

Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) &
Habitat Regulations Assessment

Screening Report
(October 2014)

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This screening report is an assessment of whether or not the contents of the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan (Draft 6) October 2014 (hereafter known as 'LANP') 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.
- 1.2 This report will also screen to determine whether the LANP requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Article 6(3) and (4) of the EU Habitats Directive and with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). A HRA is required when it is deemed that likely adverse significant effects may occur on protected European Sites (Natura 2000 sites) as a result of the implementation of a plan/project. As a general 'rule of thumb' it is identified that sites with pathways of 10-15km of the plan/project boundary should be included with a HRA. Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Cannock Extension Canal SAC are within a 15km radius of the plan boundary. Whilst the River Mease SAC is within 15km of the LANP boundary, the LANP boundary is outside the water catchment area. Appendix 1 shows the Plan Boundary in relation to the 15km radius of Natura 2000 sites.
- 1.3 The purpose of the LANP is to provide a set of statutory planning policies to guide development within Little Aston Ward over the life of the plan. The Plan sets out the community's vision of how the area will look by 2029. The LANP also provides support for improved facilities to serve the community and seeks to protect and enhance important elements of the local environment. The Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan Draft 4 (September 2014) is available to view via <http://www.parishneighbourhoodplan.co.uk>¹.
- 1.4 The legislative background set out in the following section outlines the regulations that require the need for this screening exercise. Section 3, provides a screening assessment of both the likely significant environmental effects of the LANP and the need for SEA. Section 4, provides a screening assessment of both the likely significant effects of the implementation of the LANP and the need for a Habitats Regulation Assessment.
- 1.5 This report will be split into two parts. The first will cover the screening for the SEA (see section 3) and the second will cover the screening process for the HRA (see section 4). A summary of findings and conclusions for both screening processes can be found in the conclusions chapter at section 5.

¹ Please note this Screening report has been undertaken on the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan Draft 6 (October 2014) which is not available on the website at the time of writing this report but was provided for the purposes of undertaking the screening process.

2. Legislative Background

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Detailed Guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM 2005).
- 2.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 required Local Authorities to produce Sustainability Appraisals (SA) for all local development documents to meet the requirement of the EU Directive on SEA. It is considered best practice to incorporate requirements of the SEA Directive into an SA as discussed within the NPPF at paragraph 165. However, the 2008 Planning Act amended the requirement to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal for only development plan documents (DPD's), but did not remove the requirement to produce a Strategic Environmental Assessment. As a Neighbourhood Plan is not a development plan document it therefore does not legally require a Sustainability Appraisal. Where appropriate, however, an SEA still needs to be undertaken in line with the SEA regulations. The purpose of this report is to determine if SEA is required for the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.3 The District Council is required to consult three statutory consultation bodies designated within the regulations, these are; English Heritage, Natural England and Environment Agency on whether a SEA is required, Details of the consultation bodies responses can be found at Appendix 3.

Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)

- 2.4 It is required by article 6 (3) of the EU Habitats Directive and by regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) that an appropriate assessment is carried out with regard to the Conservation Objectives of the European Sites and with reference to other plans and projects to identify if any significant effect is likely for any European Site.
- 2.5 To fulfil the legal requirements to identify if likely significant effects will occur with the implementation of the LANP upon European Sites (Natura 2000 sites) a screening assessment has been undertaken and is set out in section 4 of this report.
- 2.6 The legislation requires where there is a "risk" of a significant effect on a European Site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects then there will be requirement for the plan to progress from HRA screening to an Appropriate Assessment. This is known as the precautionary principle.

Description of the Plan or Programme

- 2.7 The LANP has been prepared by the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan Group on behalf of the Qualifying Body (Shenstone Parish Council). The Plan includes 11 Planning Policies within eight policy themes which relate to the whole of Little Aston Ward (the designated Neighbourhood Area) and a number of non-land use actions which support the plan.
- 2.8 The policies relate to the Neighbourhood Area and prioritise the protection of the environment and character of Little Aston. Policies also seek to provide support for new and improved community facilities, the provision of cycle ways and bus stops and improved broadband connection.

