



# **Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan Review 2025 – Scope**

**Strategic Environmental Assessment and  
Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening**

**Final Screening Outcome**

**November 2025**

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# 1. Summary

- 1.1. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) places a requirement for competent authorities – here the Council – to ascertain whether a plan or project will have any adverse effects on the integrity of European sites.
- 1.2. To assess whether a full HRA (Habitats Regulations Assessment) Appropriate Assessment is required under the Conservation of Habitats and Species regulations 2017 (as amended), the Council has undertaken a screening assessment of the Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan Review Scope.
- 1.3. Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) are a way of ensuring the environmental implications of decisions are considered before any decisions are made. The need for environmental assessment of plans and programmes is set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Under these regulations, Neighbourhood Plans may require SEA if they could have significant environmental effects. A plan or project that has been identified as triggering an Appropriate Assessment is also required to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- 1.4. To assess whether a SEA / HRA are required, the local planning authority must undertake a screening process. This must be subject to consultation with the three consultation bodies: Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England. Following consultation, the results of the screening process must be detailed in a screening statement, which is required to be made available to the public.
- 1.5. If a Neighbourhood Plan as drafted is considered potential to have significant environmental effects through the screening process, then the conclusion will be that the preparation of a SEA and/ or Appropriate Assessment is necessary.
- 1.6. Buckinghamshire Council considers that, following this Screening statement, the Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan Review Scope does have potential to introduce significant environmental effects so does require an SEA. The neighbourhood plan review does not however require an HRA Appropriate Assessment.
- 1.7. A consultation took place with the statutory bodies and their conclusions are reflected in this final report. The consultation took place with Natural England, The Environment Agency and Historic England for 5 weeks between 2 October 2025 and 7 November 2025.
- 1.8. The screening statement follows.

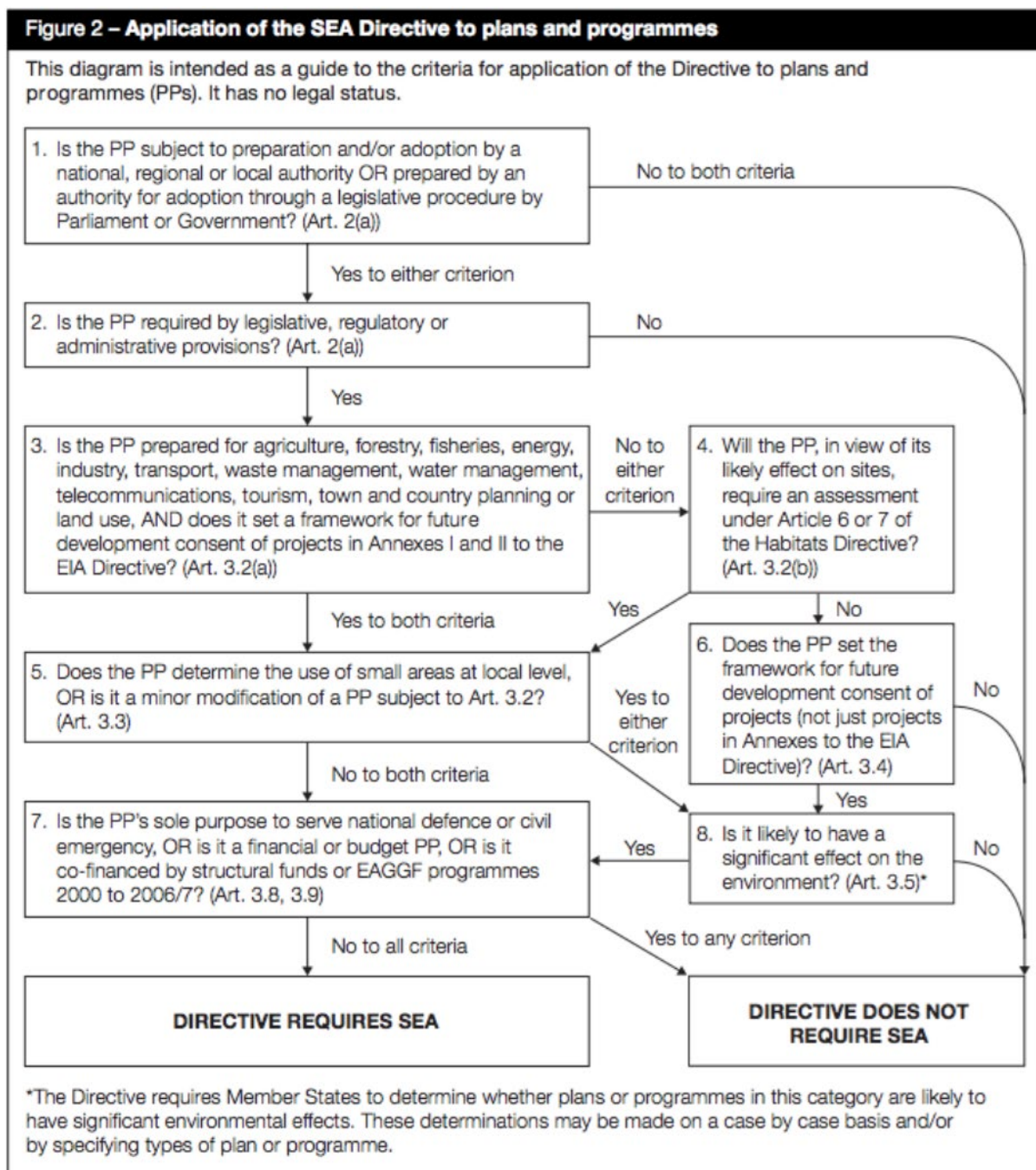
## **2. The Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan Review - Scope**

