

Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan

2020 – 2038

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report

November 2021

Redbourn Parish Council
Redbourn Parish Centre
The Park
Redbourn
St Albans
Herts, AL3 7LR

<https://www.redbourn-pc.gov.uk/>

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Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Legislative Background.....	5
3. SEA – Criteria	6
4. SEA – Screening Assessment	11
5. HRA – Screening Assessment	16
6. SEA and HRA – Consultation.....	17
7. Conclusion	18
Appendix 1: Responses from the Relevant Bodies.....	19

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This screening report is designed to determine whether the Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan requires a full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and/or Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).
- 1.2 The purpose of the Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan is to provide planning policies to guide development in the designated Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan area (Figure 1).
- 1.3 An SEA evaluates the environmental effects of a plan before it is made. The SEA requirements are in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 1.4 A HRA identifies whether a plan is likely to have any significant effects on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. European sites are designated under the UK Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations').
- 1.5 In some circumstances, a Neighbourhood Plan can have significant environmental effects. One of the basic conditions that will be tested by the independent examiner is whether the making of the Plan is compatible with European Union Obligations.
- 1.6 St. Albans District Council has the responsibility to ensure that the SEA/HRA requirements have been met, and has provided Redbourn Parish Council, as the qualifying body preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, with an SEA/HRA screening opinion.
- 1.7 To do this, the report has:
 - a) Take into account the criteria specified in the European Directives; and
 - b) Consult the consultation bodies - Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England.
- 1.8 The Neighbourhood Development Plan sets out planning policies for Redbourn Parish Council. Once formally adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan carries the same legal weight as Local Development Plans adopted up by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), in this case St Albans District Council.

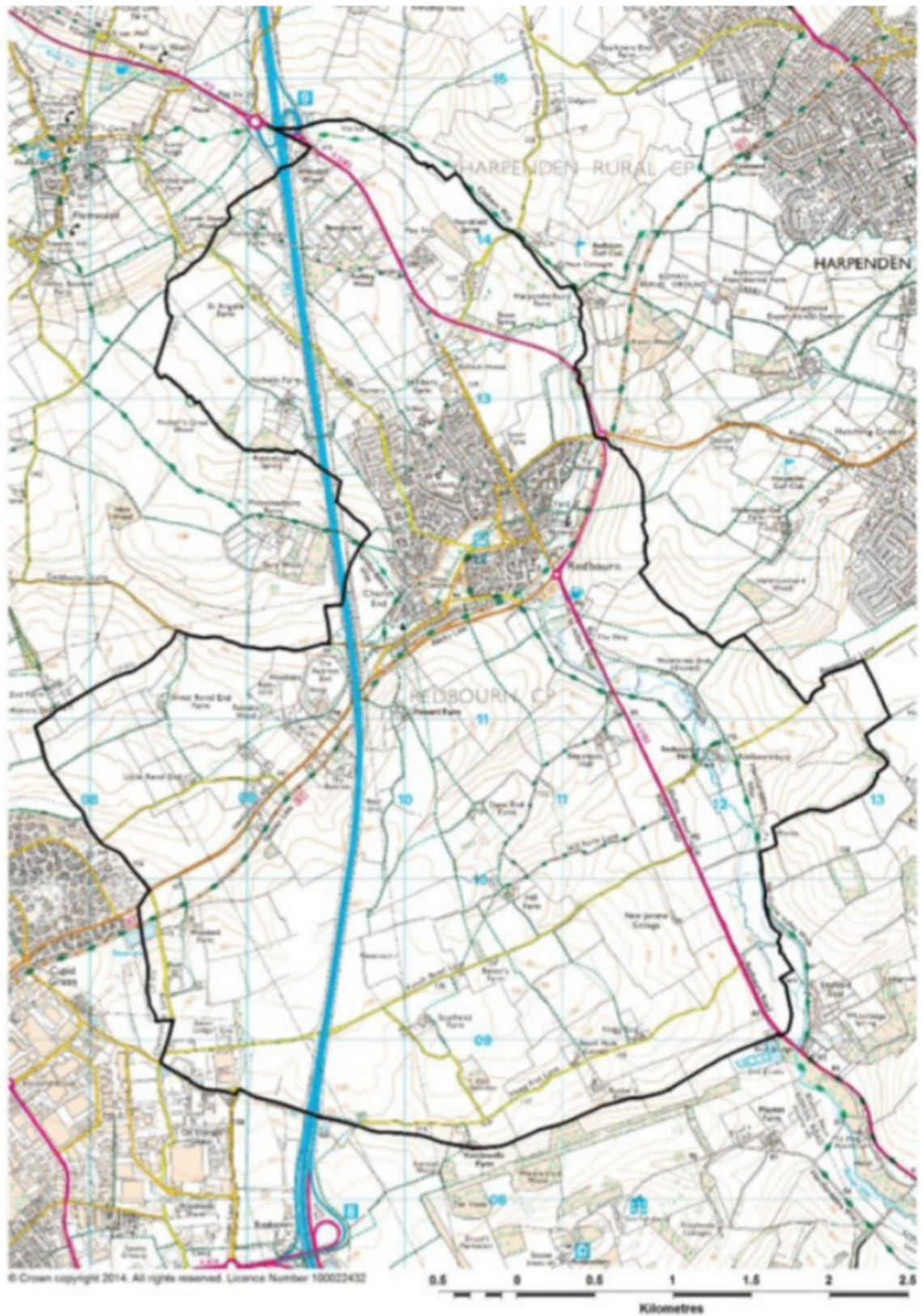


Figure 1. Map displaying the Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan Area

1.9 The Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan vision statement is:

'In 2038, Redbourn is still a pleasant village to live in. It has **retained its village feel** along with its particular individual characteristics, including its **high quality built heritage, high street** and **its green and spacious setting**.