3. SEA Screening

Criteria for Assessing the Effects of UNP

3.1 Criteria for determining the likely significant effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below:

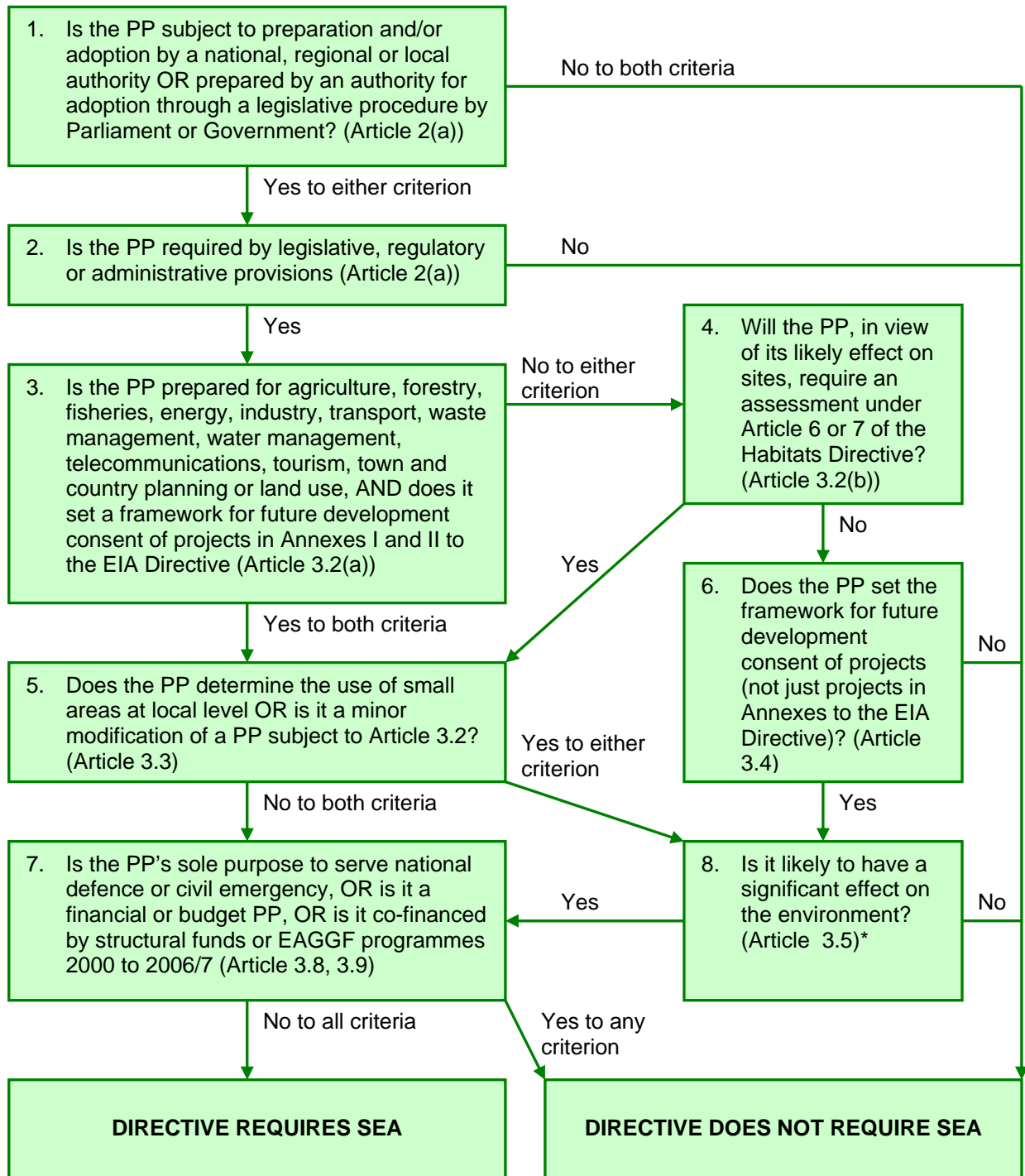
1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to
 - the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
 - the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
 - the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
 - environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
 - the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to
 - the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
 - the cumulative nature of the effects,
 - the transboundary nature of the effects,
 - the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
 - the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
 - the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
 - intensive land-use,
 - the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

Source: Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC

Assessment

- 3.2 It is required by the Localism Act that Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. The development plan for Lichfield District is currently made up of the saved policies from the 1998 Lichfield District Local Plan (saved September 2007). Therefore the Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with these saved policies. These saved policies pre-date the NPPF as such they may not carry significant weight within the decision making process.
- 3.3 Lichfield District Council has been preparing a new Local Plan for sometime. The Local Plan Strategy was submitted to the Secretary of State in March 2013 and Hearing Sessions for the Examination of the Plan commenced in June 2013. To date the Inspector has issued initial findings in the form of an Annex attached to the Inspector's letter to the District Council dated 28th August 2013. The District Council consulted on a number of proposed Main Modifications to the Plan during early 2014. The Local Plan Strategy was subject to a full Sustainability Appraisal which included a SEA assessment. This ensured that there were no likely significant effects which would be produced from the implementation of the Local Plan and if so ensured mitigation measures were in place.
- 3.4 Guidance upon SEA's written by the Department of the Environment produces a diagram to the process for screening a planning document to ascertain whether a full SEA is required, see figure1.

Figure 1. Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes (PPs)



* The Directive requires Member States to determine whether plans or programmes in this category are likely to have significant environmental effects. These determinations may be made on a case by case basis and/or by specifying types of plan or programme.

3.5 The process in figure 1 has been undertaken and the findings can be viewed in Table 1. Table 1 shows the assessment of whether the LANP will require a full SEA. The questions in table 1 are drawn from the diagram above which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

Table 1: Establishing the Need for SEA

Stage	Yes/No	Reason
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) 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))	Yes	This Neighbourhood Plan is prepared by Shenstone Parish Council (as the Qualifying Body) under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. Once the plan is 'made' subject to examination and having received 50%+ or more 'yes' votes through a referendum it will be adopted by Lichfield District Council and become part of the Statutory Development Plan for the area.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	Communities have a right to produce a Neighbourhood Plan; however communities are not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative purposes to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. However, once 'made' the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan would form part of the statutory development plan, and will be used when making decisions on planning applications within the Neighbourhood Area. Therefore it is considered necessary to answer the following questions to determine further if an SEA is required.
3. Is the PP 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))	Yes	The LANP is prepared for town and country planning and land use. The plan sets out a framework for future development in the Little Aston Neighbourhood Area. Once 'made' the LANP would form part of the statutory development plan, and will be used when making decisions on planning applications which may include development which may fall under Annex I and II of the EIA directive.
4. Will the PP, 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))	Yes	The Neighbourhood Plan could potentially have an impact on internationally designated wildlife sites covered by the Habitats Regulations. See screening assessment for HRA in following section of this report.

