



## **Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document**

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

Screening Statement - Determination under Regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

### **Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

Screening Statement – Determination under Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

**April 2019**

# **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This statement sets out the Council's determination under Regulation 9 (1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 on whether or not a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required for the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This statement also sets out the Council's determination as to whether Appropriate Assessment is required under Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017.

## **Strategic Environmental Assessment**

- 1.2 Under the requirements of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC (Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive) and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) specific types of plans that set out the framework for future development consent of projects must be subject to an environmental assessment.
- 1.3 There are exceptions to this requirement for plans that determine the use of a small area at a local level and for minor modifications if it has been determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.
- 1.4 In accordance with the provisions of the SEA Directive and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004)(Regulation 9(1)), the Council must determine if a plan requires an environmental assessment. Where the Council determines that SEA is not required then under Regulation 9(3) the Council must prepare a statement setting out the reasons for this determination. The need for SEA is considered under Section 3 of this report.

## **Sustainability Appraisal**

- 1.5 Under separate legislation (the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and associated Regulations), the Council is required to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for all Development Plan Documents. This considers the social and economic impacts of a plan as well as the environmental impacts.
- 1.6 In accordance with current Regulations (Town & Country Planning (Local Development)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2012) SA is not required to be carried out for an SPD. However, despite this, it is still necessary to determine the need for SEA.

## **Habitats Regulations Assessment**

- 1.7 Habitats Regulations Assessment is required to determine whether a plan or project would have significant adverse effects upon the integrity of internationally designated sites of nature conservation importance, or Natura 2000 sites. The need for HRA is set out within the EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EC and transposed into British Law by Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, the Borough Council must determine if a plan requires

Appropriate Assessment. Section 4 of this report deals with the need for Habitats Regulation Assessment.

## **2 Scope of the Affordable Housing SPD**

- 2.1 The scope of the Affordable Housing SPD is to provide further guidance to support the implementation of the affordable housing policies of the Rushmoor Local Plan (2019) and housing delivery objectives of the Rushmoor Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2017-2022.
- 2.2 A core purpose of this SPD is to ensure the delivery of affordable housing that meets residents' needs and aspirations, and which supports the delivery of sustainable, inclusive communities.
- 2.3 The SPD will be used by Rushmoor Borough Council in assessing planning applications that trigger the affordable housing thresholds set out in Policy LN2: Affordable Housing of the Rushmoor Local Plan.

## **3 Strategic Environmental Assessment**

### **The SEA Screening Process**

- 3.1 The process for determining whether or not an SEA is required is called screening. In order to screen, it is necessary to determine if a plan will have significant environmental effects using the criteria set out in Annex II of the Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations. A determination cannot be made until the three statutory consultation bodies have been consulted: The Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage.
- 3.2 Within 28 days of making its determination the authority must publish a statement such as this one, setting out its decision. If it determines that an SEA is not required, the statement must include the reasons for this.

### **SEA Determination and Reasons for Determination**

- 3.3 Before making a determination under Regulation 9 the three statutory bodies were consulted between 23 April 2019 and 14 May 2019. The responses received are as set out in Table 1 below.

**Table 1 – Comments received by Consultation bodies**

<b>Consultation Body</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Natural England	Natural England agree with the conclusions in the document.
Environment Agency	No comments received.

English Heritage	In light of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, our view is that a SEA is not required in this instance for the reason set out in paragraph 3.4 of the Screening Statement.
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**Table 2 – SEA Screening for the Affordable Housing SPD**

