STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) SCREENING FOR TATSFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

PREPARED BY TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR TATSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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Executive Summary

- This report represents the Strategic Environmental Assessment 'Screening Assessment' for Tatsfield Neighbourhood Plan. It represents the view of Tandridge District Council.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental effects of a plan before it is made.
- Tandridge District Council's conclusion, based on consideration of the nature and extent
 of environmental assets combined with the absence of site allocations in the
 Neighbourhood Plan, is that there are likely to be no significant effects and therefore an
 SEA is not necessary.
- The statutory consultees (Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England) have been consulted on the initial screening opinion and have not raised any issues which would lead to a different conclusion.

1. Background and Context to Strategic Environmental Assessment SEA) and the Screening Process

1.1 What is SEA?

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental effects of a plan before it is made.

1.2 Statutory Background

The key regulations which set out requirements for SEA are the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (known as the SEA Regulations). These transposed into UK law The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive¹, a European Union requirement that seeks to provide a high level of protection of the environment by integrating environmental considerations into the process of preparing certain plans and programmes. The government has produced guidance in relation to the regulations, entitled 'A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive'.

Neighbourhood Plans may require SEA – but this will depend on the content of each Neighbourhood Plan.

Under the Directive, Tandridge District Council (TDC) is legally required to determine whether the Tatsfield Neighbourhood Plan will require SEA, however; if it is concluded that a SEA is required, Tatsfield Parish Council are responsible for its production and it must form part of the material that is consulted on once the formal consultation stage is reached.

In addition, Schedule 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 makes provision in relation to the Habitats Directive. The Directive requires that any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a European site must be subject to an Appropriate Assessment. To achieve this, paragraph 1 prescribes a basic condition that the making of a neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 apply its provisions to neighbourhood development orders and neighbourhood plans. In particular regulation 81 provides that a neighbourhood development order may not grant planning permission for development which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site. A separate assessment was carried out in 2020 on an earlier draft of the Neighbourhood Plan which proposed development allocations and it was concluded that the Neighbourhood Plan does not require Appropriate Assessment. This report focuses on screening for SEA and the criteria for establishing whether a full assessment is needed.

¹ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (legislation.gov.uk)

1.3 Do Neighbourhood Plans require an SEA?

Neighbourhood plans in England require SEA if:

- (i) their environmental effects are likely to be significant, or
- (ii) if the plan requires appropriate assessment (rather than just screening) under Habitats Regulations Assessment. (See above)

However, the main determining factor as to whether SEA is required on a Neighbourhood Plan is if it is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. Those Neighbourhood Plans containing land allocations for development, which are not included in the local authority's plan, are likely to require SEA. Neighbourhood Plans which do not contain such allocations (or simply reflect allocations already identified as part of a local authority plan) are less likely to require SEA.

If SEA is required, Tatsfield Parish Council may wish to consider voluntarily expanding the scope so that is covers wider economic and social issues, rather than just environmental. This is the approach taken by Tandridge District Council, whereby SEA is included within the broader Sustainability Appraisal of plans. The advantage of undertaking a wider Sustainability Appraisal is that it can demonstrate the impact of the Neighbourhood Plan on social, economic and environmental factors and therefore demonstrate to an examiner that the Plan that has been prepared is the most sustainable given all alternatives.

1.4 What Counts as Significant Effects?

The criteria for whether a plan's effects are likely to be significant are set out at Annex II of the SEA Directive and essentially relate to the plan's influence and scale; the magnitude, probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects; and the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected. They are considered further in the table Assessment 2 below.

1.5 Testing at Examination

One of the "basic conditions" that will be tested by the independent examiner of the Neighbourhood Plan is whether the making of the plan is compatible with legal obligations. When the Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to TDC for Examination it must be accompanied by **either** a statement of reasons for a determination by TDC under regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects, **or** if it is, an Environmental Report prepared in accordance with those regulations, as well as other documentation.

