

Draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2040

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



May 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

This screening report is designed to determine whether the content of the consultation draft of the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Whether a Neighbourhood Development Plan requires a SEA, and if so the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed in the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that a SEA may be required, for example, where:

- the Neighbourhood Development Plan allocates sites for development.
- the Neighbourhood Development Plan Area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan;
- the Neighbourhood Development Plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through the SEA of the Local Plan in the area.

The screening report also examines the potential impact of the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan on internationally designated wildlife sites and determines if the plan requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

When deciding on whether the proposals are likely to have significant effects, the local authority is required to consult Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. Where the local planning authority determines that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment) it should prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.

1.2 DRAFT SOUTH LENCHES NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUMMARY

The draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan is essentially a community-led framework for guiding future development and growth of the parish from 2016 to 2040. The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared against the policies in the adopted South Worcester Development Plan and the submitted South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR). The SWDPR is currently under examination with a number of further hearing days scheduled for the beginning of May. Following the further hearing days, the Inspectors will prepare an interim report to the Local Planning Authorities with general recommendations, which may include modifications to the plan. It is anticipated that the SWDPR will be adopted by the end of this calendar year.

Noting the above timeline, it is the intention that the South Lenches NP will be consulted at Regulation 16 later in the year, and then examined and 'made' against the SWDPR policies in 2026.

The Neighbourhood Plan includes 19 draft policies addressing a range of topic areas, including: housing; design; historic environment; natural environment; flooding; community and economic uses; and tourism/leisure.

1.3 SOUTH LENCHES DESIGNATED NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

The Neighbourhood Area was designated by Wychavon District Council on the 10 September 2015 (Figure 1).

1.4 DRAFT SOUTH LENCHES NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICY SUMMARIES

Nineteen policies are proposed in the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan (SLNP); they are summarised below.