<b>Criteria (from Annex II) of SEA Directive and Schedule I of Regulations)</b>	<b>Rushmoor Borough Council's Response</b>
<b>Characteristics of the plan or programme</b>	
a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regards to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	<p>The framework is set by higher level policies in the Rushmoor Local Plan (Policy LN2: Affordable housing). The SPD will provide further guidance to support the implementation of the affordable housing policies of the Rushmoor Local Plan.</p> <p>The SPD will not set the framework for the allocation or levels of development within the Borough over the Local Plan period or set the framework for individual projects.</p>
b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The SPD is an implementation tool for delivering already adopted development plan policies at a higher tier which have already been subject to SA/SEA.
c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	Some relevance. Whilst the SPD sets out guidance on the design of development, it does so with respect to internal space and amenity space standards.
d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	The SPD will have no impact on environmental issues.
e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community (EU) legislation on the environment (for example plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	No relevance.
<b>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected</b>	
a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The SPD will not in itself set out or bring forward development plans or projects. It will solely set out guidance for schemes that trigger the requirement for affordable housing provision in Local Plan Policy LN2.
b) The cumulative nature of the effects	The SPD will help to ensure the delivery of affordable housing that meets residents' needs and aspirations.

c) The transboundary nature of the effects	Given the nature of the SPD and being local to Rushmoor, it is considered that no transboundary effects will arise.
d) The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	The SPD presents no risks to human health or the environment.
e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The SPD will cover the whole of the geographic area of Rushmoor.
f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; ii) Exceeding environmental quality standards or limit values; ii) Intensive land-use	Given the nature of the document:  i) None; ii) None; iii) None.
g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have recognised national, community or international protection status.	No effect.

#### **Other Considerations**

3.4 In reviewing these criteria and coming to a conclusion, the Council has also had regard to the following:

- The SPD does not present new policies or development proposals but seeks to support and elaborate on a recently adopted development plan policy.

#### **SEA Conclusion**

3.5 Having regard to the considerations above, the Council considers that the Affordable Housing SPD is unlikely to have any significant environmental effects and therefore does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

3.6 This determination was made on **15<sup>th</sup> April 2019**.

#### **4 Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Statement**

4.1 This part of the report seeks to determine whether the Council's policies and proposals set out in the Affordable Housing SPD will have any significant impacts on nearby Natura 2000 sites.

4.2 This SPD will support policies in the recently adopted Rushmoor Local Plan. This was subject to a Habitats Regulation Assessment (June 2017) which was prepared in consultation with Natural England. The purpose of HRA is to assess the impacts of plans against the conservation objectives of a European site. The assessment must determine whether the plan would adversely affect the integrity of the site in terms of its conservation objectives.

Where adverse effects are identified these effects should be mitigated and other options should be explored.

4.3 The Appropriate Assessment stage of HRA is only required should the preliminary screening assessment not be able to rule out likely significant effect.

4.4 The Directive states that any plan or project not connected to or necessary for a sites management, but likely to have significant effect thereon shall be subject to appropriate assessment. There are four distinct stages in HRA namely:

**Step 1:** Screening – Identification of likely impacts on a European site either alone or in combination with other plans/projects and consideration of whether these are significant. This can include the consideration of avoidance measures.

**Step 2:** Appropriate Assessment – consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European Site whether alone or in combination with other plans or projects with respect to the sites structure, function and conservation objectives. Where there are significant effects, step 2 should consider potential mitigation measures.

**Step 3:** Assessment of Alternative Solutions – Assessing alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan/project which avoid impacts; and

**Step 4:** Assessment of Compensatory Measures – Identification of compensatory measures should impact not be avoided and no alternative solutions exist and an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) deems that a project should proceed.

4.5 Should screening (step 1) reveal that significant effects are likely or effect cannot be discounted because of uncertainty, then it is necessary to move onto step 2: Appropriate Assessment. If step 2 cannot rule out significant effect even with mitigation, then the process moves onto step 3 and finally step 4 if no alternative solutions arise.

#### **Step 1 - Screening**

4.6 There are four stages to consider in a screening exercise: -

**Stage 1:** Determining whether the plan/project is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site;

**Stage 2:** Describing the plan/project and description of other plan/projects that have the potential for in-combination impacts;

**Stage 3:** Identifying potential effects on the European site(s); and

**Stage 4:** Assessing the significance of any effects

### Stage 1

- 4.7 It can be determined that the Affordable Housing SPD is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any designated sites of relevance.