1.6 How to find out whether the Neighbourhood Plan requires an SEA

Neighbourhood plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This process is commonly referred to as a "screening" assessment and is carried out by TDC. The Qualifying Body should request a screening opinion from TDC and work with the Council to be sure that the authority has the information it needs. TDC will consult the environmental assessment consultation bodies² Each body will advise on its area of expertise and this will assist TDC in reaching a decision. TDC will inform the Qualifying Body of the decision. SEA Screening should be carried out before the plan is finalized, in order that an Environmental Report can be prepared and taken into account before the Neighbourhood Plan is submitted. If the Plan goes through significant changes during the course of preparation it may be necessary to "screen" the plan more than once.

1.7 What are the next steps if an SEA is required?

Further information on this is set out in Annex 1

2 Screening Process

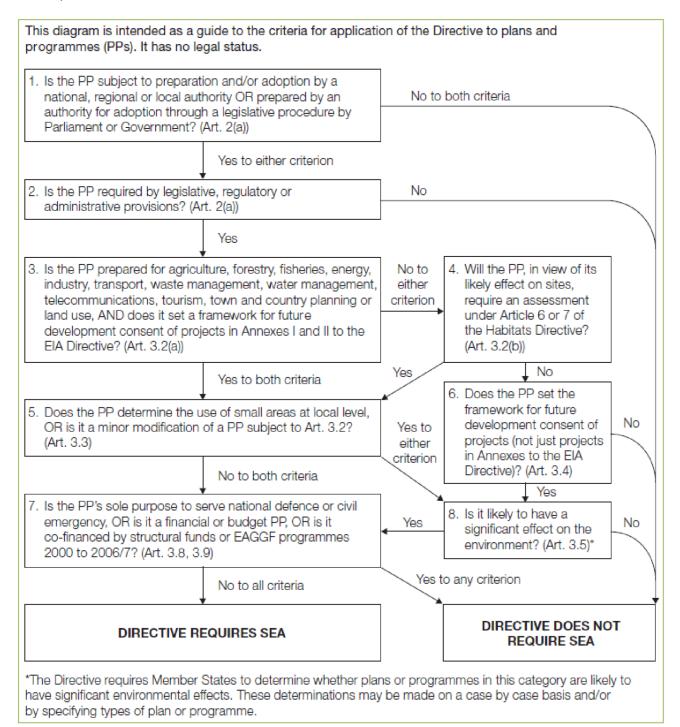
Tatsfield Parish Council requested a SEA screening opinion of its Neighbourhood Plan in February 2022. It is TDC's responsibility to assess whether the policies and proposals in the Tatsfield Neighbourhood Plan are likely to have 'significant environmental effects'. The Plan does not have to be at a final draft stage to be assessed, and the plan assessed was the Regulation 14 consultation version.

The screening opinion assessment is undertaken in two parts: the first part assesses whether the plan requires SEA (as per the flow chart which follows); and the second part of the assessment considers whether the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, using criteria drawn from Schedule 1 of the EU SEA Directive and the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (see section 1.2 above).

The three statutory consultation bodies were consulted to determine whether they agree with the conclusion of the initial screening opinion, in establishing whether the Tatsfield Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA and whether it may have a 'significant environmental effect'. Should it be concluded that SEA is required Tatsfield Parish Council will need to undertake a SEA - for further details see Annex 1.

² The environmental assessment consultation bodies are currently Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

The government guidance 'A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' sets out the following approach to be taken in determining whether SEA is required:



3 Screening Summary

3.1 Summary of the Neighbourhood Plan

Details of Neighbourhood Plan		
Name of Neighbourhood Plan	Tatsfield Neighbourhood Plan	
Geographic Coverage of the Plan	Tatsfield Parish	
Key topics/scope of Plan	There are seven main topics covered by the Plan:	
Rey topics/scope of Flair	Built and natural environment	
	Housing	
	Design	
	Transport and Infrastructure	
	Local Economy and Enterprise	
	Community Facilities	
	Climate Change and Sustainability	
Key Issues	The key issues identified are:	
Key issues	 Support for new housing which maintains a diverse 	
	community	
	Retain and improve local facilities and community	
	assets	
	 Improve the road network and parking provision in 	
	village centre	
	Improve the provision of sustainable transport	
	Strengthen the village centre	
	Ensure new development is supported by	
	infrastructure and set quality standards for design	
	Ensure new development is appropriate to the semi-	
	rural nature of the parish, retains Tatsfield's separate	
	identity and responds to local built character	
	Maintain and improve the green infrastructure	
	network and landscape setting and links to	
	surrounding countryside including Surrey Hills AONB	
	 Preserve and enhance natural habitats and biodiversity 	
	 Support and grow the local economy especially local 	
	businesses	
	Become a more sustainable community and reduce	
	the need for fossil fuels in the move to net zero	