Where development has taken place, this has been focused on **providing for Redbourn's changing needs**. The barrier created by not having enough of the type of properties that people want has been broken down. **Additional affordable housing (for rent) and smaller dwellings have been built**, enabling both young first-time buyers and older 'downsizers' to remain in the village (with all new dwellings built to Lifetime Homes standards so that they are capable of adaptation as people's needs change through their lives). This has been achieved **with development that is in keeping with the character of Redbourn**, in particular ensuring that historic and listed buildings remain protected.

Redbourn has become a **thriving hub for small, start-up businesses**. More residents now work locally.

The **High Street is thriving in both daytime and evening** and the appearance of the High Street reflects that. This has been anchored by the re-location of the Co-op to provide greater retail floorspace and parking provision at the former Bull Inn; and the relocation of the Redbourn Library to co-locate with the Fire Station at the northern end of the High Street, providing additional car parking for easy access to both the Library and High Street shops. The Redbourn Community Group's bus garage has been retained as part of the redevelopment, enabling the Group to help the less able members of the community. A pedestrian crossing has ensured easy access to the site.

Redbourn remains a village with a **distinct identity sitting in a rural setting**. Development has served to **improve access to the countryside** surrounding Redbourn, which itself is protected from inappropriate development. This means that more Redbourn **residents are able to enjoy the countryside** including the Ver Valley's Nature Reserve which is run by a local community group of volunteers.

The Climate Emergency has been adequately addressed through the provision of **high quality eco-designs** and **sensitively designed public transport and pedestrian and cycling routes**. Redbourn's **natural environment has been protected and enhanced**, and the village has a strong **offering of community facilities** that are accessible to all.

Redbourn Common is well loved and continues to provide a physical heart to the community, enjoyed for leisure activities by all. More formal leisure activities have been improved through the **enhancement of the Redbourn Leisure Centre**.

The proportion of journeys made by non-car modes has increased. This is not only due to the improved shopping on the High Street and number of local jobs, but also through **improved cycle links, bus services and footpaths to nearby towns**. This has been delivered through contributions from development and pride of place has been taken by **improvements to access along the Nickey Line**.'

1.10 To deliver this Vision, the following five Objectives have been established

Objective 1	Retain Redbourn's role as a village with a strong heritage located in a high quality and accessible countryside setting.
Objective 2	To provide for the changing housing needs of the community, particularly the growing need for affordable houses for rent and smaller properties by first-time buyers and older 'downsizers'
Objective 3	Make Redbourn a hub for start-up business and commercial enterprise.
Objective 4	Provide new community facilities and recreation space to address the needs of the growing population.
Objective 5	Increase walking and cycling movements through improved footpath and cycle path provision.

1.11 The current adopted St Albans Local Plan is The District Local Plan Review 1994¹. Local Plans "expired" after 27th September 2007 unless "saved", in whole or in part. In 2007, a Direction was made saving specified policies of the District Local Plan Review 1994, i.e. they are still part of the development plan for St Albans.

1.12 St Albans District Council had been in the process of preparing a new Local Plan for the district – the Local Plan 2018 - which would set out policies for development up to 2036. However, the emerging Local Plan 2018 was withdrawn on 19 November 2020 following its Examination². A new Local Plan is now being prepared but is still in its early stages. The St Albans City & District Council Local Development Scheme 2020-2023 (published January 2021) indicates that the new Local Plan will be submitted in Spring / Summer 2023, with adoption anticipated later that year. At the time of writing it is still at the evidence base stage. Therefore, the Local District Review 1994 provides the strategic context for the Redbourn Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

¹ <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/current-local-plan>

² <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/withdrawal-draft-local-plan-2018>

2. Legislative Background

- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the Environment'. This was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations.
- 2.2 The SEA Regulations include a definition of 'plans and programmes' to which the regulations apply, and which programmes are required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions.
- 2.3 The basis for HRA is Article 6 (3) and (4) of the EU Habitats Directive and Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).
- 2.4 Production of a Neighbourhood Development Plan is not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions. It is an optional process under the provision of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (subsequently amended by the Localism Act 2011). However, once a Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' it becomes part of the statutory development plan for the area to which it applies. As such, it therefore forms part of a plan that is required by legislative provisions (i.e: the St Albans Local Plan).

3. SEA – Criteria

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

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, 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 trans boundary 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; and;
- The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.

3.2 The following assessment considers the likelihood of the Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan (at September 2021) having significant effects on the environment.