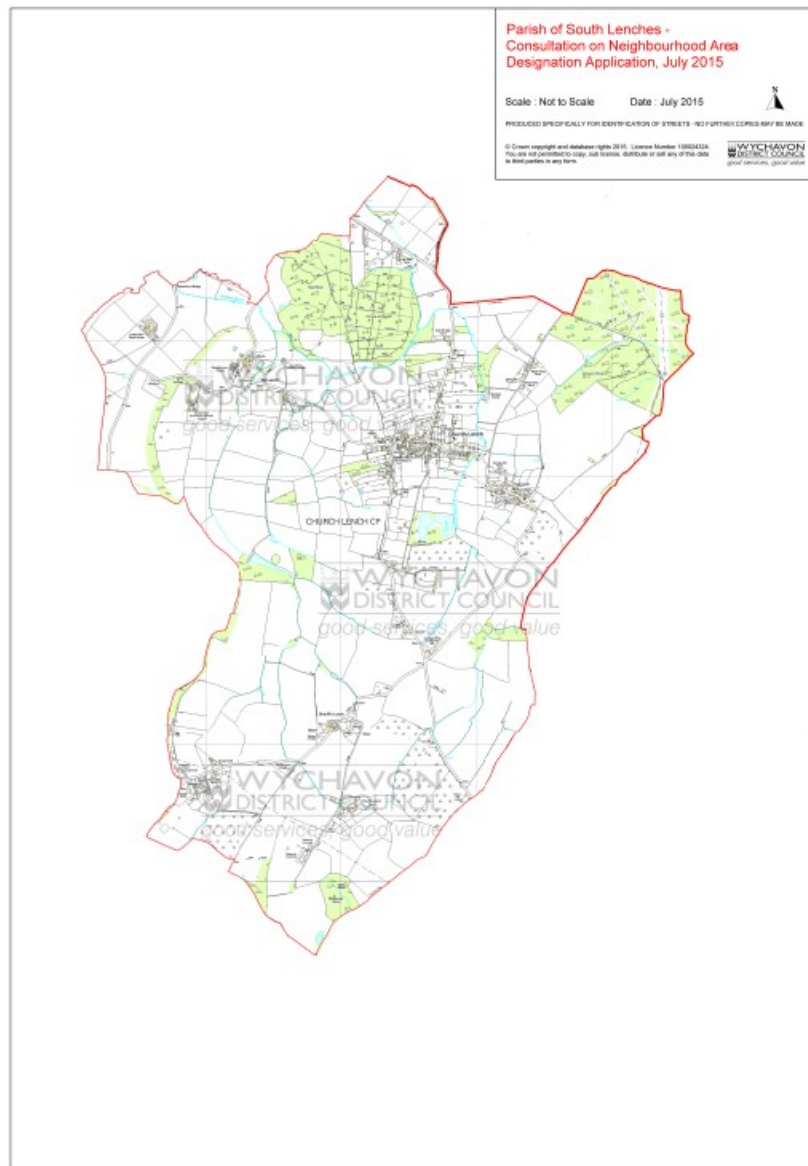


Figure 1 – Designated South Lenches Neighbourhood Area

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
<p>Policy 1 South Lenches Development Boundaries</p>	<p>Policy 1 states that proposals for infill development within the settlement boundaries, as shown on the Policies Map XX, will be supported provided they accord with the other policies of the plan.</p> <p>The policy also states that development outside the boundaries should be limited to rural exception sites, replacement dwellings, and dwellings essential for rural workers, and that these will only be supported where they accord with the other policies of the plan.</p>
<p>Policy 2 Housing Growth, Infill and Design</p>	<p>Policy 2 states that limited infilling within the settlement boundary areas of South Lenches and limited affordable housing for local community needs will be supported where those developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) do not severely impact on the free and safe flow of traffic on the local highway network. b) do not cause an unacceptable impact on the residential amenities of adjacent residential properties. c) do not cause the loss of important open space of public environmental or ecological value, nor spoil an important public view. d) reflect the character of their immediate area in terms of their height, scale, design, materials and linear layout. e) provide appropriate access, appropriate car parking provision and green space/garden provision. f) contribute towards a balanced mix of housing in the Plan area.
<p>Policy 3 Density of Development</p>	<p>Policy 3 states that development proposals located within South Lenches should have regard to the following essential characteristics as appropriate to their scale, nature and location within these low-density areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Reflecting the small-scale and fragmented building patterns, including maintaining visual gaps between buildings b) Ensuring soft boundary treatments (such as low walls, hedges and native species planting) are used on the boundaries with the public realm to avoid hard, urban edges and create a green transition between the built and open areas c) Ensuring that new driveways and accesses are no wider than is essential, and constructed in surface and curbing materials to complement the rural feel and character;

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	<p>d) Avoiding siting vehicle parking provision and ancillary buildings, such as bin stores and cycle shelters, so that they intrude into the streetscene</p>
<p>Policy 4 Affordable Housing Mix</p>	<p>Policy 4 states that proposals for small scale local affordable housing or exception sites will be supported where they are accompanied by an up-to-date housing needs survey that justifies the need for the houses in the Neighbourhood Area.</p> <p>The policy requires housing proposals of 11 or more units to include a proportion of affordable housing in accordance with the policies set out in the Local Plan, and also requires any affordable housing to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Be of a size and type which meets the requirements of those in housing need 2) Be indistinguishable in appearance from market housing on the site 3) Be distributed evenly across the site <p>Proposals for the development of small scale affordable housing schemes of rural exception sites outside the settlement boundary are supported by the policy, where there is a proven local need.</p>
<p>Policy 5 Market Housing Mix</p>	<p>Policy 5 sets out required house sizes, with regard to bedroom numbers, requiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - developments of nine or more new residential units to have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - up to 10% one-bedroom dwellings - 40% two-bedroom dwellings - 40% three-bedroom dwellings <p>Developments of between four and eight new units should provide a mix comprising predominantly one-to-three-bedroom dwellings, in general accordance with the proportions specified herein.</p>
<p>Policy 6 Design Guide & Local Character</p>	<p>Policy 6 requires developments to respond positively to the setting of the surrounding area, having regard to the character of adjacent buildings and spaces, including scale, orientation, height and massing. In particular, the policy states that development proposals should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Have regard to the South Lenches Design Guide (Appendix A)

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Be compatible with the distinctive character of the area, respecting the local settlement pattern, building styles and materials, c) Be of a density that is in keeping with the character of the surrounding development and landscape, d) Preserve or enhance the heritage assets such as listed buildings, e) Protect or enhance landscape and biodiversity by incorporating high quality native landscaping, f) Be consistent with Wychavon’s Landscape Character Assessment and its guidance, g) Demonstrate how the principles of ‘Secured by Design’ have been taken into account to achieve the objective of delivering safe places.
<p>Policy 7 Protection of Historic Environment</p>	<p>Policy 7 requires designated heritage assets and their setting to be conserved or enhanced, providing a list of key assets within the Parish. The policy also states that proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage assets.</p>
<p>Policy 8 Small-scale Sustainable and Renewable Energy</p>	<p>Policy 8 supports small scale, on-site, renewable energy development and proposals for micro-renewable energy schemes, provided that the overall requirements for development, are met. Small-scale means of a size designed to directly meet the needs of the occupants of the site and not designed primarily for export to the National Grid for use elsewhere. Renewables include thermal and photo-voltaic, solar, ground- and air-source heat pumps, biomass and anaerobic digestion, where these meet the definition of small-scale above.</p> <p>The policy also encourages incorporation and accommodation of the following, in new domestic development proposals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. electric charging points for vehicles. 2. ground and air source heat pumps. 3. biomass and anaerobic digestion systems. 4. thermal and photo-voltaic solar energy systems. 5. alternative energy systems such as solar panels and geothermic

