working in the parish. Impact will depend on the proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan, however it is highly unlikely these will be significant and have any irreversible damaging environmental impacts associated with the Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>There may be some minimal impact during the construction stage of housing/employment development but this will be short term and reversible. Any adverse environmental impacts will be minimised. The plan overall is intended to have a positive effect on sustainability.</p>
2 (b) the cumulative nature of the effects	N	It is highly unlikely there will be any negative cumulative effects of the policies, rather it could potentially have moderate positive effects. Any impact will be local in nature.
2 (c) the trans boundary nature of the effects	N	Effects will be local with no expected impacts on neighbouring areas.
2 (d) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	N	No risks have been identified.
2 (e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	N	The Neighbourhood Area covers an area which is 1,612ha and contains a population is of 1,840 residents (2011 census). Actual land allocated for development should be minimal in comparison to the total Neighbourhood Area.
2 (f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:	N	The Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to adversely affect the value and

	<p>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</p> <p>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards</p> <p>(iii) intensive land-use</p>		<p>vulnerability of the area in relation to its natural or cultural heritage. There is a large part of Stewkley within the Conservation Area. If anything it will provide greater support to enhance the setting of heritage, heritage assets and green spaces.</p> <p>The Stewkley Neighbourhood Plan potentially could include policies to improve the design of development within the village if it is deemed to be needed. Therefore the plan if anything will have a positive impact on the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and the areas heritage assets.</p> <p>There could also be specific policies to look to enhance recreation areas, green corridors and protect trees and hedgerows which will have a positive effect environmentally and help protect the rural character of Stewkley.</p>
	<p>2 (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The Chilterns Area of Outstanding National Beauty is approximately 12km to the south east of the parish but it is considered there would little or no impact on this designation by the Neighbourhood Plan considering the scale of development proposed.</p>

5.0 Screening Outcome for Stewkley Neighbourhood Development Plan

- 5.1 Having reviewed the criteria Aylesbury Vale District Council concludes that the Stewkley Neighbourhood Development Plan has some potential to have significant environmental effects beyond those expected by 'strategic' district-wide policies of the Local Plan, although the magnitude and location of these effects is difficult to ascertain at this stage of the plan making process. Therefore the best course of action is to produce a Strategic Environmental Assessment, particularly as this is a process that needs to be started in the early stages of the plan making process and cannot be retrofitted at a later stage. Although not a requirement, we would recommend this incorporates a Sustainability Appraisal to consider more widely the balance of sustainability and to help ensure the plan meets the basic conditions.