Significant effect criteria	Assessment
<i>The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>The Plan will sit within the wider planning policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adopted Development Plan (the Local Plan Review 1994). The Neighbourhood Plan sets out policies that will be used to help determine planning applications within the Neighbourhood Plan area, adding local detail to the national and strategic policies to ensure that development happens in a way that is sympathetic to the existing context. It also seeks to safeguard important areas – including green spaces and historic assets – from detrimental impacts of development. For instance:</p> <p>Policy Red 3 (Local Green Space Designations): seeks to protect the most valuable green spaces within the neighbourhood plan area.</p> <p>Policy Red 6 (Suitable Sites for New Development): this policy sets out that development should be focussed to the most sustainable locations of the parish, within the built up area boundary.</p> <p>Policy Red 10 (High-Quality Design): sets out criteria to ensure that any new development is of a high quality and respects the context within which it is located.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy. 	<p>The Plan, once made, will form part of the development plan for the district, adding additional local detail to district-wide policies, for instance on local character and green space. In this way, it adds local detail that will have a direct influence on the way in which planning applications are considered.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development. 	<p>The Plan will sit within the wider planning policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adopted Development Plan (the Local Plan Review 1994). The Neighbourhood Plan sets out policies that will be used to help determine planning applications within the Neighbourhood Plan area, adding local detail to the national and strategic policies. It also seeks to safeguard sites – including green spaces and heritage assets – from detrimental impacts of development.</p> <p>A key factor for the Plan is promoting sustainable development. It does this by supporting new development to take place in the most sustainable parts of the parish, notably on sites within the built-up area boundary and with good access to the town's services and facilities. It then sets out locally specific criteria to</p>

	<p>ensure that any such development is in keeping with the local context, in terms of the built environment and wider landscape. It then sets out specific policies exploring how particular assets – both heritage and natural – should be safeguarded.</p> <p>Built environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Red 6 (Suitable Sites for New Development): this policy sets out that development should be focussed to the most sustainable locations of the parish, within the built up area boundary. <p>Policy Red 10 (High-Quality Design): sets out criteria to ensure that any new development is of a high quality and respects the context within which it is located.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Red 11 (Sustainable Design): sets out that new development is encouraged where it adopts sustainable approaches to design and construction. <p>Natural environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Red 3 (Local Green Space Designations): seeks to protect the most valuable green spaces within the neighbourhood plan area. • Policy Red 4 (Biodiversity): seeks to ensure all development proposals manage impacts on biodiversity and aim to secure a net biodiversity gain of 10% on-site.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme. 	<p>St Albans City and District Council formally declared a Climate Emergency on 10th July 2019. The St Albans City and District Council's Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy recognises the importance of water and climate change adaptation through Theme 6 of their Action Plan. Specifically, the Strategy states that "chalk streams such as the River Ver are at risk from over abstraction, pollution and climate change", adding that "they [chalk streams] depend upon a healthy flow of water and a variety of natural habitats to thrive". The Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan contains policies advocating for developments to provide net biodiversity gain of 10% on-site, as well as projects specifically promoting the restoration and conservation of the River Red, and tree planting and re-wilding initiatives.</p>

	The parish is also rich in built heritage assets and policies 6 and 12 add additional local detail to that contained at the strategic level to ensure that development proposals are in keeping with local character.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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). 	The Neighbourhood Plan is relevant to various aspects of Community legislation, such as environmental protection and conservation of biodiversity.
<i>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular to:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects. 	The Plan will be used to assist in the determination of planning applications within Redbourn Parish. The Neighbourhood Plan will set the local vision, objectives and policies to guide new development in the Redbourn Neighbourhood Area. The objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan are not in conflict with the objectives and policies of the Adopted Local Plan. The policies are support the need for sustainable development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cumulative nature of the effects. 	The Plan is not expected to result in negative cumulative effects as no site allocations are being considered.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The trans boundary nature of the effects. 	The Plan covers the area administered by the Redbourn Parish Council only. Because of the hierarchy of Neighbourhood Plan, national policy (NPPF) and Local Plan, policy decisions taken in respect of the Plan area will not have transboundary impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents). 	The Plan policies and proposals do not present significant or direct risks to human health or the environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected) 	The Plan area has a population of approximately 5,550 (mid-year 2019 estimates). Given that no site allocations are made through the Plan, the magnitude of its impacts are not expected to be significant.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: 	Redbourn includes one Conservation Area which comprises Redbourn Common and the High Street. Within the Conservation Area are concentrations of Grade II listed properties and locally listed buildings. These include St Mary's Church (Grade I listed),