3.2 Summary of Screening Opinion

Local Authority Details	
Name and job title of officer undertaking	Anna Cronin, Strategy Specialist
screening opinion	
Date of assessment	Initial assessment 9th February 2022, final 28th March
	2022
Conclusion of assessment	SEA is not required

Reason for conclusion	The Neighbourhood Plan does not propose any development allocations, other than a small extension to the cemetery which already has planning permission. It relates to a small area and although there are significant environmental designations in the area including AONB, potential AONB, SSSI, Local Nature Reserve and Ancient Woodland, these are subject to protection in national and local policy, with which the Neighbourhood Plan must align. There are four listed buildings which are similarly protected. The Neighbourhood Plan policies aim to preserve and enhance the local environment.
Name and job title of officer approving	Marie Killip
screening opinion	Strategy Specialist
Date of approval	4.4.2022

3.3 Summary of Consultations

Statutory Consultee	Summary of Comments
Historic	Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required, for the reason set out in Section
England	5, Screening Conclusion.
Environment	Provided Neighbourhood Planning Advice note (attached) but did not comment specifically
Agency	on the conclusion of the initial SEA screening.
Natural	Cannot provide detailed advice at this time, this does not imply that there are no
England	impacts on the natural environment. It is for the deciding authority (TDC) to
	determine whether or not the plan is consistent with national and local environmental
	policies. Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the
	environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA/SA screening stage, should
	TDC seek views on the scoping or environmental report stages. This includes any
	third party appeal against any screening decision TDC may make.

4 Screening Assessment

4.1 Assessment 1: Establishing the Need for SEA

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) 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))	Υ	The preparation and adoption of the NP is allowed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The NP will be prepared by Tatsfield Parish Council (as the 'relevant body') and will be 'made' by Tandridge District Council as the local authority. The preparation of NPs is subject to the following regulations: The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012, as amended.
		GO TO STAGE 2
2. Is the NP required by		Whilst the NP is not a requirement and is optional under
legislative, regulatory or	V	the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act as
administrative provisions?	•	amended by the Localism Act 2011, it will if 'made', form
(Art. 2(a))		part of the Development Plan for the District. It is therefore

Stage	Y/N	Reason
o.w.g.c	,,	important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive. GO TO STAGE 3
3. Is the NP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste 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))	Y	The NP is being prepared for town and country planning and land use. As such, the NP contains a framework for future development consent of urban development projects (listed as 10(b) in Annex II of the EIA Directive). GO TO STAGE 5
4. Will the NP, 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))		NOT APPLICABLE
5. Does the NP determine the use of small areas at local level OR is it a minor modification of a plan or programme subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Y	The NP will determine the use of small areas at local level as part of the Development Plan. However, the entire parish lies within Green Belt, large areas are within Surrey Hills AONB and there are also considerable areas of SSSI and Ancient Woodland, as well as Local Nature Reserve, all of which are subject to national and district policies limiting development. The NP must fit within this policy framework.
6. Does the NP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)		NOT APPLICABLE
7. Is the NP's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget plan or programme, OR is it cofinanced by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art. 3.8, 3.9)		NOT APPLICABLE
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art 3.5)	Y	See Assessment 2: Likely significant effects on the environment GO TO STAGE 7

