

Non-Technical Summary of Environmental Report for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of Westbourne Neighbourhood Plan

October 2019

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Non-Technical Summary summarises the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of Westbourne Neighbourhood Plan. The preparation of Westbourne Neighbourhood Plan needed to meet obligations within EU Directive 2001/42/EC 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment' or the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.
- 1.2 The SEA Directive "seeks to provide a high level of protection of the environment by integrating environmental considerations into the process of preparing plans and programmes." The SEA Directive is transposed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations or SEA Regulations 2004. It is these regulations that neighbourhood plans need to comply with.

2. The Strategic Environmental Assessment Process

- 2.1 The purpose of the SEA is to ensure that the environmental implications of policies within the neighbourhood plan have been assessed.
- 2.2 In accordance with the SEA Regulations, the main stages of the SEA Process are as follows:
 - Stage A: The Screening Stage – determining whether the neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects and consulting the environmental assessment consultation bodies;**
 - Stage B: The Scoping Stage – Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope and consultation;**
 - Stage C: Main SEA of neighbourhood plan – Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects;**
 - Stage D: Preparing the Environmental Report;**
 - Stage E: Consultation – publishing and consulting on the Environmental Report;**
 - Stage F: Post plan making reporting and monitoring.**
- 2.3 The first stage of the SEA is the screening stage whereby the local planning authority, in this case Chichester District Council, determines whether a neighbourhood plan will require SEA. The main factor in determining this is whether the plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The SEA Directive makes SEA a mandatory requirement for:
 - a) Plans which are prepared for town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive; or
 - b) Plans which have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive.
- 2.4 In the case of Chichester Local Plan Area, some neighbourhood plans have been determined to require an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Directive. This is because they rely on mitigation measures to prevent impacts on the designated sites such as Chichester and Pagham Harbours. A

judgement from the European Court of Justice in April 2018 indicated that those plans and projects that rely on mitigation measures for designated sites should only consider the effects of mitigation through the Appropriate Assessment (AA) stage of Habitats Regulations Assessment. Neighbourhood Plans that rely on the strategic mitigation schemes in place to protect the Special Protection Areas in the District, will therefore trigger the requirement for AA. The requirement for AA means that Neighbourhood Plans will also require Strategic Environmental Assessment.

- 2.5 Since Westbourne Neighbourhood Plan required Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive, it also required Strategic Environmental Assessment.

3. Stage B: Scoping

3.1 The second stage in the Strategic Environmental Assessment is the scoping stage which gathers information about what is happening in the neighbourhood plan area. This information informs the assessment by setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and establishing the scope of the SEA. More specifically it involves:

1. Identifying relevant policies, plans and programmes and sustainability objectives;
2. Collecting baseline information;
3. Identifying sustainability issues and problems;
4. Developing the strategic environmental assessment framework;
5. Consulting the environmental assessment consultation bodies on the scope of the strategic environmental assessment.

3.2 A framework for the strategic environmental assessment was developed during the scoping stage. This framework forms the basis against which policies within the neighbourhood plan are assessed to determine their impact on the environment and to ensure that certain objectives are met. As indicated earlier, it was the potential impact on European designated sites that triggered the need for SEA and therefore are the focus of the SEA objectives. The full SEA framework is set out in table 1.

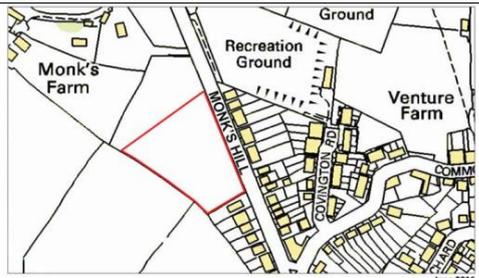
Table 1: SEA framework for Westbourne Neighbourhood Plan

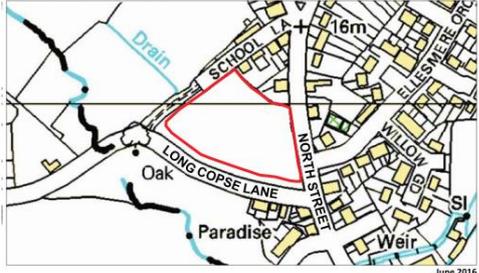
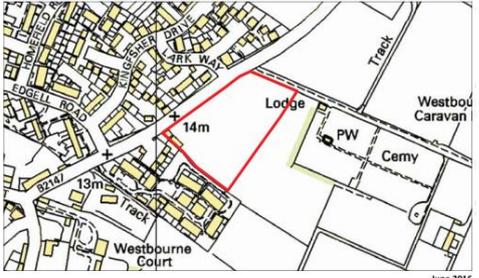
Objective	Assessment Criteria Based on Environmental Issues	Indicators
1. The integrity of Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and Medmerry Compensatory Habitat is maintained and restored.	<p>1a) Will the policy reduce urbanisation effects on the SPA?</p> <p>1b) Will the policy prevent increases in recreational pressure on the SPA?</p> <p>1c) Will the policy improve water quality within Chichester Harbour?</p> <p>1d) Will the policy prevent the loss of functionally linked habitat?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance of proposal from the SPA (i.e. Greater than or less than 400m) • Is the proposal within 5.6km of Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA? • The results of the Water Quality Assessment for the Local Plan Review • The results of the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Study 2010.

