
Strategic Environmental Assessment & Habitats Regulation Assessment

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Executive Summary

This statement sets out the reasons for Northampton Borough Council’s determination that the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan Proposal is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects and therefore does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). In addition this statement determines that the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan Proposal is not likely to result in significant effects on any European Site. Consequently, the Neighbourhood Plan does not require a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA).

This Determination Statement is intended to support the Growing Together Neighbourhood Forum to demonstrate that the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan Proposal is compatible with certain European Union obligations as required by the basic conditions, namely:


Northampton Borough Council will publicise this determination statement in accordance with its regulatory requirements.
1. Context

Neighbourhood Plans and the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

1.1. Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as applied to neighbourhood plans by Section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) sets out the basic conditions which a draft Neighbourhood Plan must meet in order to proceed to referendum. This includes ensuring that the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with European Union obligations. Of particular relevance are:

- Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, transposed into UK law by The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (hereafter referred to as the “SEA Regulations”); and

- Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, which was initially transposed into UK law by The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 with various amendments consolidated by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (hereafter referred to as the “Habitat Regulations”).

Circumstances where SEA and HRA may be required

1.2. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (para. 027: Reference ID: 11-027-20150209) recognises that where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The NPPG suggests that draft neighbourhood plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects through a screening process.

1.3. Whether a neighbourhood plan requires a SEA, and (if so) the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed in the draft neighbourhood plan (NPPG para. 046: Reference ID: 11-046-20150209). The NPPG continues that a SEA may be required, for example, where:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development;

- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan; and

- 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.
1.4. Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations requires an Appropriate Assessment (or Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)) where the plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Protected European Sites include:

- Special Protection Areas (SPAs);
- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); and
- Ramsar sites.

Purpose of Determination Statement

1.5. Following an earlier screening assessment of the Growing Together Pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan, this Determination Statement fulfils the requirements of the SEA regulations (Reg. 9), by determining whether the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan Proposal is likely to have any significant effects on the environment. It will set out the reasons for the determination.

1.6. A copy of this Determination Statement will be sent to each of the consultation bodies within 28 days of completion

2. Preparation of Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan and SEA and HRA Screening Process

Early engagement and identifying issues

2.1. Prior to commencing work on the Neighbourhood Plan, a series of consultation events were held as part of the Big Local Plan exercise. The aim was to identify areas for improvement as part of a £1 million spend which was allocated to the area through the Lottery’s ‘Big Local’ programme.

2.2. On 11 September 2013 Northampton Borough Council Cabinet designated ‘Growing Together’ as the Neighbourhood Forum for the ‘Growing Together Area’ comprising of the communities of Blackthorn, Cherry Lodge, Goldings, Lings, Lingswood Park, Lumbertubs and Overstone Lodge. Consequently the Growing Together Neighbourhood Forum (GTNF) reviewed the findings from the Big Local Plan consultation to identify what could be linked to land uses and potentially addressed in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan.

2.3. In the summer of 2014, building on the findings of the Big Local Plan consultation, the GTNF undertook a community-wide consultation specifically focused on the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. A range of events and meetings were held to identify local issues and engage local people in the neighbourhood planning process. During this time the GTNF began collating an evidence base on local planning issues, including housing, employment, green spaces and the strategic policy context.

2.4. At the same time, Northampton Borough Council’s Planning Policy team collated baseline information to inform the SEA and HRA assessment process.
Pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan and Screening Report

2.5. Following the review of evidence and using the consultation feedback provided through the previous consultation exercises, the GTNF prepared a Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan and initiated a consultation exercise between 15 June 2015 and 27 July 2015 in accordance with Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations. Alongside the preparation of the Plan, the Planning Policy team undertook a screening assessment of the draft neighbourhood plan policies to identify whether SEA or HRA were required.

2.6. The assessment findings were presented in a SEA and HRA Screening Report (June 2015). These concluded that the emerging Neighbourhood Plan did not require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulation Assessment.