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	<p>heating systems.</p> <p>6. Any other innovative solution for providing renewable energy which could be incorporated into the development.</p> <p>c) Electric vehicle charging points are expected to be installed alongside any off-road parking that is provided for educational facilities.</p> <p>The policy expects EV charging points to be installed alongside any off-road parking that is provided for educational facilities and requires renewable energy proposals in new developments to accord with Wychavon's Intelligently Green Plan 2020-2030.</p>
<p>Policy 9 High Quality Agricultural Land</p>	<p>Policy 9 states that proposals for development on land outside the built-up part of the Plan area graded as Excellent (Grade 1) or Very Good (Grade 2) in Natural England's Land Classification system will not be supported, unless the development is necessary or suitable for a countryside location.</p>
<p>Policy 10 Trees, Hedges and Woodland</p>	<p>Policy 10 states that, where development is permitted, the following standards must be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New development should reflect the character of South Lenches and take account of its rural setting. - Where practical and possible, developments should retain the existing hedgerows and trees. - Where it is not possible to retain existing hedgerows and trees, replacement planting of native species is required in mitigation. - Where mitigation of tree removal is required, replacements will be native species of similar final expected size to the tree being removed. - Native broadleaved trees should be used as default to provide maximum benefit to climate and wildlife. <p>The policy also strongly resists the partial or complete loss of orchards or remnant orchards through development proposals, in particular the fruit trees in Atch Lench Community Orchard and the Yates Community Orchard in Church Lench</p>
<p>Policy 11 Wildlife and Biodiversity</p>	<p>Policy 11 states that development proposals will aim to retain and enhance existing on-site biodiversity assets, delivering 'net gain' and provide for wildlife needs on site.</p>

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	<p>Where appropriate, the policy requires on-site biodiversity enhancements such as roosting features for bats or nesting features for birds to be incorporated into the fabric of the development. Additionally, where ecologically relevant, the policy required fences, walls or hedges to be designed to incorporate features that allow dispersal of wildlife through areas of green space and gardens.</p> <p>The policy states that fragmentation of habitats should be avoided, and that development proposals affecting the network of wildlife corridors as shown in Appendix B throughout the parish should seek to support and enhance their operation as a corridor for the movement of wildlife and the provision of ecosystem services; development proposals that assist active travel, or ecological, connections within these corridors are supported.</p>
<p>Policy 12 Public Rights of Way</p>	<p>Policy 12 states that developers will be expected to seek opportunities to develop, extend and improve the existing footpath and cycleway networks (Appendix C) to provide better connectivity within the village and to the surrounding countryside; such opportunities include where planning permission is granted for development near to the existing networks.</p> <p>The policy also requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New development to contribute towards the provision of cycle and pedestrian links that connect the different areas of South Lenches - Safeguarding of movement routes which provide non-vehicular access to natural greenspace e.g. woodland or fields. Opportunities to enhance these are supported - New movement routes to be appropriate for wheelchair users and those with limited ability for walking - Appropriate mitigation measures where new developments may severely impact upon movement routes
<p>Policy 13 Local Green Spaces</p>	<p>Policy 13 states that development which results in loss of the local green spaces listed, or adversely affects their character, setting, accessibility, appearance, general quality or amenity value will not be supported. Development on the local green spaces will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that it is required to enhance the role and function of an identified local green space.</p> <p>The policy states that, where permission can be demonstrated to be required, developers will be expected to demonstrate how existing</p>