### Stages 2 to 4

- 4.8 Information about the scope of the SPD can be found in Section 2 of this document. The following tables identify European sites assessed through the Rushmoor Local Plan HRA process as having the potential to have some likely significant effect and identifies the significance of possible effects from the SPD. The SPD policies will supplement and support Local Plan policies (already subject to a full HRA) and will not identify any new policies, levels of development or development distribution.

**Table 3: Significant Effects Matrix for the Affordable Housing SPD**

<b>Site description/Qualifying Features</b>	<b>Key Environmental Conditions to support site integrity</b>	<b>Possible impacts arising from the SPD</b>	<b>Possible impacts from other plans, trends etc.</b>	<b>Is there a significant risk of 'in combination' effects arising from the SPD</b>
<b>Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA)</b>				
The TBHSPA received full SPA status on 9 March 2005. It covers an area of 8,400 ha, consisting of 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) across Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire. The habitat consists of both dry and wet heathland, but also includes areas of deciduous woodland, gorse scrub, acid grassland and mire, as well as associated conifer plantations.	Appropriate management  Management of disturbance during breeding season (March to July)  Minimal air pollution  Absence or control of urbanisation effects, such as fires and introduction of invasive non-native species  Maintenance of appropriate water levels  Maintenance of water quality	No associated impact arising.	Potential cumulative effects from Local Plan on Urbanisation, Recreational Pressure and Atmospheric pollution were identified and appropriate mitigation provided.	Not specifically arising from the SPD.  In combination effects have been subject to an appropriate assessment as part of the HRA for the adopted Rushmoor Local Plan.

Site description/Qualifying Features	Key Environmental Conditions to support site integrity	Possible impacts arising from the SPD	Possible impacts from other plans, trends etc.	Is there a significant risk of 'in combination' effects arising from the SPD
<p>The SPA is of international importance for its heathland birds: nightjar (<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>), woodlark (<i>Lullula arborea</i>) and Dartford Warbler (<i>Sylvia undata</i>).</p> <p>It is of European importance because the site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) as it is used by 1% or more of the Great Britain population of a species listed in Annex 1.</p>				
<b>Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham SAC</b>				
<p>The Thursley, Ash, Pirbright &amp; Cobham Common SAC was designated in April 2005. It consists of 4 SSSI's 3 of which also form part of the TBHSPA.</p> <p>The qualifying Annex 1 habitats are:</p> <p>Wet heathland with cross leaved heath</p>	<p>Appropriate management</p> <p>Managed recreational pressure</p> <p>Minimal Air pollution</p> <p>Absence or control of urbanisation effects, such as fires and introduction of invasive non-native species</p>	<p>No associated impact arising.</p>	<p>Potential cumulative effects from Local Plan on Urbanisation, Recreational Pressure and Atmospheric pollution were identified and appropriate mitigation provided.</p>	<p>Not specifically arising from the SPD.</p> <p>In combination effects have been subject to an appropriate assessment as part of the HRA for the adopted Rushmoor Local Plan.</p>

Site description/Qualifying Features	Key Environmental Conditions to support site integrity	Possible impacts arising from the SPD	Possible impacts from other plans, trends etc.	Is there a significant risk of 'in combination' effects arising from the SPD
<p>Dry heaths</p> <p>Depressions on peat substrates.</p>	<p>Maintenance of appropriate water levels</p> <p>Maintenance of water quality</p>			
<b>Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons (Wealden Heaths Phase I) SPA</b>				
<p>The SPA is of international importance for its heathland birds: nightjar (<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>), woodlark (<i>Lullula arborea</i>) and Dartford Warbler (<i>Sylvia undata</i>).</p> <p>It is of European importance because the site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) as it is used by 1% or more of the Great Britain population of a species listed in Annex 1.</p>	<p>Appropriate management</p> <p>Management of disturbance during breeding season (March to July)</p> <p>Minimal air pollution</p> <p>Absence or control of urbanisation effects, such as fires and introduction of invasive non-native species</p> <p>Maintenance of appropriate water levels</p> <p>Maintenance of water quality</p>	<p>No associated impact arising.</p>	<p>Potential cumulative effects from the Local Plan on recreational disturbance and atmospheric pollution were identified and appropriate mitigation provided.</p>	<p>Not specifically arising from the SPD.</p> <p>In combination effects have been subject to an appropriate assessment as part of the HRA for the adopted Rushmoor Local Plan.</p>