Submission of Plan Proposal (25th July 2016)

2.8. The GTNF submitted the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan Proposal to Northampton Borough Council on Monday 25th July 2016. In preparing the Plan Proposal, the GTNF took into account the results of consultation on the Pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan and findings of the Screening Report. This Determination Statement has been prepared to support the suite of documents required to meet Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

3. Determination

Policy Context

3.1. The basic conditions require Neighbourhood Plans to achieve general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Development Plan for the area of the authority. For the Growing Together Area the principal Local Plan document is the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan Part 1 (Adopted 2014) (JCS). The JCS sets out the strategic policies to address strategic matters across the sub-region. It was subject to both SEA/SA and an HRA during its preparation.

3.2. In addition some Saved Policies of the Northampton Local Plan (Adopted 1997) (NLP) remain in effect. The NLP has been largely replaced through the adoption of the JCS. Due to their age and the more recent adoption of the JCS it is considered that the remaining Saved Policies have non-strategic status.

3.3. The Central Area Action Plan (Adopted 2013) provides specific planning policy and guidance for the Central Area of Northampton. This part of the Development Plan does not have a bearing on the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan as the Growing Together Plan Area does not fall within the remit of the policy document.
Methodology

3.4. The SEA and HRA Screening Report assessed the Pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan policies to identify if the policies are capable of achieving general conformity with the strategic objectives and policies of the Development Plan, and whether implementation of the GTNP will result in likely significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the JCS.

3.5. In addition the assessment considered the likely effects of the Plan policies on European Sites with particular reference to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA. The assessment reflected on three ‘vulnerabilities’ identified by the Appropriate Assessment Screening for the JCS as an inherent risk to the integrity of the SPA namely:

- visitor disturbance;
- altered water levels and;
- water quality

3.6. The Screening Report was published for consultation alongside the Pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan in June to July 2015.

Summary of Screening Report’s Findings

Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.7. The GTNP seeks to make the Growing Together Neighbourhood Area a “better place” by setting out policies to improve the local environment and which protect key open spaces and community facilities. Other policies create opportunities for the provision of new, high quality housing, local employment, for play and recreation facilities and to improve connectivity and movement.

3.8. The SEA and HRA Screening Report provided a review of the strategic policy framework for the JCS. The findings highlighted the need for housing and employment growth within Northampton’s urban area; these needs are to be delivered in accordance with sustainability principles. The review also found that the JCS recognises the importance of regenerating deprived communities including the area of Growing Together in Northampton East. Such rejuvenation will assist in the regeneration of Northampton as a whole.

3.9. The GTNP creates opportunities for new housing development at infill sites, redundant garage sites and priority areas for regeneration. It is difficult to quantify how many new homes may be delivered but any new housing is expected to contribute toward the JCS housing requirement and is not expected to result in this requirement being exceeded.

3.10. Opportunities for employment and retail development are expected to be local in scale and are unlikely to be of strategic significance. The scale and nature of non-residential development are managed through measures to protect the vitality and viability of existing centres.
3.11. The Screening Report also included an assessment of the GTNP policies against JCS strategic policies. It found that the GTNP policies are broadly aligned with the strategic policies and are therefore likely to be capable of achieving ‘general conformity’.

3.12. Overall, the GTNP is expected to make a positive contribution in enabling sustainable development to take place within the Growing Together Neighbourhood Area. The Plan approach is consistent with the JCS and the policies add a considerable amount of value and detail to the strategic policy framework. The Plan reflects community needs, priorities and aspirations and (if ‘made’) the GTNP will form an important part of the Development Plan.

3.13. In conclusion no likely significant negative effects on the environment were identified in terms of the SEA criteria set out in Article 3(5) of the Directive 2001/42/EC. Any effects that may occur have already been considered and dealt with through the Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating the requirements of a SEA), of the JCS. The Screening Report concluded that the GTNP does not require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

**Habitat Regulations Assessment**

3.14. The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA) is the only designated European Site within a 15km radius of the Growing Together Neighbourhood Area. The Screening Report assessment considered whether the GTNP policies would be likely to result in significant effects on the SPA in terms of three ‘vulnerabilities’ namely increased visitor disturbance; altered water levels; and water quality and pollution.

3.15. The Screening Report reiterated in the HRA section that new development in the Growing Together Neighbourhood Area is expected to contribute to the JCS housing requirement. Therefore the GTNP is not expected to deviate or exceed any potential effects on the SPA vulnerabilities as already considered by the JCS HRA.