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	<p>flora and fauna will be protected or subject to mitigation measures. Areas of green space are expected to be provided for any new development of 10 or more dwellings.</p>
<p>Policy 14 Valued Landscapes</p>	<p>Policy 14 supports new development where it would not have an adverse impact on the landscape setting, particularly the distinctive views shown in the table and map provided. The policy requires any planning application for new development within the distinctive view areas, as defined on the proposals map, to be accompanied by an assessment of views to/from such development,</p> <p>The policy identifies that re-modelling of local topography could adversely impact on the local character and therefore states that, where acceptable, development should be adapted to the site contours rather than the site adapted to the development.</p>
<p>Policy 15 Flood Mitigation</p>	<p>Policy 15 states that new development, excluding extensions to dwellings and change of use, will only be permitted if it incorporates Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Surface water should be managed using SuDS, with the method of surface water disposal to be as high up the sustainable drainage hierarchy as possible. The policy requires details of the method of discharge of surface water, and management/maintenance details to be provided with development proposals, and states that development is expected to take opportunities to reduce flood risk and create betterment.</p> <p>The policy encourages the use of geo-technical investigations prior to developing a drainage strategy and where uncertainty exists, states that adequate space for attenuation and storage systems to restrict the rate of surface water run-off must be provided.</p> <p>Discharge of surface water to foul or combined sewer networks are not permitted by the policy, in order to mitigate the risk of pollution from foul flooding.</p>
<p>Policy 16 Dark Skies</p>	<p>Policy 16 states that development proposals should be designed to minimise the occurrence of light pollution by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Meeting or exceeding the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance or successor guidance; and b) Avoiding unnecessarily visible lighting in designated wildlife sites or the surrounding landscape; and c) Having regard to the following hierarchy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. avoid the installation of additional external lighting ii. Install lighting necessary for its intended purpose or use at the lowest practical lumens value and avoid adverse impacts where possible.

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. appropriate mitigation of adverse impacts iv. avoiding unnecessarily visible lighting in designated wildlife sites or the surrounding landscape. Particular care should be taken in ecologically sensitive areas such as near ponds, lakes, rivers, areas of high conservation value; sites supporting particularly light-sensitive species of conservation significance and habitat used by protected species. In these situations, installation of appropriate lighting should be guided by the nature of the species found on or close to the site. v. Avoid building designs that result in increased light spill from internal lighting without suitable mitigation
<p>Policy 17 Community Facilities</p>	<p>Policy 17 identifies several community facilities and states that proposals which help to sustain the viability of community facilities will be supported, provided they conform to other land use policies. Proposals that will result in either the loss of, or significant harm to an identified community facility, will not be supported, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the operation of the facility, or of another community use of the facility or land, is no longer economically viable, or that there is an alternative, accessible location within or adjoining the Settlement Boundary.</p>
<p>Policy 18 Business & Employment</p>	<p>Policy 18 provides support for proposals that strengthen the rural economy where the range, scale and nature of provision does not detract from the rural character of the area and historic assets and their setting; and where it does not significantly increase traffic through the settlements.</p> <p>The policy gives strong support to proposals that improve the agricultural activities already being undertaken on the land, and / or propose a small-scale development that provides employment opportunities through the re-use of agricultural buildings.</p> <p>The policy encourages applications where they offer employment opportunities to local people, and/or they provide space for small start-up businesses.</p> <p>The policy requires proposals involving the loss of existing business sites to demonstrate clear evidence that the site is no longer viable to use that site for business or employment and that the site has been actively marketed for a minimum period of 12 months prior to support being given for any proposal for a change of use.</p>
<p>Policy 19 Camping & Caravan Sites</p>	<p>Policy 19 requires new camping or caravanning sites providing tourist accommodation, or extensions to existing sites, to meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) comprise sensitive, small-scale sites that would not be intrusive in the landscape b) have good road access, avoiding routes through residential or

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	<p>other sensitive areas where significant traffic movements would be severely detrimental to the living conditions of residents or cause harm to designated heritage or other environmental assets, and</p> <p>c) not generate noise or other effects which would cause harm to the living conditions of nearby residents or harm the enjoyment of public areas including rights of way.</p>

1.5 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) PROCESS

The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC which was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Detailed guidance on these Regulations can be found in the Government publication “A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive” (OPDM 2005).

The SEA process aims to ensure that likely significant environmental effects arising from a Plan are identified, assessed, mitigated, communicated and monitored, and that opportunities for public involvement are provided. It enables environmental considerations to be accounted for in decision-making throughout the production of a Plan in an integrated manner.

Figure 2 sets out the screening procedure and how a plan should be assessed against the SEA Directive criteria. This outline procedure has then been applied to the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan in Table 1.