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; - intensive land-use 	<p>Cumberland House and The Priory (both Grade II listed). In addition, The Aubreys Camp is an Iron Age Monument. These designated heritage assets benefit from NPPF protection. There are also non-statutory heritage assets which are equally important to the character and identity of Redbourn.</p> <p>The character of Redbourn derives from its scale and relationship with surrounding Green Belt, which comprises countryside, green and open spaces. The Neighbourhood Plan Area is relatively small and is occupied by the existing built-up area, as well as open spaces including Redbourn Common, Long Cutt Park, Hill Top Park, Flamsteadbury Park and Holts Meadow. The Plan does not seek to allocate sites. It does though seek to safeguard landscape quality through a series of policies identifying key local natural features</p> <p>Traffic levels can increase air pollution effects. There are no AQMAs in the Neighbourhood Plan area and no site allocations are being made that could lead to increased vehicles. The Plan does promote active travel, supporting provision for walking and cycling.</p> <p>Furthermore, since the plan does not seek to allocate sites the level of development proposed in the Plan is unlikely to lead to intensive land use and as such not affect the value and vulnerability of the area.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status. 	<p>The Neighbourhood area includes two Ancient Woodland sites, and the built-up area is surrounded by Green Belt designated land. The plan does not allocate any sites and as such is not expected to significantly impact on either of these.</p>

4. SEA – Screening Assessment

- 4.1 Planning Practice Guidance – Strategic environmental assessment requirements for neighbourhood plans (Paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 11-026-20140306³) states that,

“In some limited circumstances, where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a strategic environmental assessment. Draft neighbourhood plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This process is commonly referred to as a “screening” assessment and the requirements are set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

If likely significant environmental effects are identified, an environmental report must be prepared in accordance with paragraph (2) and (3) of regulation 12 of those Regulations.

One of the basic conditions that will be tested by the independent examiner is whether the making of the neighbourhood plan is compatible with European Union obligations (including under the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive).

To decide whether a draft neighbourhood plan might have significant environmental effects, it must be assessed (screened) at an early stage of the plan’s preparation according to the requirements set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These include a requirement to consult the environmental assessment consultation bodies.

Each consultation body will be able to advise on particular topics relevant to its specific area of expertise and responsibility, and the specific information that it holds.

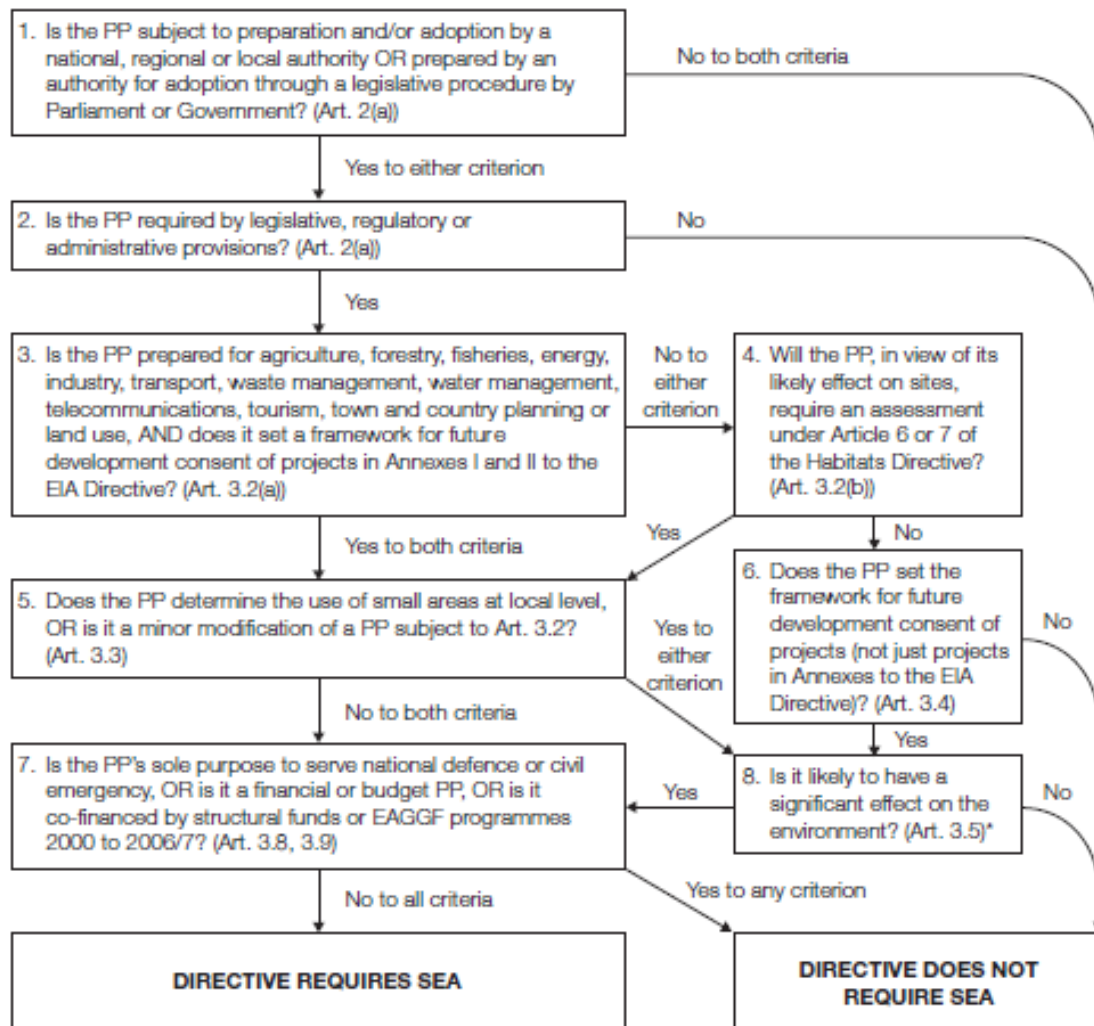
Where it is determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for the determination should be prepared. A copy of the statement must be submitted with the neighbourhood plan proposal and made available to the independent examiner.”