2.1. The scope of the emerging replacement Neighbourhood Plan for Great Horwood will:

- allocate new sites for development
- include a green gap policy
- contain policies on design
- will designate Local Green Spaces

### 3. Assessment - SEA

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



3.2. The table below shows the assessment of whether the Great Horwood Neighbourhood Development Plan Review will require a full SEA. The questions below are drawn from the diagram above which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

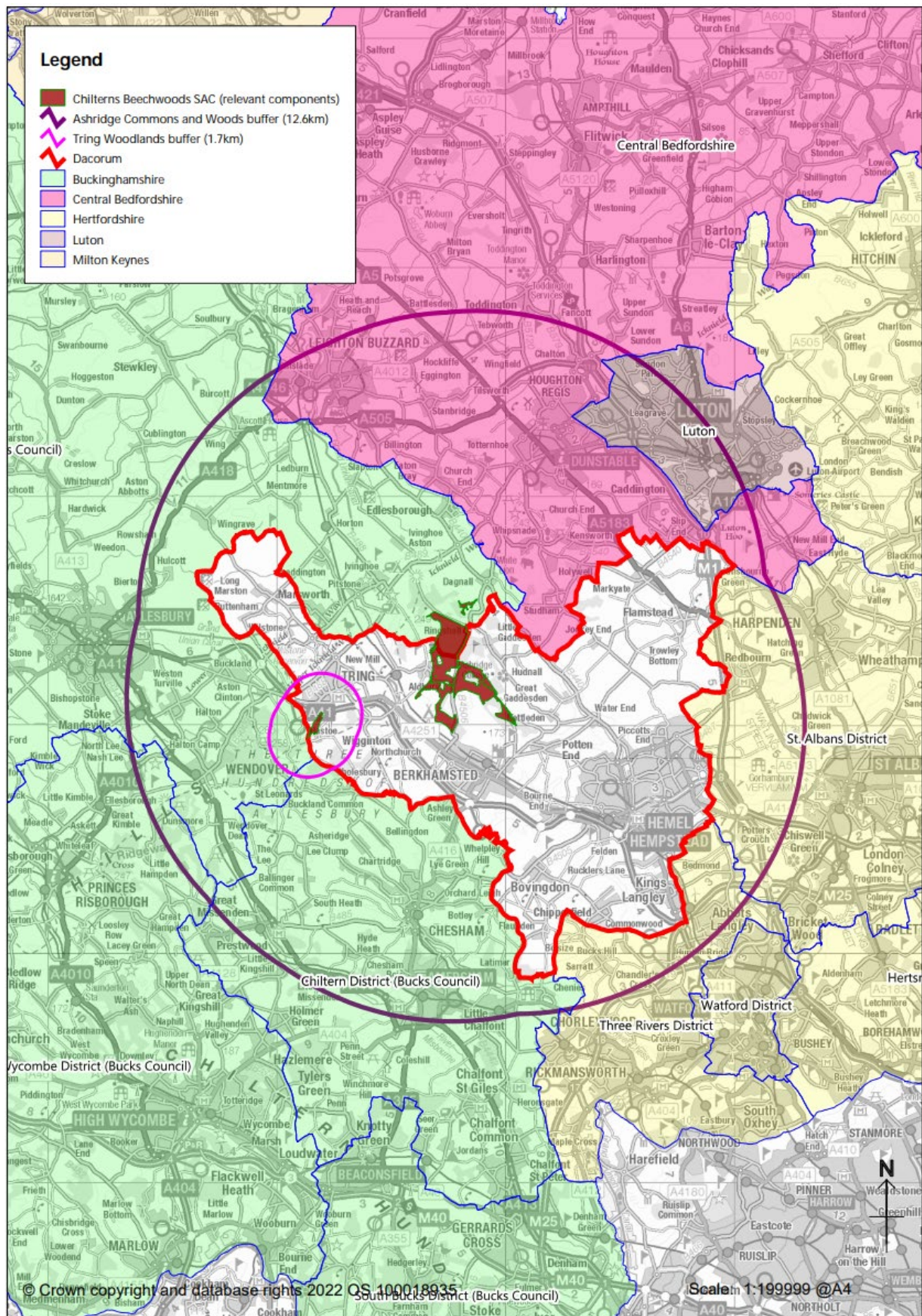
Stage	Y/ N	Reason
1. Is the plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Y	The Neighbourhood Development Plan will be adopted by a Local Planning Authority, Buckinghamshire Council
2. Is the plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	N	The Neighbourhood Development Plan is an optional plan produced by Great Horwood Parish Council.
3. Is the plan 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))	N	The Neighbourhood Development Plan is prepared for town and country planning purposes, but it does not set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive (Art 3.2(a)).
4. Will the plan, 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))	N	Great Horwood parish is 24km to the nearest part of an SAC, the Chiltern Beechwoods, due southeast near Ringshall and Ivinghoe Common. Any other SACs or equivalent designations such as Special Protection Areas are even further away. Due to this distance, the neighbourhood plan review is not considered to have any likely significant effect on any of these sites.
5. Does the plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a plan subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Y	The Neighbourhood Development Plan will determine the use of land through site allocations for housing.
6. Does the plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Y	The Neighbourhood Development Plan will set a framework for future development consent of projects, including land allocated for housing.
7. Is the plans 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)	N	The purpose of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is not for any of the projects listed in Art 3.8, 3.9.

