

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

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Non-Technical Summary summarises the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of Boxgrove Neighbourhood Plan. The preparation of Boxgrove 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.
- 1.3 Boxgrove Neighbourhood Plan has been informed by a wide range of evidence and the SEA is a component of the evidence base. The SEA ensures that the plan promotes sustainable development by ensuring that the significant environmental impacts of proposals and policies are understood and these impacts are considered in the plan.
- 1.4 This document represents the Environmental Report for Boxgrove Neighbourhood Plan which is the culmination of the SEA process for the plan.

2. The Strategic Environmental Assessment Process

- 2.1 The purpose of the SEA is to ensure that the environmental implications of options 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, will determine whether a neighbourhood plan will require SEA. The main factor in determining this is whether the plan is likely to have 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 2019 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 Boxgrove Neighbourhood Plan required Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive, it also requires 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 SEA 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 certain objectives are met. As indicated earlier, it was the potential impact on the European designated sites that triggered the need for SEA and therefore are the focus of the SEA objectives, in this case Singleton and Cocking Tunnels Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The full SEA framework is set out in table 1.

Table 1: SEA framework for Boxgrove Neighbourhood Plan

Objective	Assessment Criteria Based on Environmental Issues	Indicators
1. The integrity of Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC is maintained and restored.	1a) 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 from Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC)?

4. Stage C: Main SEA of the Neighbourhood Plan

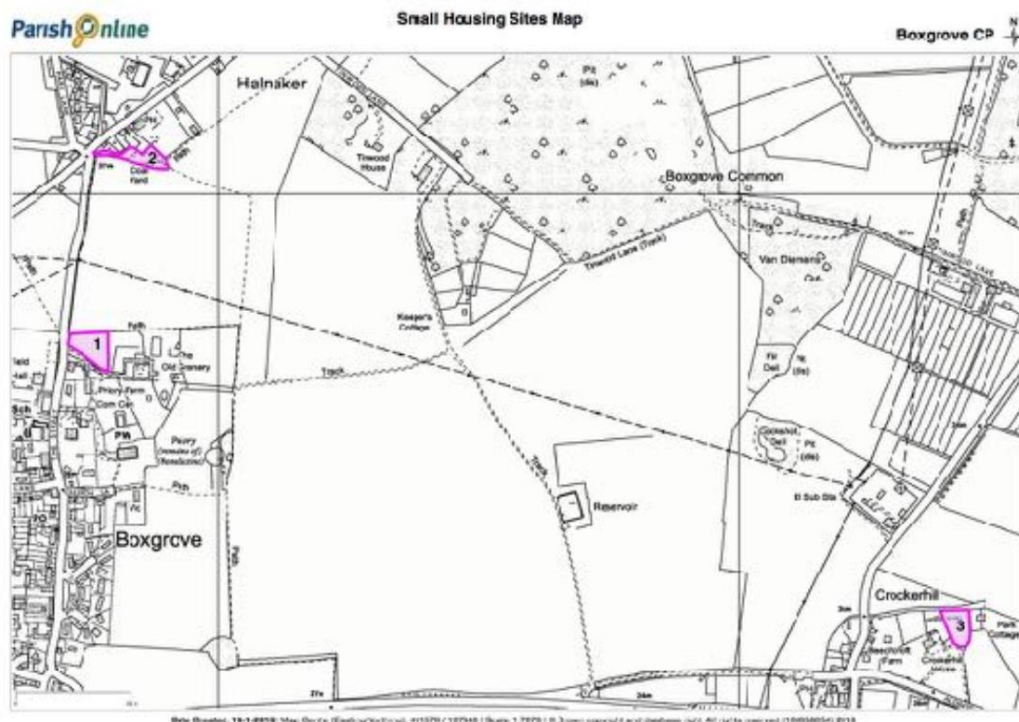
- 4.1 This document should be read in conjunction with the Boxgrove Neighbourhood Plan which provides background information to the various policies and the precise wording of the policies (<https://www.chichester.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=29839&p=0>).
- 4.2 During the main SEA of the plan, the policies within the plan were assessed against the SEA framework above and were assessed compared to a baseline without the policy.
- 4.3 Although all the policies within the plan were assessed against the framework, it is policy H5 which specifically identifies sites for development and therefore is given in full below:

Policy H5 Small development sites

The following small sites (shown on Map C [figure 1 below]) will be supported for development provided that the design and layout reflects the historic sensitivities of the area:

1. Site 7 – Land at The Old Granary, Boxgrove – courtyard of 3-6 single storey residences with gardens and screened parking.
2. Site 8 – The Old Coal Yard, Halnaker – One dwelling house for the owner and five tourist units (planning permission granted during the Plan making period so included for completeness as it is referred to in the Evidence Base).
3. Site 10 – Brambles, Crockerhill – one family dwelling for the owner.

Figure 1. Map C in Boxgrove Neighbourhood Plan



5. Summary of Effects

- 5.1 Most policies within the Neighbourhood Plan will either have a neutral impact on the assessment criteria or the policy has no interaction with the assessment criteria, so effectively no impact on the integrity of Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC. The following policies have a positive impact in terms of preventing the disturbance of Bat Flight Lines, compared to the baseline without the policy
- EH1 – Protection of trees and hedgerows
EH7 – Dark Skies
EH9 – South Downs National Park
LC4 – Designation of local green spaces
H1 – Quality Design
- 5.2 These positive impacts are a result of measures being implemented to protect and enhance features used by the bats for commuting and minimising the disturbance of their flight lines.
- 5.3 The assessment of Policy H5 indicated that without mitigation, policy H5 could have a negative impact on the integrity of Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC by failing to prevent the disturbance of the Flight Lines of Bats using the SAC. The proposed allocations are within the 12km zone of influence of the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC and in total, amount to a maximum of 7 homes. In accordance with advice from Natural England and as detailed in the emerging 'Sussex Bat SAC – Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol' developed with the South Downs National Park Authority, development could result in the direct loss of habitats and commuting/foraging paths and disturbance of flight lines by lighting during construction and operation, and noise/vibration. Therefore development proposals on greenfield sites and sites that support, or are in close proximity to, suitable commuting and foraging habitat within the identified 6.5km and 12km ranges, should have due regard to the possibility that Barbastelle and Bechstein Bats will be utilising the site. Within the 6.5km zone, all impacts to bats must be considered given that these habitats are considered critical for sustaining the populations of bats. Within the wider 12km zone, significant impacts or severance to flight lines are to be considered.
- 5.4 The proposed allocation of 3 – 6 courtyard style homes at Land at The Old Granary, Boxgrove, is 7.3km from Singleton Tunnel SAC. There is a formally maintained hedge to the north of the site which might form part of a flight line, but there are no bat records near the site. The hedgerow is not identified as part of the bat movement network mapped for CDC by Forest Research. However mitigation can ensure that the hedgerow is retained and therefore the allocation would not result in significant impact on or severance of bat flight lines.
- 5.5 There is another allocation of one dwelling at Brambles, Crockerhill which is 8.65km from Singleton Tunnel SAC. The site has significant tree cover on the eastern side which links with a linear feature of trees and open farm land, which is identified as bat network. There is also a record of common pipistrelle bats immediately adjacent to the site but no evidence of

Barbastelle or Bechstein bats associated with Singleton and Cocking tunnels SAC. However without mitigation a likely significant effect on the integrity of the SAC cannot be ruled out.

- 5.6 Both the South Downs National Park Authority and the Boxgrove Neighbourhood Plan have policies to ensure that the allocations will provide mitigation to prevent any impact on the bat flight lines and therefore the integrity of the SAC. These policies ensure that bat commuting routes should be retained, protected and enhanced and that development proposals must seek to enhance ecological networks. With mitigation, the allocations under policy H5 will not result in likely significant effect on the environment.

6. Monitoring Framework

- 6.1 The main monitoring framework for the SEA process is set out in the indicators column in the table 1 above. 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 the assessment are found to be occurring, then additional measures will be introduced to mitigate any 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 Boxgrove 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 concluded that all the policies, included the allocations under policy H5, will not result in a significant negative impact on the environment.