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

³<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal#covid19>

Figure 2 – Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

This diagram is intended as a guide to the criteria for application of the Directive to plans and programmes (PPs). It has no legal status.



*The Directive requires Member States to determine whether plans or programmes in this category are likely to have significant environmental effects. These determinations may be made on a case by case basis and/or by specifying types of plan or programme.

Source: A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2005)

- 4.3 The following assessment applies the questions from the diagram above. The answers determine whether the Neighbourhood Plan will require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Question	Yes/No	Response
1) Is the PP 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))	Yes	<p>The preparation and adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan is allowed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by Redbourn Parish Council as the relevant body and, subject to successful completion of the relevant processes as set out in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012, will be made by St. Albans City and District Council as the local authority to become part of the statutory Local Plan for that part of the Council's area.</p>
2) Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	<p>A Neighbourhood Development Plan is not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions. It is an optional process under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (amended by the Localism Act 2011). However, once a Neighbourhood Plan is made it becomes part of the statutory development plan for the area to which it applies. As such it forms part of a plan that is required by legislative provisions.</p>
3) Is the PP 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))	Yes	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is prepared for town and country planning and land use. The Neighbourhood Plan contains policies to determine the use of land at the local (parish) level (Art3 (3)).</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan will provide guidance against which planning applications will be assessed throughout the Parish Council's area, but it does not allocate any land for development.</p>

4) Will the PP, 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))	No	There are no Natura 2000 (Habitats Directive relevant) sites in the District or adjacent to / in the vicinity of the PP area, therefore an assessment is not required.
5) Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Yes	The Neighbourhood Plan will include policies for the use of land and buildings within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
6) Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3(4))	Yes	The Neighbourhood Plan will, together with national planning policy and Local Plan policy, be used for the determination of planning applications including new housing sites in the Redbourn Parish.
7) Is the PP's 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)	No	N/A
8) Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3(5))	No	<p>The Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate sites for development.</p> <p>Rather it proposes a series of policies to underpin the contribution of the natural and built environment to the parish and the way it is considered in planning policy.</p> <p>For instance, it describes the character of the Parish at a finer level to that included in the SADC Local Plan; it proposes the designation of Local Green Spaces; and it promotes the conservation of Redbourn's existing heritage assets.</p>

		<p>In this way, the Plan is considered to have a positive effect on the environment. The Plan is not therefore considered to have a significant effect on the environment</p> <p>SEA is Not Required</p>
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5. HRA – Screening Assessment

- 5.1 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 set out the requirement for neighbourhood plans to assess implications for European Sites (Regulation 106).
- 5.2 The St Albans Local Plan has been subject to multiple HRA screening updates since its publication in 1994 and has been found to be sound each time. The latest HRA screening update, in 2018⁴, concluded that it remains the case that the findings of the 2008 HRA Screening Report remain valid and the replacement to the St Albans Local Plan 1994, namely the Publication Draft St Albans Local Plan 2018, will not have likely significant effects on the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. As a result, it was considered that Appropriate Assessment was not required.
- 5.3 The information, findings and conclusions that were contained in the HRA Screening Update (September 2018) were subject to consultation with Natural England and other stakeholders as part of the Regulation 19 stage for the St Albans Local Plan
- 5.4 The Regulation 19 response from Natural England in relation to the Local Plan and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal/HRA stated that *“Natural England does not consider that this St Albans District Council Local Plan Publication 2018 poses any likely risk or opportunity in relation to our statutory purpose, and so does not wish to comment on this consultation.”*
- 5.5 Further clarification in relation to the HRA was sought from Natural England in March 2019 and in the resulting correspondence Natural England confirmed that they *“agree with the conclusion of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) that there will be no likely significant effects on any European Site”*.
- 5.6 The draft Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan Area is not directly connected with or necessary for the conservation management of a European site.
- 5.7 The Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate sites for development. There are no overlaps or interactions with the protected features of a site in a direct or indirect way as a result of the Plan, and as such it would not lead to any significant effects on a European site.
- 5.8 Proposed policies in the draft Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan concern sense of place, housing, services and facilities, getting around, and design. It is considered that these policies would not create additional risks of a significant effect on any recognised European sites.