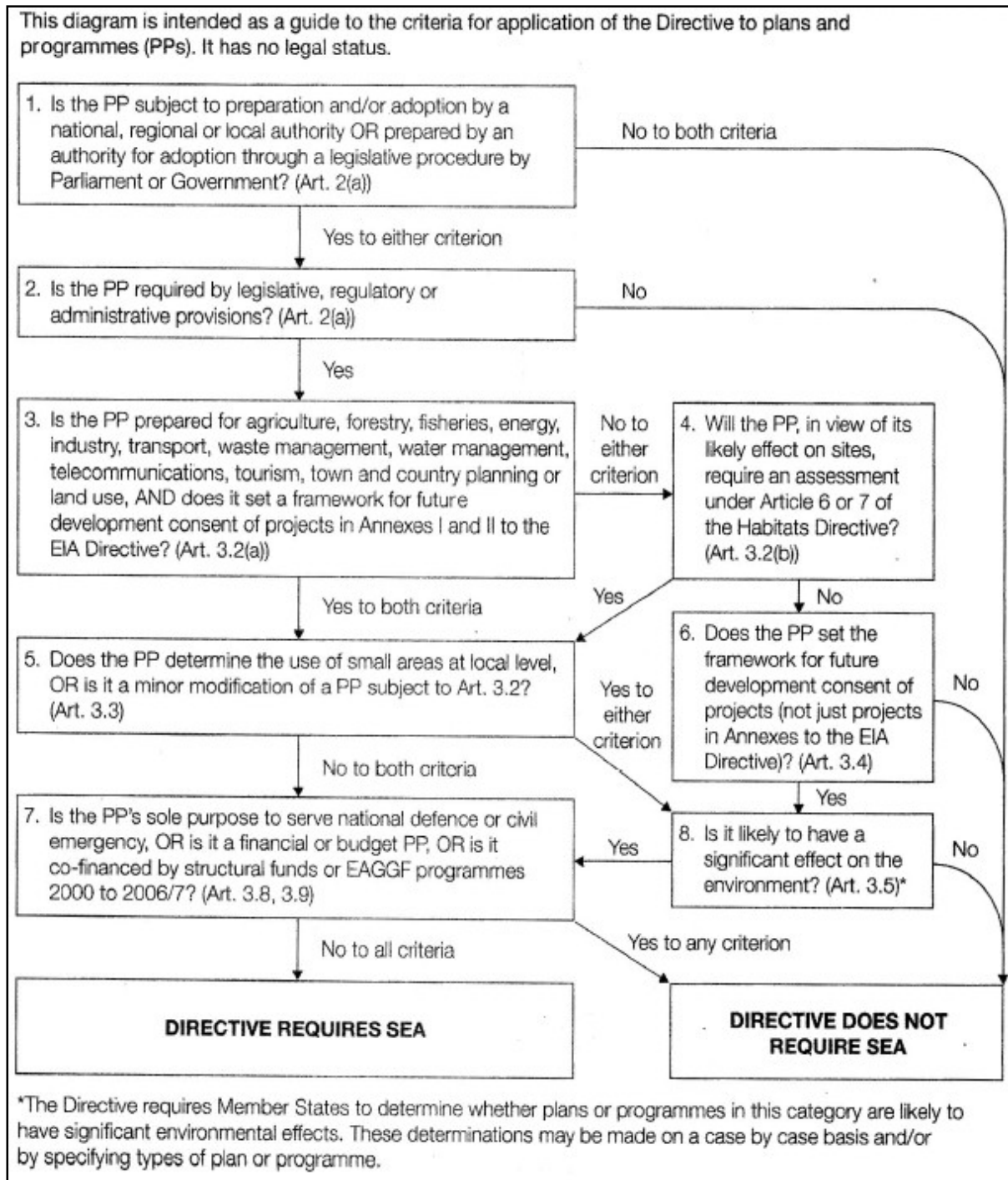


Figure 2 – Application of the SEA Directive to Plans and Programmes

Table 1: Assessment of the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan using SEA Directive Criteria

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the South Lenches Neighbourhood 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	This is a Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by a qualifying body the Localism Act 2011. If the Plan is passed by means of an either Examination and/or Referendum, it will be formally adopted by the Local Planning Authority. It will then form part of the local development framework and be afforded significant weight in planning decisions.
2. Is the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	N	The South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared voluntarily by the local qualifying body in line with the provisions of the Localism Act. If the Plan is adopted or 'made' it will form part of the statutory development plan, and it is therefore considered necessary to answer the following questions to determine if a SEA is required.
3. Is the South Lenches Neighbourhood 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))	Y	The Plan is prepared for town and country planning and sets out a framework for future development consent of projects.
4. Will the South Lenches Neighbourhood 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	See Screening Opinion for HRA in Section 3 of this report.
5. Does the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan determine the	Y	The South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan is made up of several policies which, when

use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)		adopted, will form part of the Local Development Framework, and so will have significant weight in planning decisions.
6. Does the South Lanches Neighbourhood Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Y	When adopted, the South Lanches Neighbourhood Plan will be a statutory planning document. It will form part of the Local Development Framework and so will have significant weight in planning decisions. The responsibility for issuing development consent will remain with the Local Planning Authority.
7. Is the South Lanches Neighbourhood Plan 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	Not Applicable
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	?	The South Lanches Neighbourhood Plan may have a significant effect on the environment. To investigate the likelihood of potential impacts further a case-by-case assessment has been conducted, the full results of which can be found in Table 2.

