



Whitchurch Town Council
Town Hall
Newbury Street
Whitchurch
RG28 7DW

02.10.2014

Dear Sir or Madam

Whitchurch Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion

This letter sets out the borough council's screening opinion concerning the need for SEA and HRA in relation to the Whitchurch Neighbourhood Plan. This screening opinion has been underpinned by a detailed report and the opinions of the three consultation bodies (Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage).

The screening process undertaken concludes that in order to meet the 'basic conditions'¹ for neighbourhood planning **an Environmental Assessment is considered to be required to accompany the Whitchurch Neighbourhood Plan but it would not need to be subject to HRA**. The consultation bodies have all agreed with the conclusion reached. The reasons for the decision are set out below:

Strategic Environmental Assessment

The conclusion reached is informed by the sensitivity of the area, which includes various valued and vulnerable areas such as AONB, SSSI, SINCs, Conservation Area and a number of listed buildings. When this level of sensitivity is combined with the scale and nature of development potentially covered by the Neighbourhood Plan (including approximately 200 residential units, employment sites, infrastructure and industrial development), it is considered that significant effects on the environment are likely.

¹ Requirement (f), that the making of the order or neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with EU Obligations. The basic conditions are set out in [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.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

There are no European sites within a 10km radius of the neighbourhood area. Therefore, it is considered that there are not likely to be significant effects on any European sites flowing from the Neighbourhood Plan. Accordingly, an HRA is not required.

The Environment Assessment will need to meet the relevant legal requirements set out in the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#). Further guidance on the requirements for carrying out the Environment Assessment is set out in the [National Planning Practice Guide](#) and [the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive: guidance](#). In addition, please feel free to contact the borough council (planning policy team) if you require any additional advice regarding how to complete the Environmental Assessment.

Yours Sincerely

Andrew Rushmer
Senior Planning Policy Officer