3.16. The assessment found no substantial reason to expect visitor disturbance to increase significantly as a result of the GTNP. It observed that the JCS includes criteria which all new developments must achieve to maximise water efficiency, improve water quality and reduce pollution.

3.17. The assessment determined that the implementation of the GTNP would not result in any likely significant effects, alone or in combination, upon the SPA in regard to the vulnerabilities stated in paragraph 3.14 above. Therefore the Screening Report concluded that the GTNP does not require a full Habitats Regulation Assessment.

**Consultation**

3.18. The Planning Policy team invited the consultation bodies and other technical stakeholders to comment on the Pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan and the findings of the SEA & HRA Screening Report between 15 June 2015 and 27 July 2015. A full list of bodies consulted is provided in Appendix B of this Statement.
3.19. The statutory consultees did not respond to this first round of consultation. However, given the number of green spaces, the quality of the natural environment and the proximity of the Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA to the Neighbourhood Area GTNF and Northampton Borough Council were keen to engage with them. They were invited to comment for a second time in February 2016.

3.20. In terms of the Screening Report responses were received from Historic England, the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Wildlife Trust. Historic England and the Wildlife Trust made no comments on the Screening Report. The Environment Agency agreed that the Plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects. Natural England’s response is summarised below and included in full, together with all the representations noted above, in Appendix C.

3.21. Natural England confirmed that:

- They checked their records and that in their view the Plan’s proposals/allocations will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect;
- They are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies/proposals within the Plan; and.
- They are in agreement with the conclusion of the Screening Report in relation to HRA as the location and scale of development included within the Plan would not represent a likely significant effect to any European Site.

3.22. In their response, Natural England highlighted the need to contact local advisers on ecology and biodiversity. The Wildlife Trust were contacted as the relevant wildlife body. In their response the Trust did not raise any issue with the Screening Report’s conclusions, a copy of this response is also included in full in Appendix C.

3.23. Natural England’s response noted that the HRA Screening relied on the conclusion of the JCS HRA. They cautioned against an over-reliance for two reasons:

- Firstly, the JCS HRA assessed housing numbers across the NRDA which included a significant element of uncertainty in the eventual location for housing. This could mean a lower tier plan introducing housing close to the SPA which could result in a likely significant effect; and
- Secondly that the Visitor Access Study of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA (2014) provides new evidence post completion of the JCS HRA. It changes the understanding of issues such as how far residents are likely to travel to visit the SPA.

3.24. However, Natural England also note that given the relatively small scale residential development that would be promoted in the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan and its distance to the SPA it is considered unlikely that the plan would contribute significantly to recreational pressure within the SPA.
3.25. Taking into account the comments provided by Natural England, it was concluded that no further action was required in respect of SEA or HRA.

**Conclusions**

3.26. The implementation of the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan (GTNP) is not expected to result in any likely significant effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through the Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating the requirements of a SEA) and HRA of the JCS. This finding was determined within the SEA and HRA Screening Report (June 2015) which concluded that the GTNP does not require a full SEA or HRA. Following public consultation, the findings of the Screening Report were not disputed by the consultation bodies or other technical stakeholders.

3.27. The Borough Council concludes that the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan does not require a full SEA or HRA. Consequently, the GTNP has not been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulation Assessment.
Appendix A – Screening Report for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment: Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan (Pre-submission June 2015)

Document available to download from the Northampton Borough Council website at:

- [http://www.northampton.gov.uk/gtnp](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/gtnp)

or by email:

- [planningpolicy@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@northampton.gov.uk)

If you require any additional assistance please telephone:

- 01604 837636
## Appendix B – List of bodies and technical stakeholders consulted on SEA and HRA Screening Report (June 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schedule 1 (a) - Local Planning Authority</td>
<td>Steven Baynes</td>
<td>Director of Regeneration, Enterprise &amp; Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule 1 (b) - County Council</td>
<td>Mark Chart</td>
<td>Head of Planning Services</td>
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<td>Schedule 1 (c) - Any adjoining parish council</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Schedule 1 (d) - the Homes and Communities Agency</td>
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<td>Schedule 1 (f) - the Environment Agency</td>
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<td>Schedule 1 (g) - English Heritage</td>
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<td>Schedule 1 (h) - Network Rail Infrastructure Limited</td>
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<td>Schedule 1 (j) - the Marine Management Organisation</td>
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<td>Schedule 1 (k) - Electronic communications companies</td>
<td>Northamptonshire Healthcare PCT</td>
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<td>Schedule 1 (l) - Electricity companies</td>
<td>Western Power Distribution</td>
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<td>Schedule 1 (m) - Gas companies</td>
<td>National Grid</td>
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<td>Schedule 1 (n) - Water undertakers</td>
<td>see sewerage undertaker</td>
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<td>Schedule 1 (o) - Voluntary bodies</td>
<td>see local organisations below</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule 1 (p) - bodies which represent different racial, ethnic or national groups</td>
<td>Cllr Christopher Mollus</td>
<td>Counsellor Co-Chair of Northamptonshire UNESCO Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule 1 (q) - bodies which represent different religious groups</td>
<td>Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership</td>
<td>Counsellor Co-Chair of Northamptonshire Small Business Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule 1 (r) - bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons</td>
<td>Cllr Phil Larratt</td>
<td>Counsellor Co-Chair of Northamptonshire Disabled People’s Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northampton Borough Council - Housing Assets</td>
<td>Tim Bruce</td>
<td>Interim Housing Asset Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northampton Borough Council - Asset Management</td>
<td>Andrew Malekin</td>
<td>Corporate Asset Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northampton Borough Council - Housing and Wellbeing</td>
<td>Phil Morris</td>
<td>Interim Manager of Housing and Wellbeing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northampton Borough Council - Customers &amp; Communities</td>
<td>Julie Seddon</td>
<td>Director of Customers and Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northampton Partnership Homes</td>
<td>Mike Kay</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
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<td>Northamptonshire County Council - Education</td>
<td>Ben Huffer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northamptonshire County Council - Transport</td>
<td>Chris Wragg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daventry District Council</td>
<td>Richard Wood</td>
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<td>South Northants Council</td>
<td>Andy Berry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Borough Council of Wellingborough</td>
<td>Maxine Stevens</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit</td>
<td>Colin Staves</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northamptonshire Police</td>
<td>Sharon Kenney</td>
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<td>Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust</td>
<td>Lesley Roseman</td>
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<td>Leicestershire County Council</td>
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<td>Clinical Commissioning Group</td>
<td>Cllr Dennis Meredith</td>
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<td>Ward Counsellors</td>
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<td>Cllr Janie Duffy</td>
<td>Talavera Ward</td>
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<td>Cllr Dennis Meredith</td>
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<td>Cllr Clement Chriga</td>
<td>Brookside Ward</td>
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<td>Cllr James Hill</td>
<td>Redwood Farm Ward</td>
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<td>Cllr Andrew Kilbride</td>
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<td>Cllr Christopher Mollus</td>
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<td>Cllr Stephen John Hobart</td>
<td>Riverside Ward</td>
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<td>Cllr Mary Markham</td>
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<td>Cllr Matt Lynch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cllr Janie Lane</td>
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<td>Cllr David Mackintosh</td>
<td>Billing and Redwood Farm</td>
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<tr>
<td>County Councillors</td>
<td>Cllr Anna King</td>
<td>Counsellor Co-Chair of LGBTIQ Forum</td>
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<td>Cllr Dennis Meredith</td>
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<td>Cllr Michael Ellis</td>
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<td>Cranbrooke Residents’ Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Margaret Pritchard, Secretary</td>
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Appendix C – Statutory Consultee responses

Historic England Response (by email)

From: Fletcher, Clive [mailto:Clive.Fletcher@HistoricEngland.org.uk]
Sent: 05 April 2016 10:27
To: Emma Arklay

Dear Emma,

Thanks for your call earlier – I called back but couldn’t get hold of you. I’ve taken a look at the plan and can confirm that Historic England has no comments.

Best regards,

Clive
Environment Agency Response

Emma Arkley
Northampton Borough Council
Planning and Regeneration
The Guildhall
St. Giles Square
Northampton
NN1 1DE

Our ref: AN/2012/114000/SE- 01/DS1-L01
Your ref:
Date: 11 March 2016

Dear Emma

Growing Together Pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan consultation (Reg. 14)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Growing Together Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan and associated Screening Report for the SEA / HRA.