Based upon the initial screening carried out against the criteria in Table 1 above, the draft South Lanches Neighbourhood Plan may have a significant effect on the environment. To explore these potential effects further, a case-by-case assessment has been conducted. The criteria used in the undertaking of such an assessment are drawn from Article 3.5 (Annex II) of the SEA directive, and the results are shown in Table 2.

1.6 HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT (HRA) PROCESS

The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) refers to the assessment required for any plan or project to assess the potential implications for European wildlife sites. The HRA therefore looks at whether the implementation of the plan or project would harm the habitats or species for which European wildlife sites are designated. The relevant European wildlife site designations are Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), which together form part of the Natura 2000 network.

In addition to SPAs and SACs, Ramsar sites are also designated areas which, as a matter of government policy, are to be treated in the same way as European wildlife sites (although they are not covered by the Habitats Regulations). European wildlife sites and Ramsar sites are collectively known as internationally designated wildlife sites.

The legislation sets out a process to assess the potential implications of a plan on internationally designated wildlife sites. The first stage of this process is a screening exercise where the details of nearby internationally designated sites are assessed to see if there is the potential for the implementation of the plan to have an impact.

2. SEA SCREENING

2.1 SEA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

European Directive 2001/42/EC requires a full Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken for certain types of plans and programmes that would have a significant environmental effect.

Table 2 below provides the screening determination of the need to carry out a full Strategic Environmental Assessment for the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan. This has been made in accordance with the Regulations and will be subject to consultation with the strategic environmental bodies before Wychavon District Council makes its determination on the necessity for a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Table 2 – The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004: Schedule 1 - Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)	Likely to have significant environmental effects?	Summary of significant events
1(a) the degree to which the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	NO	The South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan would, if adopted, form part of the statutory Development Plan and as such would contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects. This is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.
1(b) the degree to which the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	NO	The draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan, when 'made', will be used alongside the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR), once adopted in 2025, for the determination of planning applications.
1(c) the relevance of the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	NO	The policies of the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan are not considered to have a significant impact on the integration of environmental considerations.
1(d) environmental problems relevant to the draft South Lenches	NO	The draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan is more likely to

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)	Likely to have significant environmental effects?	Summary of significant events
Neighbourhood Plan:		promote environmental sustainability than create any environmental problems.
1(e) the relevance of the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management and water protection);	NO	The policies of the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan are not considered to be relevant to the implementation of EC legislation.
2(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan;	NO	It is considered unlikely that there will be any irreversible damaging environmental impacts associated with the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan features policies which seek to protect and enhance the natural and built environment, and the plan is therefore likely to result in beneficial rather than damaging effects.
2(b) the cumulative nature of the effects of the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan;	NO	The policies of the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Pan are unlikely to have any significant cumulative negative environmental impacts.
2(c) the transboundary nature of effects of the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan;	NO	The draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have any significant negative environmental impacts on adjoining parishes.
2(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents) due to the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan;	NO	It is considered that there will be no risk to human health or the environment as a result of the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan.
2(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely	NO	The policies of the Neighbourhood Development Plan apply to the entirety of South Lenches Parish

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)	Likely to have significant environmental effects?	Summary of significant events
to be affected);		Council's administrative area and are unlikely to significantly affect areas beyond the Neighbourhood Area boundary.
2(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use; and 	NO	The draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan will not have any substantial impact on these factors.
2(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	NO	The policies of the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to have a negative impact on any environmental designations in the Neighbourhood Area.

2.2 SEA SCREENING OPINION

The draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared against policies in the adopted South Worcester Development Plan and the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review. The SWDPR is currently under examination, and it is anticipated that the SWDPR will be adopted by the end of this calendar year. Therefore, it is the intention that the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan will be consulted at Regulation 16 and examined under the newly adopted local plan in late 2025 or early 2026. The SWDPR has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The assessment shown in Table 1 above identifies no potential significant negative effects arising from the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan and as such, will not require a full SEA to be undertaken. This determination is pending the findings of consultation and the formal views of the statutory environmental bodies. This view is taken as the policies in the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan seek to reinforce and do not deviate from the remit of the submitted policies of the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review.

3. HRA SCREENING

3.1 HRA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

There are no internationally designated wildlife sites within the South Lenches Neighbourhood Area. For the purposes of this screening assessment, sites that fall within a 20km radius are also considered. There are three sites identified within this range – Bredon Hill SAC, Lyppard Grange Ponds SAC and Dixton Wood SAC, which are approximately 8km south west, 12.5km west, and 16.5km south, respectively.