5. Does the PP Determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art.3.3)	Yes	The LANP does not identify any land allocations at the local level, although it does provide a preferred location for a 'community hub'. Once 'made' the LANP would form part of the statutory development plan and be used when making decisions on planning applications of small areas at the local level.
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Yes	The LANP, once the 'made', forms part of the statutory development plan and will be used to determine planning applications within the designated Little Aston Neighbourhood Area. Therefore the Neighbourhood Plan will set the framework for future developments.
7. Is the PP's 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)	No	The LANP does not deal with any of these categories of plan.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	Yes	The LANP could potentially have a significant effect on the environment, not just within the Neighbourhood Area but also within the District. The Plan identifies a preferred location for a community hub which if this came to fruition would have an impact on the environment. The LANP could also impact upon a number of Natura 2000 sites, including the Cannock Chase SAC (see HRA section). For these reasons a case by case assessment of the LANP is required.

3.6 A number of the criteria above suggest that SEA of the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan may be required. Criteria 4 and Criteria 8 of the assessment in Figure 1 and Table 1 considered that the Neighbourhood Plan may have a significant effect on the environment, particularly relating to Natura 2000 sites. Depending on the proposals within the plan and a case by case assessment may be made on a case by case basis. The criteria for undertaking such an assessment are drawn from Article 3(5) of the SEA Directive as set out at paragraph 3.1 of this report. Table 2 outlines the result of this assessment in relation to the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan (Draft 6) October 2014.

3.7 The following assessment will consider the likelihood of the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan (as published at the date of this report) to have significant effects on the environment.

Table 2: Assessment if likelihood of significant effects on the environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of Significant effects
The characteristics of the plans, having regard to;	
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.</p>	<p>Once 'made; the LANP will set out the framework which will be used to determine proposals for development within the neighbourhood area regarding housing, and community facilities. The LANP also provides protection to the character of the area which will influence potential development across the plan period. There is therefore the potential for an effect on the environment resulting from the proposals in the plan.</p> <p>However the plan does not propose development in excess of that identified within the emerging Local Plan Strategy (LPS) nor does it allocate sites for development. As such the SA/SEA carried out by the District Council for the LPS is considered sufficient.</p>
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.</p>	<p>The LANP must be in general conformity with the Lichfield District Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. The Local Plan Allocations document has not yet been produced as such the neighbourhood plan cannot be influenced by or influence this. The LANP only provides policies for the area it covers and the Local Plan Strategy will provide the necessary strategic context when determining planning applications.</p> <p>The LANP will help to deliver the overall aims of the Local Plan. Little Aston is not identified as a key settlement within the Local Plan Strategy and the Neighbourhood Plan does not proposed to restrict development which is considered to be in broad conformity with the LPS.</p>
<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>	<p>Any Neighbourhood Plan is required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore the likelihood of significant effects on the environment is minimised. This plan does not seek to allocate sites (with the exception of a Local Green Space). As such the impact of the plan on the environment is minimal.</p>
<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan.</p>	<p>The environmental impacts of the proposals within the LANP are likely to be minimal due to the scale of the development proposed. The Plan does not propose more development than is identified within the LPS and only proposes a preferred location for a community hub as such the SA/SEA carried out by the District Council is considered sufficient.</p>

<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).</p>	<p>The LANP has to be in general conformity with the Local Plan. The adopted Local Plan and emerging LPS has had regard to European Community legislation on the environment and therefore this legislation will not be relevant for the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>
<p>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular to;</p>	
<p>The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.</p>	<p>Development is supported within the LANP and therefore an element of environmental change will occur, the impacts of which will depend upon the proposals. The LANP seeks to minimise the effects of development on its immediate surroundings. Additionally the plan provides a preferred location for a community hub.</p>
<p>The cumulative nature of the effects.</p>	<p>The cumulative effects of proposals within the LANP are unlikely to be significant on the local environment given the level of development proposed does not exceed that within the LPS.</p>
<p>The trans boundary nature of the effects.</p>	<p>Effects will be local with limited effects on neighbouring areas. Neighbourhood Plans are at varying stages of preparations in areas adjoining the Little Aston Neighbourhood Area which will set planning policies for those areas. However, the policies within the LANP relate only to the designated Little Aston Neighbourhood Area as such there will be no trans boundary effects.</p>
<p>The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).</p>	<p>There is limited risk to human health or the environment as a result of the LANP.</p>
<p>The magnitude spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).</p>	<p>The scale of development proposed through the LANP is small and therefore effects are likely to be localised. It is unlikely that the effects of proposals within the neighbourhood plan will be large scale and extensive.</p>
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage - exceeded environmental quality standards - intensive land use 	<p>The LANP is unlikely to adversely affect the value and vulnerability of the area in relation to the special natural characteristics or cultural heritage. The policies within the LANP seek to provide greater protection to the character of the area and the Conservation Area. The plan does not allocate sites and as such many of these issues would be considered at a later stage. The preferred location of the potential Community Hub may have an impact on the historic setting of the village and the environment.</p> <p>The level of development proposed through the LANP is unlikely to lead to intensive land use and as such not affect the value and vulnerability of the area.</p>
<p>The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.</p>	<p>The Cannock Chase SAC and AONB lies within 15km of the LANP boundary. Developments within the Cannock Chase SAC 15km zone of influence will in combination have an effect on the integrity of the SAC. The inclusion of Policy SAC1 will ensure that before development is permitted it must demonstrate that it (alone or in combination) will not have an adverse effect, whether direct or indirect, upon the integrity of the SAC having regard to avoidance or mitigation measures.</p>

	The LANP boundary is within 15km of the Cannock Extension Canal SAC and is outside of the River Mease SAC water catchment. There will be no significant effects from the proposals within the LANP on these SACs.
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Screening Outcome

- 3.8 The LANP does not propose more development than is set out within the Local Plan Strategy, nor does it allocate sites for development. However, it is noted that the neighbourhood plan does provide a preferred location for a potential 'Community Hub' outside of the village boundary within the Green Belt.