We have reviewed the information submitted and consider the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan, which comprises the communities of Blackthorn, Cherry Lodge, Goldings, Lings, Lingswood Park, Lumbertubs and Overstone Lodge, is unlikely to result in significant environmental impacts.

As the plan is required to be in general conformity with the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, we do not consider that we are able to provide you with further advice at this stage until we are consulted on individual planning applications by your Authority. However, we can offer the following comments which may be of use.

Plan Area Constraints
Flood Risk
The Plan area falls mostly within Flood Zone 1, defined by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) as having a low probability of flooding. Drainage from new development must not increase flood risk either on-site or elsewhere. Government policy strongly encourages a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) approach to achieve these objectives. Guidance on how to address specific local surface water flood risk issues may also be available through the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment or Surface Water Management Plans produced by your Authority.

A small area falls within Flood Zone 3, defined by the PPG as having a high probability of flooding. Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

All development proposals in this zone should be accompanied by a flood risk...
assessment.

Prior to investing resources in completing a FRA, applicants are advised to contact the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and discuss how the flood risk Sequential Test as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will affect the proposed development. It is possible that the development will be inappropriate and be refused planning permission irrespective of any FRA.

There are no main rivers within the Neighbourhood area of Blackthorn, Goldings, Lings and Lumbertubs. The Billing Brook runs through area however it is classified as a non main river at this location.

A flood map is available for the Billing Brook as we produce flood maps for main rivers and non main watercourses where the catchment is greater than 3km. The flood map can be viewed on Figure E-49 of the West Northamptonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (http://www.westnorthamptonshiredup.org/9/tiff/208178/6412897.1/pdf/-/sfra_11_v1.pdf) or our website at 'what’s in your backyard'?.

Non main rivers and surface water drainage are now the responsibility of the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) in this case Northamptonshire County Council. It is recommended that LLFA is consulted on this Neighbourhood plan.

The Neighbourhood Area extends into the reservoir breach area of the Overstone Reservoir. Reservoir maps can also be viewed on 'what’s in your backyard'.

We would recommend that future developments consider space for water and roll back development from all watercourses (main and non-main rivers). Naturalisation of any watercourse is also promoted for example removal of sections which are culverted.

Surface Water Drainage
The Neighbourhood Area borders critical drainage area within Boothville and Western Favell see Figure F-1 of the Northampton SFRA level 2 (http://www.westnorthamptonshiredup.org/9/tiff/278178/6369637.1/pdf/-/5_northampton_level2_SFRA.pdf).

Approved Document Part H of the Building Regulations 2000 establishes a hierarchy for surface water disposal, which encourages a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) approach. Under Approved Document Part H the first option for surface water disposal should be the use of SuDS, which encourage infiltration such as soakaways or infiltration trenches. In all cases, it must be established that these options are feasible, can be adopted and properly maintained and would not lead to any other environmental problems. For example, using soakaways or other infiltration methods on contaminated land carries groundwater pollution risks and may not work in areas with a high water table. Where the intention is to dispose to soakaway, these should be shown to work through an appropriate assessment carried out under Building Research Establishment (BRE) Digest 365. Second tier is discharge to water course. Only if infiltration and connection to watercourse are not possible should discharge to sewer be considered.

Table 5-7 of the Northampton SFRA level 2 states “Attenuation SuDS techniques should be considered at an early stage in the site layout process to ensure that it can be accommodated on site”.

Further information on SUDS can be found in:
- Northampton SFRA Level 2 chapter 9 and Section 12.5.3 to 12.5.22.
- CIRIA C522 document Sustainable Drainage Systems-design manual for Cont/d.
England and Wales
- CIRIA C697 document SuDS manual
- the Interim Code of Practice for Sustainable Drainage Systems. The Interim Code of Practice provides advice on design, adoption and maintenance issues and a full overview of other technical guidance on SuDS.

Preliminary Opinion
We are able to provide a free preliminary opinion to a developer/applicant per site. This will outline our position and highlights any key environmental risks that we are concerned about as a statutory consultee and provide developers with an idea of what we would expect to receive within a planning application.

Charged Service for Planning Advice
If further bespoke advice is required outside of a formal planning application then this will form part of our charged for planning advice service. Please note that this response is based on the information provided at this time and if this changes in the future we would need to consider our position again. We trust that the above information is of assistance.