Bredon Hill SAC is an area of pasture woodland and ancient parkland situated approximately 5km south-west of The Lenches. The site provides habitat for the Violet Click Beetle *Limoniscus Violaceus*, which develops in the decaying wood either of very large, old hollow beech trees (Windsor Forest) or ash trees (Worcestershire and Gloucestershire border sites). Currently the key site attributes which Natural England understands the species to require is related to the abundance and condition of the ancient trees on the designated site within which it develops.

Lyppard Grange Ponds SAC is located on the eastern outskirts of Worcester in Warndon Parish, situated amongst a housing development on former pastoral farmland. The site comprises two ponds in an area of grassland and scrub (public open space). The site provides habitat for Great Crested Newts *Triturus Cristatus*, which are dependant on both the existing terrestrial habitat (to provide foraging areas and refuge) and on the aquatic habitat (for breeding).

Dixton Wood SAC is located approximately 6.7km to the south east of Tewkesbury and is an area of broadleaved woodland (formerly partially grazed) with a dominance of ash including exceptionally large ancient pollards. The site is designated for its population of Violet Click Beetle *Limoniscus violaceus*, which is largely dependent on these pollards (for breeding). Principal risks to the site's integrity are lack of future replacement pollards (age-class skewed to older generation) and game management practices.

The potential impact of development on these sites was examined in an interim HRA as part of the production of the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review. The HRA screening of the SWDPR (ref. CD31) concluded that likely significant effects on Dixton Wood SAC associated with reductions in air quality and in terms of hydrological issues were unlikely; the site was therefore screened out of further assessment in the HRA process in respect of those matters. In respect of potential for significant effects as a result of increased disturbance, in particular increased recreational activity, the HRA screening concluded that there was uncertainty with regard to Lyppard Grange Ponds SAC and Bredon Hill SAC. Concerns were also raised regarding potential impacts of development on the Lyppard Grange Ponds SAC as a result of reductions in air and water quality, and on the Bredon Hill SAC as a result of reductions in air quality.

As a result of the concerns raised, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been conducted (this can be viewed on the SWDPR website – [017f5b_885065667fa8420c836d4f1181dfb7ac.pdf](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/017f5b_885065667fa8420c836d4f1181dfb7ac.pdf)). The AA further considered likely

significant effects from air quality and screened out both Bredon Hill SAC and Lyppard Grange Ponds SAC from the HRA process. The AA concluded that, in respect of increased disturbance, the policies of the SWDPR (including land allocations) were not likely to have adverse effects on the integrity of Lyppard Grange or Bredon Hill SAC. In addressing such concerns relating to possible increased disturbance at the SACs, it was concluded that the location of the sites in relation to proposed developments and also the availability of more suitable areas of open space for recreation in close proximity would keep potential impacts to a minimum. It was also considered that the policies of the SWDPR would sufficiently mitigate the potential impact of proposed developments on water quality, leading to the conclusion that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the Lyppard Grange Ponds SAC.

The policies in the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan are considered to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the SWDPR, and therefore it can be considered that the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan will have no negative impact on internationally designated wildlife sites.

3.2 HRA SCREENING OPINION

As a result of the above assessment, it is considered that the policies of the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan are in general conformity with those contained in the SWDPR. It is therefore concluded that the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have a negative impact on any internationally designated wildlife sites and as such, the recommendation is made that a full AA is not required.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The preceding assessment exercises have examined whether the draft South Lenches Development Plan is likely to require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment or a Habitats Regulation Assessment Appropriate Assessment.

The SEA screening exercise featured in Section 2 concludes that the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan will not require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken. This is because the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the SWDPR and does not deviate from the proposed land allocations for development made in the SWDPR. The Neighbourhood Plan is not proposing any housing allocations to meet the community need.

The HRA screening exercise featured in Section 3 concludes that the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan does not require a full Habitats Regulation Assessment Appropriate Assessment to be undertaken. There are no internationally designated wildlife sites within the South Lenches Neighbourhood Area, but there are three SAC's identified within a 20km radius. The impact on these sites and others because of the land allocations contained within the SWDPR has been assessed in the SWDPR HRA AA, and as the South Lenches

Neighbourhood Plan is considered to be in general conformity with the SWDPR and does not deviate from the land allocations for development made in the SWDPR, the recommendation is made that a full AA is not required.

Both of the above conclusions were subject to consultation with the three statutory environmental bodies (i.e. Natural England, Historic England and Environment Agency). The consultation period ran from 16 April 2025 to 28 May 2025. The consultation responses are included in Section 5 of this report. However, in short, all three statutory environmental bodies agreed that neither a full SEA nor HRA AA are required for the reasons outlined above.