- 3.9 The conclusions of the above screening assessment on the 'Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan (Draft 6) October 2014' indicate that Strategic Environmental Assessment will not be required for the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan.

4. HRA Screening

- 4.1 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) refers to the assessment required for any plan or project to assess the potential impacts against the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 wildlife sites. The assessment must determine whether the plans would adversely affect, or are likely to affect, the integrity of a site(s) in terms of its nature conservation objectives. Where negative effects are identified other options should be examined to avoid any potential damaging effects.
- 4.2 Under Criteria 4 of Figure 1 and Table 1 it was concluded that the Neighbourhood Plan may have an impact upon internationally designated sites and as such a 'case by case' assessment is required.
- 4.3 The HRA process is generally divided into three stages. The initial stage of the HRA process is called the screening stage and determines if there are any likely significant effects or risk of significant effects possible as a result of the implementation of the plan. If there are significant effects the plan will need to undertake an Appropriate Assessment. The screening process should provide a description of the plan and an identification of the Natura 2000 sites which may be affected by the plan and assess the significance of any possible effects on the identified sites.
- 4.4 The Lichfield Local Plan Strategy was subject to HRA during its production. This assessment looked at all internationally designated sites which could be impacted by development within Lichfield District. [The Habitat Regulations Assessment: Lichfield District & Tamworth Borough \(May 2012\)](#) was updated by the [Addendum to Habitat Regulations Assessment \(January 2014\)](#) which concluded that the Local Plan Strategy (as modified by the proposed Main Modifications) would have no likely significant effects upon European sites.
- 4.5 This section of the report provides a "screening" assessment for the LANP. It looks at the potential impacts of the plan's proposals on European Sites within 15km of the Neighbourhood Plan area; these sites are illustrated at Appendix 1. The following screening assessment will determine if the LANP will have any likely significant effects to determine whether the subsequent stages will be required.

Relevant Natura 2000 sites

- 4.6 The relevant Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the Little Aston Neighbourhood Area are;
- Cannock Chase SAC – approximately 15km to the North-West
 - Cannock Extension Canal – approximately 7km to the North-West
 - River Mease SAC – approximately 15km to the North-East
 - Humber Estuary SAC – River Trent whose catchment is part of the Humber Estuary SAC is within the LANP boundary.
- 4.7 The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), The Cannock Extension Canal SAC and the River Mease SAC are within a 15km radius of the Little Aston Neighbourhood Area boundary. However, the LANP boundary is not within the River Mease water catchment area (as illustrated at Appendix A) The River Trent whose water catchment is part of the Humber Estuary SAC is within the LANP boundary. Therefore the HRA screening assessment needs to identify if any likely significant effects on the reasons for these sites to be designated will be caused by the implementation of the plan. This

assessment has been undertaken having regard to the results and information in the HRA and HRA addendum prepared for the Local Plan Strategy and is set out at Table 3.

Table 3: Sites within 15km of Little Aston Neighbourhood Area²

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Identified Impacts
Cannock Chase SAC	Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ European dry heaths Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix 	Maintain in favourable condition Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix for which the area is considered to support a significant presence. European dry heaths for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom	Visitor pressures include dog walking, horse riding, mountain biking and off-track activities such as orienteering, all of which cause disturbance and result in erosion, new track creation and vegetation damage. Bracken invasion is significant, but is being controlled. Birch and pine scrub, much of the latter from surrounding commercial plantations, is continually invading the site and has to be controlled. High visitor usage and the fact that a significant proportion of the site is Common Land, requiring Secretary of State approval before fencing can take place, means that the reintroduction of sustainable management in the form of livestock grazing has many problems. Cannock Chase overlies coal measures which have been deep-mined. Mining fissures continue to appear across the site even though mining has ceased and this is thought to detrimentally affect site hydrology. Furthermore the underlying Sherwood Sandstone is a major aquifer with water abstracted for public and industrial uses and the effects of this on the wetland features of the Chase are not fully understood.
Cannock Extension Canal SAC	Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Floating water-plantain 	Maintain favourable condition as this is considered to be one of the	The population of Luronium natans in this cul-de-sac canal is dependent upon a balanced level of boat traffic. If the canal is

² Extracts from the Habitat Regulations Assessment: Lichfield District & Tamworth Borough (May 2012)