If you would like to discuss our response further, or would like more information about our charged for planning advice service, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Kerrie Ginn
Sustainable Places - Planning Adviser
Direct dial 02030253304
Direct e-mail kerrie.ginn@environment-agency.gov.uk

Awarded to the Environment, Planning and Engagement Department, Lincolnshire & Northamptonshire
Natural England Response

Date: 27th July 2015
Our ref: 156718

Edward Dade
Senior Planning Officer
Northampton Borough Council

Dear Edward

Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan (Pre-submission) and SEA/HRA Screening

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 15th June 2015.

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.

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests are concerned (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.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans in light of the SEA Directive 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/allocations 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)

Natural England is in agreement with the conclusion of the screening report in relation to HRA as the location and scale of development included within the plan would not represent a likely significant effect to any European Site.

The main policies requiring consideration are H2: small scale housing development and Dev 1: priority development areas which are considered in relation to the potential for increased recreational disturbance at the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA. As stated in the HRA report these policies do not allocate sites for development but do none the less promote residential development within the plan area and steer it towards certain locations. Given the relatively small scale of residential development that would be promoted and its distance to the SPA Natural England considers it unlikely the plan would contribute significantly to recreational pressure within the SPA. The closest part of the plan area is approx. 2.4km from the nearest entrance point to the SPA. The results of a visitor access study to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA indicate that a development of 100 houses at 2km from the site would generate 0.3 additional visits per day. The majority of the plan area is over 3km from the SPA and the access study concludes that visitor rates are very low beyond this distance.

We note that the HRA relies on the conclusion of the West Northants Joint Core Strategy HRA as any residential development promoted by the plan would fall within the housing numbers within the Northampton Related Development Area promoted by the Core Strategy. We would caution against over reliance on the HRA for this higher tier plan for two reasons. Firstly the JCS HRA assessed housing numbers across the NRDA (as well as SUEs) which included a significant element of uncertainty in the eventual locations for much of the housing which means that lower tier plans or planning applications introducing housing close to the SPA could still result in a likely significant effect. Secondly significant new evidence in the form of a visitor access study of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA has been produced since the completion of the JCS HRA which changes our understanding of issues such as how far residents are likely to travel to visit the SPA.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Ross Holdgate on 0300 060 4657. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Ross Holdgate

Essex, Herts, Beds, Cambs and Northants Area Team.
Wildlife Trust Response

From: Alan Smith [mailto:Alan.Smith@wildlifebcn.org]
Sent: 09 May 2016 12:44
To: Emma Arklay
Subject: Feedback from The Wildlife Trust - as at 09/05/16 - RE: Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan.
Importance: High

Dear Emma,

Hello there once again. Hope that you are keeping well, and doing just fine, at the present time - and that you also had a great, sunny, weekend too.

Thank you very much indeed for having kindly given me the, extended period of time and, opportunity to, finally !!, review and provide some comments in respect of the above matter and its related geographical site area coverage in the eastern part of Northampton town itself.

Therefore, having now had a look through the relevant report document, entitled “Draft Neighbourhood Plan”, Pre-Submission version, dated June 2015, as prepared on behalf of the Lumbertubs, Blackthorn, Goldings and Lings “Growing Together” Community Groups, please note the following comments:

- On Page 3; in the relevant portion of the “Contents” list shown there : Please note that there are no listings included here for the Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 parts of this same overall report document.
- On Page 7; in the relevant portion of the first full paragraph on this same page : Since this is the first ( ?? ) mention / entry in the overall document that is referring the designated site area at “Lings Wood”, might it also be a good idea here to say that it is a statutorily-designated site - being a Local Nature Reserve ( LNR ) ??
- On Page 41; for the content of the ‘policy box’ itself for “Policy OS1 : Local Green Spaces” : Although I suspect that it may well have something to do with the definition of just what the term “Local Green Space” actually is, but, please note that I am still a bit ‘concerned’ to see that this particular Policy Statement here itself does not currently include any specific reference to wildlife or biodiversity, etc.
- On Page 42; for the relevant content of Figure 17 : Can I please just ask why the southern ‘tail’ of the “Lings Wood” LNR site area - the thinner / narrow section which runs all the way down to meet the A4500 Wellingborough Road highway - is not also included in this same Figure 17; shaded-in in green and identified / labelled as a part of the overall No.7 site area ??
- Again on Page 42; for the relevant content of Figure 17 : Can I please just ask why the roughly ‘rectangular’ portion of the “Lings Wood” LNR site area, which extends to the westwards to meet the Lings Way highway, about halfway down the ‘northern half’ of the LNR, and immediately adjacent to the south side of the Prentice Court ‘Special Needs School’ site area, is not also included in this same Figure 17; shaded-in in green and identified / labelled as a part of the overall No.7 site area ??
- On Page 45; for the relevant content of Figure 18 : As feedback received from my colleague here at The Wildlife Trust, Jane Pearman, who is the Northants County Nature Reserves Manager, please note the following points :
For the dark-blue coloured dashed-line symbol, which is depicting the “Possible pedestrian links / cycle path upgrades:

- For the portion / length of this possible route that runs down the eastern side of the “Lings Wood” LNR site area, entering it from the northern end, and then turns and cuts across the ‘middle’ of the LNR in a roughly ‘south-westerly’ direction, then please note that this is on, part of, an existing surfaced and lit ( circular ) pathway anyway.

- For the portion / length of this possible route that continues on ‘southwards’, down through the southern ‘tail’ of the “Lings Wood” LNR site area, then please note that this is likely to be on an existing muddy, un-surfaced and un-lit, fairly narrow ( and with several protruding tree roots too ) route.

- Please note that, if the dark-blue coloured dashed-line symbol, which is depicting this “Possible pedestrian links / cycle path upgrade through the “Lings Wood” LNR site area, actually eventually happens on-the-ground, then The Wildlife Trust would require an additional amount of site management funding in order to account for the consequent increase in the incidence of Health & Safety tree works, path maintenance and management, new signage, etc.

- On Page 51; for the statements made at the bottom of the same page here; ‘underneath’ the content of the Table included as Appendix 1 to this report document : Please note that I am afraid that I do not think that these remarks are correct - and / or that there has been some ‘confusion’ concerning the sizes of the various site areas. For instance, the site known as “Billing Arbours” measures 9.07 hectares in overall area size; and this is an area size which is equivalent to 22.41 acres ( when converted ). Therefore, I recommend that the area sizes and the area units ( conversion calculations ) for all of the identified sites illustrated on Figure 17, on Page 42, and as listed in this same Table in Appendix 1, should be re-visited - and then the wording of these same statements at the bottom of Page 51 should be re-considered.

- On Page 52; for the entries in the relevant Column Headings for the content of the Table included as Appendix 2 to this report document : Can I please just ask what the asterisk suffixes are meant to be denoting on the headings for “Site ID”, “Open space type”, “Hectares”, “Quality %” and “Accessibility %” ?

- On Pages 52 through to 56, inclusive; for the relevant content of the Table included as Appendix 2 to this same report document, please now note the following points :
  - Billing Arbour is all designated as a Local Wildlife Site ( LWS ) too.
  - Swanhaven Park includes at is northern end, for the lake area immediately to the east of Billing Arbour, an ex-LWS area, which is currently a “No Status” site area, and also includes at its southern end, for the lake area just to the north of the Northampton Academy main buildings, a Potential Wildlife Site ( PWS ) area too.
  - Lings Wood ( the ‘extended’ footprint area for it !! ) is not only designated as an LNR, but the same footprint as that is also a LWS area too; and, furthermore, the majority of the overall site area is also a Wildlife Trust Natures Reserve area too.
  - Foxcovert Wood is a PWS area.

Emma, I do hope that the above feedback and observations on behalf of The Wildlife Trust can still prove to be of some interest and use to you, and any other relevant colleagues within NBC, in respect of the above same matter.

If you do have any questions about any of the above items, then, of course, please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Many Thanks & all the best,

Alan.
The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire
Lings House, off Lings Way
Billing Lings
Northampton
NN3 8BE
United Kingdom

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire works to make our three counties a place where nature matters, where wildlife can flourish and enrich the lives of the people who live here: with your help we care for local wildlife. Ninety five per cent of the local population live within five miles of one of our 126 reserves and contributions of time or money will directly benefit local wildlife www.wildlifebcn.org

Bedfordshire
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