5. STATUTORY ENVIRONMENTAL BODIES CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Environment Agency – 06 May 2025

Wychavon District Council
Planning Policy
Civic Centre Queen Elizabeth Drive
Persnore
Worcestershire
WR10 1PT

Our ref: SV/2018/110042/OT-
11/IS1-L01
Your ref:

Date: 06 May 2025

FAO: Chloe Allen-Hewitt

Dear Chloe,
Email Cc: neighbourhoodplanning@wychavon.gov.uk

South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan - Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion Consultation

I refer to your email of the 16 April 2025 with regard to the South Lenches Parish SEA/HRA Screening Opinion for the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). We have reviewed the submitted documentation and offer the following comments for your consideration at this time.

Flood Risk

Based on our indicative Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea), we note the Whitsun Brook (ordinary watercourse) flows around the Northwest corner of the Parish boundary bringing some areas of Flood Zones 3 and 2 (the high and medium risk zones respectively) within the Parish.

It should be noted that the Flood Map provides an indication of 'fluvial' flood risk only. You are advised to discuss matters relating to surface water (pluvial) flooding with the drainage team at Malvern Hills District Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA).

Site Allocations: We would not, in the absence of any site allocations proposed within the NDP, offer any bespoke comment at this time.

However, please note that other potential development areas may be at flood risk given the presence of 'ordinary watercourses' which are un-modelled based on the scale and nature of the stream and receiving catchment (less than 3km²).

SEA / HRA Screening Opinion

To assist your Council's determination of the SEA and HRA Screening Opinion (dated April 2025), we note the conclusions achieved:

- The SEA Screening Opinion concludes that *"the draft South Lenches*

Environment Agency

Hafren House Welshpool Road, Shelton, Shrewsbury, SY3 8BB.

Customer services line: 03708 506 506

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

Cont/d..

Neighbourhood Plan will not require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken. This is because the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the SWDPR and does not deviate from the proposed land allocations for development made in the SWDPR."

- *The HRA Screening Opinion concludes that "the draft South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have a negative impact on any internationally designated wildlife sites and as such, the recommendation is made that a full AA is not required."*

We therefore agree and advise based on the Screening Report submitted and in consideration of matters within our remit that the NDP is considered unlikely to have significant environmental impacts and or significant effects on European designated sites, based on the above conclusions we do not believe a full Appropriate Assessment will be required.

Furthermore, we do not offer detailed bespoke advice on policy but advise you ensure conformity with the local plan and refer to guidance within our area neighbourhood plan "pro-forma guidance", I have attached an updated version for your consideration. Notwithstanding the above, for example it is important that these plans offer robust confirmation that development is not impacted by flooding and that there is sufficient wastewater infrastructure in place to accommodate growth. I trust the above is of assistance at this time.

I trust the above is of assistance at this time.

Yours faithfully

Mr. Ewan Burvill
Planning Officer

Direct e-mail ewan.burvill@environment-agency.gov.uk

Historic England – 19 May 2025



Ms Chloe Allen-Hewitt
Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils
Civic Centre
Queen Elizabeth Drive
Pershore
Worcestershire
WR10 1PT

Direct Dial: 0121 625 6887

Our ref: PL00798647

19 May 2025

Dear Ms Allen-Hewitt

**SOUTH LENCHES NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - SEA & HRA SCREENING OPINION
CONSULTATION**

Thank you for the above consultation and invitation to comment on the screening of the above Neighbourhood Plan.

For the purposes of consultations on SEA Screening Opinions, Historic England confines its advice to the question, "Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?" in respect of our area of concern, cultural heritage.

Our comments are based on the information supplied with the screening request. 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 the 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with your view that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

Regarding HRA Historic England does not disagree with your conclusions but would defer to the opinions of the other statutory consultees.

The views of the other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for a SEA is made. If a decision is made to undertake a SEA, please note that Historic England has published guidance on Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Historic Environment that is relevant to both local and neighbourhood planning and available at: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>

I trust the above comments will be of help in taking forward the Neighbourhood Plan.

Yours sincerely,

P. Boland.



THE FOUNDRY 82 GRANVILLE STREET BIRMINGHAM B1 2LH

Telephone 0121 625 6888
HistoricEngland.org.uk

Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.

Natural England – 28 May 2025

Date: 28 May 2025
Our ref: 510100
Your ref: South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan – SEA/HRA screening



Chloe Allen-Hewitt
Planning Policy Officer
Wychavon District Council
NeighbourhoodPlanning@wychavon.gov.uk

Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Chloe Allen-Hewitt

South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan – SEA/HRA Screening Opinion Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 16 April 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 sites¹, 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

¹ 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

Yours sincerely

Emily Bond
Higher Officer – Sustainable Development
West Midlands Area Team