⁴https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/planning-policy/examination-library/CD%20013%20St%20Albans%20Local%20Plan%20-%20HRA%20Screening%20Update%20March%202019_tcm15-67031.pdf

6. SEA and HRA – Consultation

- 6.1 St. Albans District Council consulted the consultation bodies (see 1.7) in October/November 2021. The consultation responses are attached to this report (Appendix 1), and all support St. Albans District Council's opinion that a full Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulations Assessment will not be necessary to accompany the Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.2 In summary:
- Environment Agency (EA) – Due to resource limitations, EA are focusing on strategic plans where the environmental risks and opportunities are the highest. Subsequently, they provided a standard issue advice note, which has been interpreted that the EA agree that a Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulations Assessment would not be required for the Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan.
 - Historic England – Concur with the Council that the plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. Therefore agree with the conclusion that a Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulations Assessment would not be required.
 - Natural England - Agree with the conclusion of the SEA / HRA screening report that a Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulations Assessment would not be required.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 As a result of the assessment in Section 4, St. Albans District Council has concluded that there are not likely to be significant environmental effects arising directly from the decisions taken through the Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, a full Strategic Environmental Assessment will not be necessary to accompany the Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan.
- 7.2 Given that the Neighbourhood Plan Area is not directly connected with or necessary for the conservation management of a European site, together with the understanding that the proposed policies in the draft Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan do not risk having a significant effect on a European site on its own or in combination with other proposals, it is concluded that further stages of appropriate assessment for the Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan are not required.

Appendix 1: Responses from the Relevant Bodies

Natural England

Date: 18 October 2021
Our ref: 370464
Your ref: Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan

Daley Wilson
Spatial Planning Officer
St Albans City & District Council
Daley.Wilson@stalbans.gov.uk

BY EMAIL ONLY



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

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Daley Wilson

REDBOURN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SCREENING OPINION FOR SEA/HRA

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 07 October 2021 which was received by Natural England on 07 October 2021

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.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils) are concerned, that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

Neighbourhood Plan

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in light of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), is contained within the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#). The guidance highlights three triggers that may require the production of an SEA, for instance where:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that in our view the proposals contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies / proposals within the plan. It remains the case, however, that the responsible authority should provide information supporting this screening decision, sufficient to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected.

Notwithstanding this advice, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all potential environmental assets. As a result the responsible authority should raise environmental issues that we have not identified on local or national biodiversity action plan species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites or local landscape character, with its own ecological and/or landscape advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local landscape and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by this plan, before determining whether an SA/SEA is necessary.

Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA/SA screening stage, should the responsible authority seek our views on the scoping or environmental report stages. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

Natural England agrees with the report's conclusions that the Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European Site, either alone or in combination and therefore no further assessment work would be required.

For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Jacqui Salt
Consultations Team

Historic England

From: **James, Edward** Edward.James@HistoricEngland.org.uk
Subject: RE: REDBOURN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SCREENING OPINION FOR SEA/HRA
Date: 12 November 2021 at 17:25
To: Daley Wilson Daley.Wilson@staibans.gov.uk



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Dear Daley,

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. Therefore we welcome this opportunity to review the Screening Report for this plan. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied with the Screening Opinion.

The Screening Report indicates that the Council considers that the plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We 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.

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, either via email or the number below, if you have any queries.

Kind regards,

Edward

Edward James
Historic Places Adviser - East of England
Historic England

Direct Line: 01223 582 746
Mobile: 07833 718 273



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Environment Agency

From: HNL Sustainable Places [mailto:HNL.SustainablePlaces@environment-agency.gov.uk]
Sent: 22 November 2021 17:07
To: Daley Wilson <Daley.Wilson@stalbans.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: REDBOURN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SCREENING OPINION FOR SEA/HRA

Dear Daley,

Apologies for the delay in getting back to you. Thank you for consulting us on the Neighbourhood Plan consultation for Redbourn.

We have had to prioritise our limited resource and focus on strategic plans where the environmental risks and opportunities are highest. We attach our advice note which sets out our substantive response to Neighbourhood Plan consultations including Strategic Environmental Assessment screening and scoping.

We recognise that Neighbourhood Plans provide a unique opportunity to deliver enhancements to the natural environment at the local level. This advice note sets out the key environmental issues, within our remit, which should be considered. It also references sources of data you can use to check environmental features.

We hope this is helpful as you prepare evidence and the Neighbourhood Plan itself.

If you have any feedback please let us know.

Kind regards,

Isabel Smith

Planning Advisor, Hertfordshire & North London Sustainable Places

Environment Agency | Alchemy, Bessemer Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL7 1HE

Hertfordshire and North London Neighbourhood Plan Advice Note

Updated: June 2021

Neighbourhood Plans provide a unique opportunity to deliver enhancements to the natural environment at the local level. This document sets out the key environmental issues, within our remit, which should be considered.

We have had to prioritise our limited resource and focus on strategic plans where the environmental risks and opportunities are highest. This advice note sets out our substantive response to Neighbourhood Plan consultations including Strategic Environmental Assessment screening and scoping.