	Luronium natans	best areas in the United Kingdom	not used, the abundant growth of other aquatic macrophytes may shade-out the Luronium natans unless routinely controlled by cutting. An increase in recreational activity would be to the detriment of Luronium natans. Existing discharges of surface water run-off, principally from roads, cause some reduction in water quality.
River Mease SAC	<p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculus fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spined loach <i>Cobitis taenia</i> ▪ Bullhead <i>Cottus gobio</i> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> ▪ Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> 	Maintain the river as a favourable habitat for floating formations of water Crowfoot (<i>Ranunculus</i>), populations of bull head, spined loach and white clawed crayfish and the river and adjoining land as habitat for populations of otter.	The River Mease is an unusually semi-natural system in a largely rural landscape, dominated by intensive agriculture. Water quality and quantity are vital to the European interests, whilst competition for water resources is high. Diffuse pollution and excessive sedimentation are catchment-wide issues which have the potential to affect the site. The SSSI assessment report undertaken in 2007 notes the site's adverse condition and identifies the following issues: drainage, invasive freshwater species, water pollution – agriculture/run-off, water pollution – discharge. Significant new development could take place within the catchment as a result of new housing and employment development in North-West Leicestershire, South Derbyshire and East Staffs which may impact upon water quality and quantity. The continuing creation of the National Forest will lead to further catchment wide changes in land use.
Humber Estuary	<p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Estuaries 	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time - for which the area is	The Humber Estuary is subject to the impacts of human activities (past and present) as well as ongoing processes such as sea level rise and climate change.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time ▪ Coastal lagoons * Priority feature ▪ Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand ▪ Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) ▪ Embryonic shifting dunes ▪ Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (‘white dunes’) ▪ Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (‘grey dunes’) * Priority feature ▪ Dunes with <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> ▪ River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> 	<p>considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Estuaries, for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, of which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Coastal lagoons, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p>	<p>Management intervention is therefore necessary to enable the estuary to recover and to secure the ecological resilience required to respond to both natural and anthropogenic change. Key issues include coastal squeeze, impacts on the sediment budget, and geomorphological structure and function of the estuary (due to sea level rise, flood defence works, dredging, and the construction, operation and maintenance of ports, pipelines and other infrastructure), changes in water quality and flows, pressure from additional built development, and damage and disturbance arising from access, recreation and other activities. Coastal squeeze is being addressed through the development and implementation of the Humber Flood Risk Management Strategy. All proposals for flood defence, development, dredging, abstractions and discharges which require consent from any statutory body, and land use plans which may have impacts upon the site are subject to assessment under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (the “Habitats Regulations”). Diffuse pollution will be addressed through a range of measures including implementation of the Waste Water Framework Directive and Catchment Sensitive Farming initiatives.</p> <p>Other issues are addressed via a range of measures including regulation of on-site land management activities and</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grey seal <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> 	<p>Embryonic shifting dunes, which are considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 1000 hectares, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes"), for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes"), for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Dunes with <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i>, which is considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 1000 hectares, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p>	<p>implementation of the Humber Management Scheme, developed by all relevant statutory bodies to assist in the delivery of their duties under the Habitats Regulations.</p>
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		<p>Petromyzon marinus, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Lampetra fluviatilis for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Halichoerus grypus for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p>	
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- 4.8 The likelihood of significant effects have been assessed in relation to the specific features and environmental conditions of the protected sites, as could be effected by the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan, or in combination with other known plans, taking particular account of the sites conservation objectives. As part of establishing what effects are significant, the probability of impact, duration of the impact, frequency of any impact and reversibility of impact have been considered.
- 4.9 Tables 4-7 set out the assessment based on the effects of the LANP on the four sites detailed above.

Table 4: Cannock Chase SAC

	Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressures	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is LANP likely to impact upon this site	<i>Potential</i>	<i>Potential</i>	<i>Potential</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Possible effects in combination with other plans	The site is influenced by traffic and visitors from a wide area. Evidence has been produced which demonstrates that any new residential development within 15km of the SAC will, alone or in combination, have an impact upon the integrity of the SAC. The LANP includes a policy which ensures that development will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated that it will not have an adverse effect upon the integrity of the SAC having regard to avoidance or mitigation measures.							
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	The Little Aston Neighbourhood Area is on the edge of the 15km radius surrounding the site. Evidence has highlighted there are vulnerabilities from recreational pressures. The LANP includes a policy which ensures that development will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated that it will not have an adverse effect upon the integrity of the SAC having regard to avoidance or mitigation measures.							
Conclusion: No significant effects								

Table 5: Cannock Extension Canal SAC

	Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressures	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is LANP likely to impact upon this site	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Possible effects in combination	None							

with other plans	
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	The Little Aston Neighbourhood area is on the edge of the 15km radius surrounding this site. Development within the neighbourhood area would not have a direct impact upon the habitat, any protected species, air and water quality of this site. Additionally the site is a significant distance from the Neighbourhood Area and it is considered that the plan would have no significant effects.
Conclusion: No significant effects	

Table 6: River Mease SAC

	Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressures	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is LANP likely to impact upon this site	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	None.							
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	Whilst the Little Aston Neighbourhood Area is within 15km of the River Mease SAC, it is outside of the River Mease SAC Water catchment area (as identified at appendix 1). As such no significant effects are likely.							
Conclusion: No significant effects								

Table 7: Humber Estuary SAC

	Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressures	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is LANP likely to impact upon this site	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	None - The site is currently managed as a National Nature Reserve. It would be vulnerable to on site physical alterations to the water quality and quantity. There are many plans still being developed along the length of the River system.							
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	Site is over 20km from the LANP boundary. Development proposals within the neighbourhood area will not affect the site physically as any effects would be through discharges into the River Tame and Trent as this eventually flows to the Humber. The Local water providers and foul waste company have been contacted regarding the emerging Local Plan Strategy and have up to date plans agreed with EA with regards to the impact upon the River Tame and River Trent. They have advised that no additional treatment works or changes to any of their existing consents would be necessary to accommodate the proposed levels of growth within the emerging Local Plan Strategy. As the LANP does not propose more growth than the Local Plan it is unlikely this position would change.							
Conclusion: No significant effects								

Screening Outcome

- 4.10 Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7 do not identify any significant effects upon the identified European sites as a result of the LANP (as published at the date of this report). The presence of Policy SAC1 ensures that development will only be permitted where it has demonstrated that it will not have a significant effect on the integrity of the Cannock Chase SAC.
- 4.11 Appendix 2 sets out a detailed assessment of the likely significant effects on European sites as a result of each policy within the LANP. The assessment concludes that some of the policies within the LANP could have significant impacts upon the European sites identified within the assessment.
- 4.12 The conclusions of the screening assessment above indicate that the further stages of Appropriate Assessment are not required for the LANP.