Objective	Assessment Criteria Based on Environmental Issues	Indicators
2. The integrity of the Kingley Vale SAC is maintained and restored	2a) Will the policy reduce the nitrogen deposition rate at the site?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nitrogen deposition rate from the Air Pollution Information System (apis.ac.uk)
3. The integrity of Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC is maintained and restored.	3a) Will the policy prevent disturbance of Bat Flight Lines?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the proposal within the conservation areas for bats (up to 12km)?
4. The integrity of the Solent and Dorset Coast potential Marine SPA is maintained and restored	4a) Will the policy prevent increases in recreational pressure on the potential SPA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distance from the potential SPA
5. Green infrastructure within the wider ecological networks is protected and enhanced	5a) Will the policy protect and enhance wildlife corridors and other connective features to the designated sites?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the proposal impact on components of the ecological networks as mapped for CDC by Forest Research UK?

4. Stage C: Main SEA of the Westbourne Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.1 This document should be read in conjunction with the Westbourne Neighbourhood Plan which provides background information to the various policies and the precise wording of the policies (<https://www.chichester.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=28212&p=0>). The policies have been assessed compared to a baseline without the policy.
- 4.2 During the main SEA of plan, the policies within the plan were assessed against the SEA framework above. The policies were assessed compared to a baseline without the policy.
- 4.3 It is policies SS1, SS2 and SS3 which specifically allocate sites for the development of 28 units, as follows:

SS1: Land to the West of Monk's Hill – 6 units	
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SS2: Land at Long Copse Lane – 16 units	
SS3: Land adjacent to Chantry Hall, Foxbury Lane – 6 units	

5. Summary of Effects

- 5.1 The proposed allocations at Land to the West of Monk’s Hill, Land at Long Copse Lane and Land adjacent to Chantry Hall for 28 units under policies SS1, SS2 and SS3 of Westbourne Neighbourhood Plan are within 5.6km of Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA. The 5.6km zone represents the zone of influence whereby a net increase in housing development within this area is likely to result in impacts to the integrity of those sites as a result of increased recreational disturbance of the bird species for which the site is designated.
- 5.2 Development within the 5.6km zone will increase the human population and therefore the potential for increased levels of recreation and disturbance of the bird species. Therefore it is clear that without mitigation the increased population has the potential to increase recreational disturbance at the SPA. However mitigation will be provided through contributions to the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership Strategy which sets out strategic measures required to mitigate the impacts of any net increase in residential development.
- 5.3 Although the housing allocations under policies SS1 – SS3 are within the zone of influence, they are outside the SPA boundary and at such a distance from the SPA so as not to lead to the direct loss of SPA habitat or habitat which is functionally linked to the SPA.
- 5.4 The allocations are also sufficiently distant from Kingley Vale SAC, Solent and Dorset Coast potential Marine SPA and Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC to have negligible impact on the integrity of these sites.
- 5.5 Policy OA1 on Sustainable Development is likely to have a positive impact on Green Infrastructure and the wider ecological networks as the policy states “3 (iii) The proposals are to be accompanied by a study to demonstrate that there would be no negative impact on local

biodiversity. This will include potential harms arising from changes to access points and visibility splays to accommodate typical vehicles.”

- 5.6 Similarly, policies BD1: Biodiversity Opportunity Area and SCNI Policy, Policy BD2: Natural Environment Policy and Policy LGS1: Cemetery Green Space are likely to have a positive impact on green infrastructure and ecological networks. This is particularly true of the policy BD2 which states “..Biodiversity Corridors are identified to recognise the establishment of coherent ecological networks and offer protection to the significant number of species of flora and fauna to be found there and to allow more resilience of the physical network against current and future pressures and opportunities for species within. Proposals must demonstrate how they provide net gains to the habitats of the identified corridors and how the protection, enhancement and management of the biodiversity of the site can contribute to the resilience of the wider ecological network...”
- 5.7 Under Policy LD4: Local Gaps, proposals will need to ensure that they do not have any adverse impacts on the integrity and function of wildlife corridors by ensuring that important features (such as hedgerows) within the corridors are retained.
- 5.8 The proposed allocation of 6 units under Policy SS3: Land adjacent to Chantry Hall, Foxbury Lane will need to ensure that measures, such as the retention and enhancement of ecological features, are included to ensure the ecological value of wildlife corridors are retained.

6. Monitoring Framework

- 6.1 The monitoring framework for the SEA process is set out in the indicators column in table 1 above and also the monitoring undertaken for the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership. The scoping process used to select these indicators is explained fully in the SEA Scoping Report dated July 2019.
- 6.2 Should this monitoring indicate that negative impacts not envisaged in this assessment are found to be occurring, then additional measures will be introduced to mitigate any negative impacts. These impacts will also be addressed during any future review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 A Strategic Environmental Assessment of the policies within Westbourne Neighbourhood Plan has been undertaken against the SEA framework and the results are presented in an Environmental Report. Since SEA can consider mitigation measures, the assessment has concluded that provided mitigation measures are implemented, none of the policies will result in a significant negative impact on the environment.