4.2 Assessment 2: Likely Significant Effects on the Environment

SEA Directive criteria and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of plans and programmes Regulations 2004	Tandridge District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
Characteristics of the Neighbour	hood Plan, having regard to:	
The degree to which the Plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The NP would, if made, form part of the statutory Development Plan and as such contributes to the framework for future development consent of projects. However, the NP sits within the wider framework of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), the TDC Core Strategy (2008) and the Detailed Policies (2014), as well as the emerging Local Plan to a more limited extent, therefore the projects for which this NP helps to set a framework are localised in nature and have limited resource implications.	N
The degree to which the Plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The NP should be in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework. The policies within the NP should also be in general conformity with the Council's strategic policies and complement the Core Strategy and the Detailed Policies. The southern half of the parish lies within the Surrey Hills AONB, and this area may be extended under the current review. Candidate areas include the locally designated Area of Great Landscape Value which extends north of the AONB and abuts the village to the south. The AONB Management Plan is also relevant to the content of the NP. The NP should not significantly influence other plans and programmes, but may have a limited degree of influence over the formation of future strategic policies.	N
The relevance of the Plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	The NP contains policies to protect and enhance the natural environment and heritage of the area, including tranquillity and dark skies, open space, woodland and farmland. The NP policies promote limited housing development within and adjacent to the "defined village" close to facilities, and standards of design including energy efficiency. The NP promotes improved accessibility by sustainable means and the provision of appropriate infrastructure and facilities.	Y

SEA Directive criteria and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of plans and programmes Regulations 2004	Tandridge District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
	The NP contains policies supporting appropriate renewable energy installations, and seeking SUDs to deal with flooding issues. It is therefore considered that the NP will integrate environmental considerations and promote sustainable development.	
Environmental problems relevant to the Plan.	Flooding is the main environmental issue raised in the NP and no others are likely to be relevant.	N
The relevance of the Plan for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The NP is not directly relevant to the implementation of European legislation, although most of the parish lies within Groundwater Protection Zones.	N
	d of the area likely to be affected, having regard	, in particular, to:
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	As the NP is concerned with land use it is likely to have long term effects. However, it does not allocate specific sites for development. (It protects land which already has planning permission for a cemetery extension). Policies direct new development to within or adjacent to the "defined village" within the Green Belt and seek to ensure that character and design of new development is appropriate and energy efficient, thereby minimising irreversible effects. The NP seeks to protect the natural environment long term, and much of the parish is already covered by national designations such as AONB and potential future AONB, SSSI and Ancient Woodland, and Area of Great Landscape Value, which are protected under national and district policies with which the NP policies must align.	Y
The cumulative nature of the effects of the Plan.	The NP policies promote a thriving community located within a rural landscape, much of which is designated as of national value as AONB. It is intended that the NP will have a positive cumulative benefit for the area.	Y
The trans-boundary nature of	There are not expected to be any significant	N
the effects of the Plan. The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	There are no significant risks to human health.	N
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects	Tatsfield Parish has an area of 13.36 km² (5.16 sq mi) and a population of	N

SEA Directive criteria and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of plans and programmes Regulations 2004	Tandridge District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
(geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected) by the Plan.	about 1,600, mostly located within the "defined village". The Parish lies in the North Downs, adjacent to the Surrey border with both Kent and Greater London, approximately 3.9 miles north east of Oxted, Surrey. Tatsfield village is situated in an elevated location just south of Biggin Hill in Greater London.	
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected by the Plan due to: - Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;	The NP aims to protect and enhance the natural characteristics and cultural heritage of the parish, within the framework set by national and local policy, including national policy on AONB and Green Belt and local policy on Areas of Great Landscape Value.	N
-	Given that the District is generally rural in nature, with a wealth of biodiversity and natural habitats, any proposed development is likely to have an impact on the environment. However, small scale development to support the vitality of the village will not be significant as it is likely to occur within or adjacent to the "defined village". Areas which are rich in biodiversity are to be protected, and through other policies within the Development Plan. There are a small number of nationally listed buildings in the parish, and others have been put forward for designation as locally designated heritage assets under a current review by Surrey County Council.	
- Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or	The NP is not expected to exceed environmental quality standards or limit values.	N
- Intensive land use	Any proposals are unlikely to intensively use the land for development. Other policies within the Development Plan should mitigate against the over-development of land.	N
The effects of the Plan on areas or landscapes which have recognised national, community or international protection status.	The southern part of the NP area is designated as part of the Surrey Hills AONB, and is thus subject to a high degree of protection under national and local policy with which the NP must align. Additional areas covered by the	Y