5. Conclusions and recommendations of the Screening Assessments

- 5.1 This report contains the detail of the assessment of the need for the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment as required by the SEA Directive and Appropriate Assessment as required by the Habitats Directive.
- 5.2 The assessment of both of these requirements has been undertaken on the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan (Draft 6) which was produced in October 2014 following an informal consultation on an earlier draft of the plan. As such if the content of the Neighbourhood Plan is significantly changed there may be the need for a further screening exercise to be undertaken on any modified version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

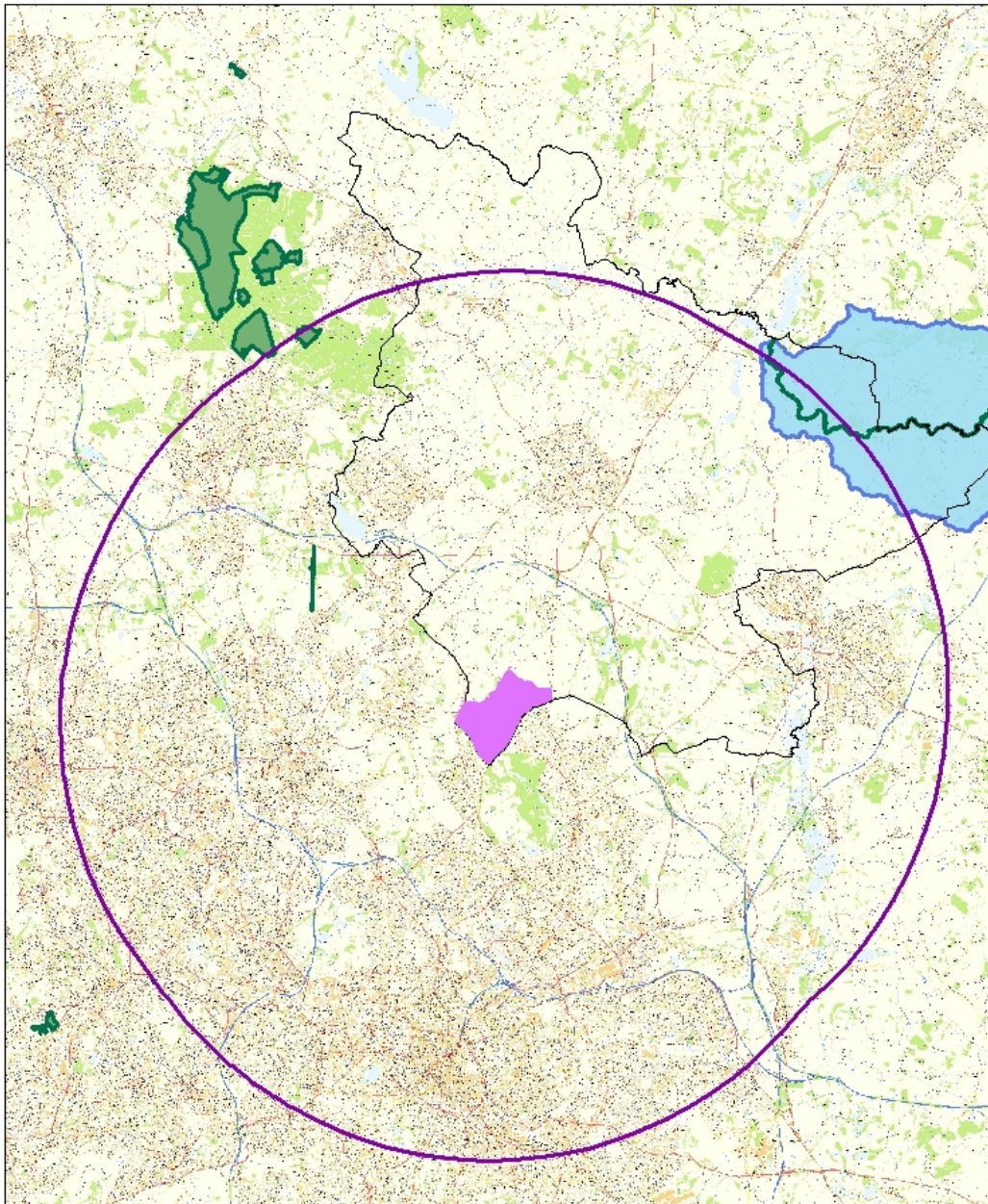
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- 5.3 In relation to the requirement for the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment, the assessment detailed in Section 3 of this report concludes that as the plan in its current form is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore SEA will not be required.





Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

- 5.4 In relation to the requirement for the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to Habitat Regulations Assessment, the assessment detailed at Section 4 of this report concludes that whilst there are potential significant effects upon the Cannock Chase SAC the inclusion of Policy SAC1 ensures that development will only be permitted where it is demonstrated it will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC. The report concludes that there will be no potential significant effects upon the identified designated European sites and as such no further work as part of the compliance with the Habitat Regulations will be required.