Together with Natural England, English Heritage and Forestry Commission we have published joint advice on neighbourhood planning which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans. This is available at: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/consider-environment-neighbourhood-plans/>

Drawing up a neighbourhood plan is a fantastic opportunity to build community resilience to climate change and make the local natural environment better. Opportunities include:

- New green spaces and improvements to public space through new development. This could include planting trees, creating rainwater gardens or enhancing local waterways for water quality and biodiversity.
- Recognising the value of certain environmental features within a plan area, e.g. a floodplain, wetland habitat or rivers. Identify these features and outline how you intend to protect them and improve them.
- Helping a community to manage and adapt to the risk of flooding and climate change by incorporating natural features and green space to manage and store water, and supporting the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).
- Promoting energy and water efficiency measures for new builds. These measures will reduce the cost of construction for developers and help to reduce utility bills for future occupiers. This will also help reduce unsustainable water consumption and carbon emissions.

We also recommend your Plan takes account of relevant Local Planning Authority's policies, plans and strategies including Local Planning Authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, flood risk strategies (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/flood-risk-management-current-schemes-and-strategies>), and the Thames River Basin Management Plan (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/289937/0910bswa-e-e.pdf) as appropriate.

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The information below explains the key issues we would consider in reviewing your Plan. We aim to reduce flood risk, while protecting and enhancing the water environment.

Infrastructure Delivery

We recommend that environmental infrastructure, including habitat enhancements, water storage areas, and green space, is taken into account if the Plan looks to fund local infrastructure.

Flood risk

Development must be safe and should not increase the risk of flooding.

Neighbourhood Plans should conform to national and local policies on flood risk:

If a Neighbourhood Plan is proposing sites for development please check whether there are any areas of Flood Zones 2 or 3 within the proposed site allocations. You can view a site's flood zone on the Flood Map for Planning on our website: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

If the proposed allocation is located within Flood Zone 2 or 3 you should consult the Flood Risk and Coastal Change pages of the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG):

<http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change/>.

Here you can determine whether the flood risk vulnerability of the proposed development and the flood zone are compatible. In accordance with national planning policy the Sequential Test should be undertaken to ensure development is directed to the areas of lowest flood risk taking into account climate change. This should be informed by the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning and the Local Planning Authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), if they have one. We recommend you contact the Local Planning Authority to discuss this requirement further.

If the Neighbourhood Plan proposes development in flood risk areas, the Strategic Environmental Assessment should include baseline information about the flood risks, and include it as a key sustainability issue and as an objective.

We would have concerns if development is allocated in this high risk flood zone without the Sequential Test being undertaken. It is important that your Plan also considers whether the flood risk issues associated with these sites can be safely managed to ensure development can come forward.

We can provide any flooding information which we have available – such as predicted flood levels and historical flood data. Please note that there may be a charge for this information. Please contact our Customers and Engagement Team at HNLinquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk for further details. In addition to the above you should also check with the Local Planning Authority's Neighbourhood Planning team with regards to other sources of flooding (such as surface water, groundwater, sewers and historic flooding) as detailed in their Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), now has responsibility for local flood risk management and may hold flooding information that is not identified on our Flood Map.

Climate Change Allowances

The Local Authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment should indicate the extent of flood zones with likely climate change. On 19 February 2016, we published new guidance for planners and developers on how to use climate change allowances: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessments-climate-change-allowances>

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Flood Defences

Areas of your Neighbourhood Plan area, or proposed sites, may be given protection by a flood defence/alleviation scheme. Where this is the case the Plan should acknowledge this and identify the level of protection provided (including any climate change allowance). It should be noted that flood defences are intended to protect existing properties and are not to facilitate new development in areas that would otherwise be impacted by flooding. Any assessment of development behind flood defences should consider the impacts of a breach or overtopping. Where it is determined that new development should be behind a flood defence financial contributions may be sought to maintain or improve the structure.

Thames Estuary 2100 (Tidal Defences)

In line with requirements set out in the Thames Estuary 2100 (TE2100) plan, developments in this location will need to demonstrate how the flood defence could be raised in the future to meet the demands of climate change.

No activities on site should preclude access to the flood defence from maintenance or prevent the future raising of flood defences. In some cases we hold technical drawings of flood defence structures which may be of use. To request these you should contact our Customers and Engagement Team at hnl.enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Ecology and Water Management

Proximity to watercourse/ Ecology

Main rivers can be viewed on the Environment Agency's map:

<https://environment.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=17cd53dfc524433980cc333726a56386>

The neighbourhood plan should draw upon evidence of designated or non-designated sites of nature conservation sites of international, national or local importance, and seek to ensure these sites are safeguarded and there is no degradation to these sites. The mitigation hierarchy of avoid mitigate and compensate should be followed to ensure this.

In accordance with national policy, any development proposal should avoid significant harm to biodiversity and seek to protect and enhance it; delivering **biodiversity net gain**. The forthcoming Environment Bill will mandate when enacted the demonstration of a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain using the Defra Biodiversity Metric 2.0 (or subsequent version), even where development proposals do not result in biodiversity loss. The Neighbourhood Plan could identify opportunities to incorporate requirements for achieving biodiversity and wider environmental net gains.

The provision of green infrastructure, particularly along rivers, can bring about benefits for people and wildlife. Creating networks of green space and habitats can also ensure wildlife are able to migrate and move across sites more easily enabling recovery and resilience of different wildlife species. The Neighbourhood Plan could play a role in helping to preserve, safeguard and establish green buffer zones along rivers by including policies or design guidance for their area. Even where buffer zones do not currently exist it is becoming more vital that we create them not just for the benefit of biodiversity but to reduce flood risk and increase our resilience to climate change.