Site description/Qualifying Features	Key Environmental Conditions to support site integrity	Possible impacts arising from the SPD	Possible impacts from other plans, trends etc.	Is there a significant risk of 'in combination' effects arising from the SPD
<b>Thursley &amp; Ockley Bogs Ramsar Site</b>				
<p>Thursley and Ockley Bogs is a valley mire complex that lies within the Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons SSSI.</p> <p>It qualifies under the Ramsar site criteria as it supports a community of rare wetland invertebrate species including notable numbers of dragonflies, and it is one of the few sites in Britain to support all six native reptile species.</p>	<p>Appropriate management</p> <p>Managed recreational pressure</p> <p>Minimal air pollution</p> <p>Absence or control of urbanisation effects, such as fires and introduction of invasive non-native species</p> <p>Maintenance of appropriate water levels</p> <p>Maintenance of water quality</p>	<p>No associated impact arising.</p>	<p>Possible potential cumulative effects from the Local Plan on recreational pressure and water abstraction were identified.</p> <p>It was concluded that the Local Plan contains an adequate policy framework to mitigate the adverse impacts.</p>	<p>Not specifically arising from the SPD.</p> <p>In combination effects have been subject to an appropriate assessment as part of the HRA for the adopted Rushmoor Local Plan.</p>
<b>Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA</b>				
<p>The SPA is of international importance for its heathland birds: nightjar (<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>), woodlark (<i>Lullula arborea</i>) and Dartford Warbler (<i>Sylvia undata</i>).</p> <p>It is of European importance because the site</p>	<p>Appropriate management</p> <p>Management of disturbance during breeding season (March to July)</p> <p>Minimal air pollution</p> <p>Absence or control of urbanisation</p>	<p>No associated impact arising</p>	<p>Possible potential cumulative effects from the Local Plan on recreational pressure and atmospheric pollution were identified.</p> <p>It was concluded that the Local Plan will not lead to adverse</p>	<p>Not specifically arising from the SPD.</p> <p>In combination effects have been subject to an appropriate assessment as part of the HRA for the adopted Rushmoor Local Plan.</p>

Site description/Qualifying Features	Key Environmental Conditions to support site integrity	Possible impacts arising from the SPD	Possible impacts from other plans, trends etc.	Is there a significant risk of 'in combination' effects arising from the SPD
qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) as it is used by 1% or more of the Great Britain population of a species listed in Annex 1.	effects, such as fires and introduction of invasive non-native species  Maintenance of appropriate water levels  Maintenance of water quality		effects on the SPA.	

4.9 The SPD is also considered to have no significant effect on the following sites as they were all assessed as part of the Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment 2017 and considered to be too far from the Borough for there to be any likelihood of recreational impact:

- East Hampshire Hangars SAC
- Shortheath Common SAC
- Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC

#### **HRA Screening Conclusion**

4.10 On the basis of the above and having regard to the scope of the SPD and the considerations set out in paragraph 3.4 of this report the Council considers that the Affordable Housing SPD will not have a significant adverse effect on any Natura 2000 sites and that a full appropriate assessment is therefore not required. The SPD will support the delivery of Rushmoor Local Plan (specifically Policy LN2: Affordable Housing), which has been subject to a full Assessment, including any in-combination effects with other plans.