**Appendix 1: Map of Natura 2000 sites within 15km of Neighbourhood Plan
Boundary**



Key

-  Little Aston Neighbourhood Area 15k Radius
-  Little Aston Neighbourhood Area
-  Lichfield District Boundary
-  Special Areas of Conservation
-  River Mease SAC Water Catchment

Lichfield
district council
www.lichfielddc.gov.uk

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Appendix 2 – HRA review of Proposed Policies in Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan

LANP Policy Number	Description of Policy	Any likely significant effects on European Sites anticipated as a result of the policy?
Policy GB1	Green Belt Boundary – Support for appropriate development within the Green Belt, including provision of a community hub on a preferred site. Policy also suggests a minor change to the Green Belt boundary to be considered through the Local Plan allocations process.	No – the policy itself does not proposed development but reinforces Green Belt policy contained within the NPPF and will allow development within the green belt when it is deemed appropriate or can demonstrate very special circumstances. The inclusion of Policy SAC1 ensures development will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that it will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC.
Policy SAC1	Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation – Before development is permitted it must demonstrate it will not have an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Cannock Chase SAC.	No – the policy will ensure that development will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated that the development will not have an adverse effect, whether direct or indirect upon the SAC having regard to avoidance or mitigation measures.
Policy HSG1	Residential Infill and Backland Development – Infill and garden land development must not have a detrimental impact on the character and amenity of properties in the immediate area.	No – policy allows for residential development subject to it meeting criteria within the policy. The inclusion of Policy SAC1 ensures that no such development will be permitted without demonstrating that it will not have an adverse effect upon the SAC.
Policy LAP1	Density of Development in Little Aston Park – Protect the character of Little Aston through the retention of a half acre plot policy.	No – policy allows for residential development subject to it meeting criteria within the policy. The inclusion of Policy SAC1 ensures that no such development will be permitted without demonstrating that it will not have an adverse effect upon the SAC.
Policy LAP2	Design of Development in Little Aston Park – Supports proposals which show innovative design.	No – Policy relates to design of properties and as does not in itself propose development. As such will have no effect on European Sites.
Policy MOV1	Provision of Footpaths and Cyclepaths – support provision of improved cycle and pedestrian facilities including a circular pedestrian route.	No – the policy relates to supporting pedestrian facilities.
Policy MOV2	Provision of New Bus Stops – support provision of improved bus facilities.	No – the policy itself relates to public transport facilities.
Policy MOV3	Provision of Pedestrian Safety Improvements –	No – the policy itself related to pedestrian safety.

	support proposals to address issues of pedestrian safety.	
Policy CMH1	Provision of Community Hub – support the provision of a community hub on a preferred site within the neighbourhood area. Policy also supports development of alternative locations if it is considered that they are accessible.	No – the policy does not propose or support development which would have a detrimental impact on the identified European sites.
Policy BBD1	High Speed Broadband – supports delivery of broadband facilities in new properties.	No – the policy does not itself propose development.
Policy EE1	Light Pollution -	No – the policy does not itself propose development.

Appendix 3: SEA & HRA Screening Opinion and Statutory Consultee Responses

The following appendix includes the screening opinion requests from Lichfield District Council to the Statutory Bodies (Natural England, English Heritage and Environment Agency) who have been consulted through the SEA & HRA process and their responses. These are set out in chronological order.

- 3.1 SEA & HRA Screening Opinion Letter 23/10/2014**
- 3.2 English Heritage Response 12/11/2014**
- 3.3 Environment Agency Response 13/11/2014**
- 3.4 Natural England Response 13/11/2014**

Appendix 3.1

Your ref
Our ref LANP-SEA-HRA
Ask for Patrick Jervis
email patrick.jervis@lichfielddc.gov.uk

**District Council House, Frog Lane
Lichfield WS13 6YU**

Switchboard +44 (0) 1543 308000
Fax +44 (0) 1543 309899
Direct Line +44 (0) 1543 308196
☎ Minicom only +44 (0) 1543 308078

23rd October 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

LITTLE ASTON NEIGHBOURHOOD SCREENING OPINION FOR AN SEA & HRA

Shenstone Parish Council has recently undertaken an informal consultation on the draft Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan as part of this process the Parish Council has requested Lichfield District Council to undertake screening for SEA & HRA of the Neighbourhood Plan. The District Council has undertaken a screening process and produced the attached Screening Report which concludes that SEA and HRA of the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan (as currently drafted) will not be required.

Under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI No.1633) Lichfield District Council ('the responsible authority') is required to consult with the consultation bodies in determining whether or not the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects and will therefore require an SEA. The Parish have also requested screening opinion with regards to the need for a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

I am therefore requesting that you consider the attached Screening Report and provide any comments on its conclusions to assist in determining whether or not the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects and will therefore require an SEA. I would also welcome your comments on the need for a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).

If you have any comments I would ask for these to be sent within the next 21 days (by 14th November 2014) and if you have any queries please contact myself, Mr Patrick Jervis on 01543 308196. If no reply is received by Friday 14th November it will be assumed that you concur with the conclusions of the Screening Report.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Jervis
Planning Officer
Development Plans and Implementation



ENGLISH HERITAGE

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

**Mr Patrick Jervis
Development Plans Team
District Council House
Lichfield District Council
Frog Lane
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS13 6YZ**

Our ref: 1222-1223
Your ref:
Telephone 0121 625 6887
Fax

12 November 2014

Dear Mr Jervis

LITTLE ASTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING OPINION & HRA SCREENING REPORT

Thank you for your consultation received on the 23rd of October and the request for a Screening Opinion.