This is a key way in which we can carry out our legal duty to further and promote the ecological and landscape value of rivers and land associated with them. In urban areas, in particular, rivers have often been degraded by past development, and we expect that any new development should go some way to redress the balance.

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Neighbourhood Plans provide an opportunity to promote river restoration and enhancements helping us all to achieve the targets to improve waterbodies as part of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). There should be no deterioration in water quality and development should bring about improvements to the ecological status of any water body. Local WFD catchment data for the rivers in your area can be obtained from: <http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/RiverBasinDistrict/>. We have identified WFD action measures for specific locations or whole reaches of watercourse (e.g. river bank restoration, improving fish passage, etc) and can be obtained from hnl.enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk on request.

Objectives to achieve WFD improvements across all sectors are outlined in the Thames River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) (<https://www.gov.uk/search?q=River+Basin+Management+Plans>).

An assessment of the potential impacts of the Neighbourhood Plan on watercourses under WFD should be included within the SEA/SA appraisal, making use of the datasets available above.

Groundwater Quality

Development must not cause pollution to the water environment.

Aquifers and Source Protection Zones

Some of your local area, and specific potential site allocations, may be located upon or within aquifers and Source Protection Zones (link below). SPZ 1 is especially sensitive. You might consider these within your Plan and when allocating sites. The relevance of the designation and the potential implication upon development proposals should be seen with reference to our Groundwater Protection guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/groundwater-protection>

To see if a proposed development is located within a Source Protection Zone, please use our online map: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/groundwater-source-protection-zones-spzs>

Land Contamination

You must consider land contamination when preparing your plan. Managing it during development is key to addressing past contamination and preventing further impacts during development.

You can establish if a site may be contaminated in several ways. Your Local Authority may hold a register of sites it knows to be contaminated. A list of potentially contaminated sites can be accessed on the following link:

<https://www.clare.co.uk/useful-government-legislation-and-guidance-by-country/76-key-documents/198-doe-industry-profiles>

We recommend you contact your Local Authority's Environmental Health team who may hold records on known/potential land contamination. Please note our primary concern is with regards to water quality. Your Local Authority's Environmental Health team will advise you on issues related to human health.

Your plan may include areas which are located on aquifers and Source Protection Zones. These areas represent the most sensitive and highest risk in terms of potential pollution to protected groundwater supplies, some of which are used for drinking water. These should be considered within your plan if growth or development is proposed here. Further information can be accessed on the following links:

Guiding principles for the Land Contamination

<https://www.clare.co.uk/useful-government-legislation-and-guidance-by-country/192-guiding-principles-for-land-contamination-qplc>

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Approach to Groundwater Protection:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/692989/Environment-Agency-approach-to-groundwater-protection.pdf

Water supply and foul drainage

When allocating sites in your Plan, you will need to consider if the water supply and foul drainage infrastructure can accommodate the development. Your local water company can provide further information about water supply and sewerage capacity. Our [‘Water Stressed Areas – final classification’](#) 2013 explains that our area is seriously water stressed. This is particularly significant as population numbers rise and there are increased impacts from climate change on water resource availability and reliability. The Neighbourhood Plan should consider what further measures could help the local area achieve water sustainability that are not already in the Local Plan, water efficiency standards and measures including the retrofitting of existing buildings.

Surface water drainage

The inclusion of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) should always be a consideration within any development to reduce the risk of surface water flooding on and off site. The Lead Local Flood Authority, is the main contact for SUDS issues. However, we have interest in SUDS from a groundwater protection perspective and improving water quality.

The collection and dispersal of clean surface water to ground to recharge aquifer units and prevent localised drainage or surface systems flooding in heavy rainfall is encouraged. However, dispersal into the ground through soakaways or other infiltration systems requires a site-specific investigation and risk assessment. Generally, we would accept roof drainage going to soakaway (or other systems), but other surface drainage may need to go through treatment systems or to foul main, for instance vehicle parking. Infiltrating water has the potential to cause mobilisation of contaminants present in shallow soil/made ground which could ultimately cause pollution of underlying groundwater resources. Where contamination is known or suspected, remedial or other mitigating measures will likely be required so that it can be demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to Controlled Waters.

We advise applicants to follow our guidance – Groundwater Protection. This is a report that highlights the importance of groundwater and encourages industry and other organisations to act responsibly and improve their practices. This can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/groundwater-protection>

The design of the drainage systems should be in line with G1, G9, G12 and G13 position statements: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/groundwater-protection-position-statements>

Please note

This document is a response to a Neighbourhood Plan consultation and does not represent our final view in relation to any future planning application made in relation to any site. You should seek your own expert advice in relation to technical matters relevant to your neighbourhood plan before submission.

If you have any questions please contact the Hertfordshire and North London Sustainable Places team: HNL.SustainablePlaces@environment-agency.gov.uk

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Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan

2020 – 2038

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment
(HRA) Screening Report

November 2021