SEA Directive criteria and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of plans and programmes Regulations 2004	Tandridge District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
	the NP are under consideration as potential additions to the AONB. The NP area also lies within the Green Belt and is subject to national and local policy constraint on development, including within the "defined village". The NP does not propose any alteration to the defined village boundary. Other areas protected by national policy include SSSI and Ancient Woodland and these are likewise protected within the NP.	
Assessment 2 Conclusion	Overall the Neighbourhood Plan is not considered to give rise to significant environmental effects and therefore a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required. GO TO STAGE 7 (Assessment 1)	

5 Screening Conclusion

As a result of the Screening Assessment, it is concluded that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required. The Neighbourhood Plan does not propose any development allocations. It relates to a small area and although there are significant environmental designations in the area including AONB, potential AONB, SSSI, Local Nature Reserve and Ancient Woodland, these are subject to protection in national and local policy, with which the Neighbourhood Plan must align. There are four listed buildings which are similarly protected. The Neighbourhood Plan policies aim to preserve and enhance the local environment. The statutory consultees (Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England) have been consulted on this screening opinion. However, it is important to remember that this screening opinion is a 'snapshot in time' and that if the issues addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan should change then a new screening process will need to be undertaken to determine whether an SEA will still be required.

The TDC Core Strategy has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment. The Council is also preparing a Local Plan, which has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal, including a Strategic Environmental Assessment. The Strategic Environmental Assessment, in particular the Habitats Regulation Assessment, identifies that at this stage it is not possible to determine the likely significant effects of the emerging Tandridge District Local Plan. However, the Tatsfield Neighbourhood Plan has been determined not to require Appropriate Assessment.

Tatsfield Neighbourhood Plan should also meet each of a set of "basic conditions". 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. Tatsfield Parish Council will need to prepare a basic conditions statement to be submitted to TDC with other documentation alongside the plan for Examination.

Annex 1 Next Steps if SEA is required

1. The Scoping Stage

The next stage following the screening is the 'Scoping Stage' which identifies the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report. It should set out the context, objectives and approach of the assessment; establish the baseline; and identify relevant environmental issues and objectives.

Although the scoping stage is a requirement of the process, a formal scoping report is not required by law but is a useful way of presenting information at the scoping stage. A key aim of the scoping procedure is to help ensure the strategic environmental assessment is proportionate and relevant to the neighbourhood plan being assessed. The consultation bodies must be consulted on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included within the report. Planning Practice Guidance³ states that the SEA should only focus on what is needed to assess the likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan and does not need to be done in more detail or using more resources than is considered appropriate for the content and level of detail in the Neighbourhood Plan.

2 What issues should be taken into account in scoping the SEA?

TDC agreed a set of 16 Sustainability Assessment (SA) objectives with other East Surrey Local Planning Authorities. The 16 objectives are supported by decision aiding questions. These are

³ Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

used in assessing Tandridge District Council's own Development Plan documents.

It is recommended that Neighbourhood Plans utilise the same 16 SA objectives for the sake of consistency. They can be found in Table 3, page 102 of the Tandridge District Council - Local Plan 2033: Sustainability Appraisal Incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment Volume 1: Context January 2019 Local Plan Submission.⁴

The 16 objectives were designed for the Sustainability Appraisal process, but it is considered that objectives 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 will be relevant to the SEA process.

For consistency, the qualifying body may also wish to cross-refer to the Tandridge Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal's consideration and assessment of relevant sites and policies.

3 What options and alternatives can be considered in SEA for Neighbourhood Plans?

The SEA should consider reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme.

However, the fact that neighbourhood plans must be 'in general conformity' with the adopted Local Plan limits the alternatives that they can consider; for instance, they cannot consider housing numbers lower than those allocated to them in Local Plans.

4 Consultation

The SEA must be made available alongside the draft neighbourhood plan (Reg 14 stage). The consultation bodies (Natural England, the Environment Agency, Historic England) should be sent a copy of these documents and the documents publicised in order to bring them to the attention of those members of the public likely to be affected by or have an interest in the decisions involved in the assessment and development of the neighbourhood plan. The consultation bodies and the interested parties should have an opportunity to express their opinion and be given sufficient time to do so.

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⁴ Sustainability-Appraisal-2018-Volume-1-Context (tandridge.gov.uk)