8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	Y	The Neighbourhood Development Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment as the policies will determine the future use of land and will guide future development of the area.
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## 4. Assessment - HRA

- 4.1. Great Horwood Neighbourhood Area is 24km from the Ashridge Commons and Woods part of the Chiltern Beechwoods (the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) part in Dacorum Borough). This SSSI is the nearest part of any Special Area of Conservation or any protected site subject to the Habitats Regulations. The neighbourhood area is therefore also more than 12.6km from Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI for which there is a Zone of Influence mitigation strategy for recreational pressures.
- 4.2. On this basis there is no possibility of any impact on the integrity of a protected site due to distance and a full HRA screening assessment is unnecessary.







## 5. Buckinghamshire Council's Screening Opinion

- 5.1. Based on the above assessment, the screening outcome is that the Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan Review Scope is likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore **does** require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- 5.2. Under the Habitat Regulations (HRA) it is **not** considered there is any need for an HRA Report or to proceed to Stage 2 of HRA- an Appropriate Assessment.
- 5.3. The Council's Final Screening Outcome reflects the views of the response received from Historic England and Natural England during the consultation. No response was received from the Environment Agency.
- 5.4. Historic England agrees with the Council's screening conclusion that an SEA is required.
- 5.5. Natural England advises that, based on the information provided, the proposed Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant effects that would necessitate an SEA. However, they note; *"The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA"*.
- 5.6. Buckinghamshire Council concludes that an SEA is required for the following reasons:
  - To maintain consistency with the Council's approach to screening Neighbourhood Plans that include site allocations
  - Natural England has identified potential local environmental sensitivities that could justify the need for an SEA
  - Historic England has taken a precautionary stance, supporting the need for an SEA due to potential impacts on the historic environment, particularly in relation to site-specific and localised heritage concerns
- 5.7. Natural England agrees with the Council's conclusion that no HRA is required.

# Consultation Responses



Historic England

By email only to: [Neighbourhoodplanning@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:Neighbourhoodplanning@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

Our ref: PL00800139

Your ref: Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan SEA

Main: 020 7973 3700

[e-seast@historicengland.org.uk](mailto:e-seast@historicengland.org.uk)

[louise.dandy@historicengland.org.uk](mailto:louise.dandy@historicengland.org.uk)

Date: 0318/11/2025

To whom it may concern

## Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Opinion

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. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied.

The information supplied indicates that the plan will have significant effects on the historic environment. We also note there are site allocations.

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 required.



Historic England, 4th Floor, The Atrium, Cannon Bridge House, 25 Dowgate Hill, London EC4R 2YA

Telephone 020 7973 3700 [HistoricEngland.org.uk](http://HistoricEngland.org.uk)

Please note that Historic England operates an access to information policy.

Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available.





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, via email if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

**Louise Dandy**

Historic Places Adviser

Date: 24 October 2025  
Our ref: 528915  
Your ref: Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan



Ms Ella Wood  
Buckinghamshire Council

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**BY EMAIL ONLY**

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T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Wood

**Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan Review - SEA/HRA Screening Consultation**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 2 October 2025.

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 (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

**It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:**

- **significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,**
- **significant effects on Habitats sites<sup>1</sup>, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.**

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the [Planning Practice Guidance](#). This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

- 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.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected

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<sup>1</sup> Habitats sites are those referred to in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (Annex 2 - glossary) as "any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites".

species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's [standing advice](#) on protected species.

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission [standing advice](#).

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk)

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle  
Consultations Team