For the purposes of consultations on SEA Screening Opinions, English Heritage 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, including that set out in the draft plan, and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of ‘SEA’ Directive], English Heritage concurs with the Council that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is currently unlikely to be required.

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 English Heritage 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: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/strategic-environ-assessment-sustainability-appraisal-historic-environment/>.

8TH FLOOR, THE AXIS, 10 HOLLIDAY STREET, BIRMINGHAM B1 1TG

Telephone 0121 625 6820 Facsimile 0121 625 6821

www.english-heritage.org.uk

Please note that English Heritage operates an access to information policy.


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



As regards the HRA Screening Report English Heritage does not wish to comment in detail and would defer to Natural England and other statutory consultees, however, we have no adverse comments to make on the report.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours faithfully



Pete Boland
Historic Places Adviser
E-mail: peter.boland@english-heritage.org.uk



8TH FLOOR, THE AXIS, 10 HOLLIDAY STREET, BIRMINGHAM B1 1TG

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Please note that English Heritage operates an access to information policy.
Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available

Appendix 3.3

Mr Patrick Jervis
Planning Officer
Lichfield District Council
Planning Policy
PO Box 66
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS13 6QB

Our ref: UT/2007/101798/SE-04/SC1-L01

Your ref: LANP-SEA- HRA

Date: 13th November 2014

Dear Mr Jervis

Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan Screening Opinion for an SEA & HRA

Thank you for giving the Environment Agency the opportunity to comment on the above Neighbourhood Plan.

The Environment Agency is the main agency providing advice on improving resilience and adaptation to the effects of climate change, with particular regard on flood risk, water resources, water quality and aquatic biodiversity. We are also an environmental regulator for some renewable and low carbon technologies and we are committed to better regulation of renewable energy and the identification and mitigation of environmental impacts.

We strive to make a positive contribution through our statutory consultee role and we hope you will find our comments useful.

We welcome the draft Neighbourhood Plan, in particular Policy SAC1 Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

With regards to the SEA & HRA screening report we do not consider the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to result in significant environmental impacts and therefore concur with the conclusions of the report.

If you have any queries regarding the above please contact me on the details below.

Yours sincerely

Mr Kazi Hussain
Planning Specialist

Direct dial 01543 40 5025

Direct e-mail Kazi.Hussain@Environment-Agency.gov.uk

Environment Agency
Sentinel House 9 Wellington Crescent, Fradley Park, LICHFIELD, WS13 8RR.
Customer services line: 03708 506 506

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

End

Appendix 3.4

Date: 13 November 2014

Our ref: 135309

Your ref: LANP



Lichfield District Council

For the attention of Patrick Jervis

BY EMAIL ONLY

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

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Patrick

Planning consultation: Little Aston Draft Neighbourhood Plan - SEA & HRA Screening Report

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 23 October 2014 which was received by Natural England on the same day.

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.

Strategic Environmental Assessment – Screening

We welcome the production of this SEA Screening report. Natural England notes and concurs with the screening outcome i.e. that no SEA is required.

Further guidance on deciding whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects and the requirements for consulting Natural England on SEA are set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance at:

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal/sustainability-appraisal-requirements-for-neighbourhood-plans/>

Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening

Natural England notes the screening process applied to this Neighbourhood plan and offers the following advice. Please contact me if you would like to discuss further.

We note and agree with the reasoning set out at Table 4 of the Council's HRA screening report. You may wish to consider our advice below in order to augment the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening rationale applied so far:

It is unclear from the screening report or the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) proposals map what extent of the NP area falls within the 15km zone of influence around the Cannock Chase SAC. We acknowledge that the Council is likely to have applied the precautionary principle in order to deal with any uncertainty. We suspect the proportion of the NP area within 15km of the SAC is unlikely to include land within the settlement boundary shown on the NP proposals map. Clarity on this point might help to understand better where in the NP area proposed policy SAC1 may be needed.

Nevertheless and assuming for the time being that Policy SAC1 is necessary the following points may help to clarify the approach you take in terms of the NP's implementation:

- Natural England notes and agrees with the NP statement under Policy SAC1 (supporting paragraph 5.2) regarding the NP's relationship with the emerging Local Plan and associated strategic policy dealing with the Cannock Chase SAC strategic project (Policy NR7). We welcome the Council drawing attention to the overlapping timeline for the two plans. Your colleague Heidi Hollins is the Council's representative on the SAC Partnership and you should speak to Heidi about the project's progress accordingly.
- The proposal to use Policy SAC1 would benefit from reference to the District Council's 'Interim mitigation guidance for the Cannock Chase SAC' (November 2013). This will help ensure that applicants are aware of relevant background information.
- The SAC strategic project focuses on residential development. As a result the proposed Community Hub would seem very unlikely to need Habitats Regulations Assessment in terms of the Cannock Chase SAC.
- The SAC strategic project addresses a 'net increase in dwellings' as stated in proposed policy SAC1. This does not include *replacement* dwellings i.e. where no net increase occurs. This is relevant to Policy HSG1 and LAP1.
- For information - Natural England welcomes the proposed circular walk, jog, bike, horse ride route. This type of local facility is in sympathy with the broad thrust of 'access management' measures which the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership are working on at the moment.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact me on 0300 060 1640. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours sincerely

Antony Muller
Lead Adviser – Sustainable Development and Wildlife Team – North Mercia Area

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