

**Cranbrook and Sissinghurst  
Neighbourhood Plan  
Strategic Environmental Assessment  
Screening Report  
Final Report  
September 2020**

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 SEA Background

1.1.1 This screening report is designed to determine whether or not the contents of the draft Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) 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.

1.1.2 The vision statement of the Cranbrook and Sissinghurst NDP is as follows:

*“In fifteen years’ time, Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish will be a vibrant, attractive and sustainable place to live, work and visit. It will have protected and enhanced its distinctive rural Wealden character and richness of its landscape, its settlements and its built environment. High quality well-designed and well-connected new developments which are sympathetic to the distinctive local heritage, will provide new homes for local workers and new residents. Greater social and environmental sustainability will have been achieved through improvements to technological infrastructure, active travel routes, community facilities and public realm spaces, as well as enhancements to ecological connectivity for the benefit of people and wildlife. These, in turn, will have brought increased opportunities to boost the local economy through a range of new businesses in a variety of sectors including new green and technological economies, to serve the needs of both residents and visitors.”*

1.1.3 The legislative background set out below outlines the regulations that require the need for this screening exercise. Section 3 provides a screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the draft plan and the need for a full SEA. The NDP aims to ensure that the distinctive heritage and rural nature of the parish is preserved, whilst securing the community and economic benefits that growth can bring.

## 1.2 Legislative Background

1.2.1 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.

- 1.2.2 This report focuses on screening for SEA and the criteria for establishing whether a full assessment is needed.

## 2. Assessment

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

2.1.2 The ODPM publication “A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive” (2005) sets out the approach to be taken in order to determine whether SEA is required.

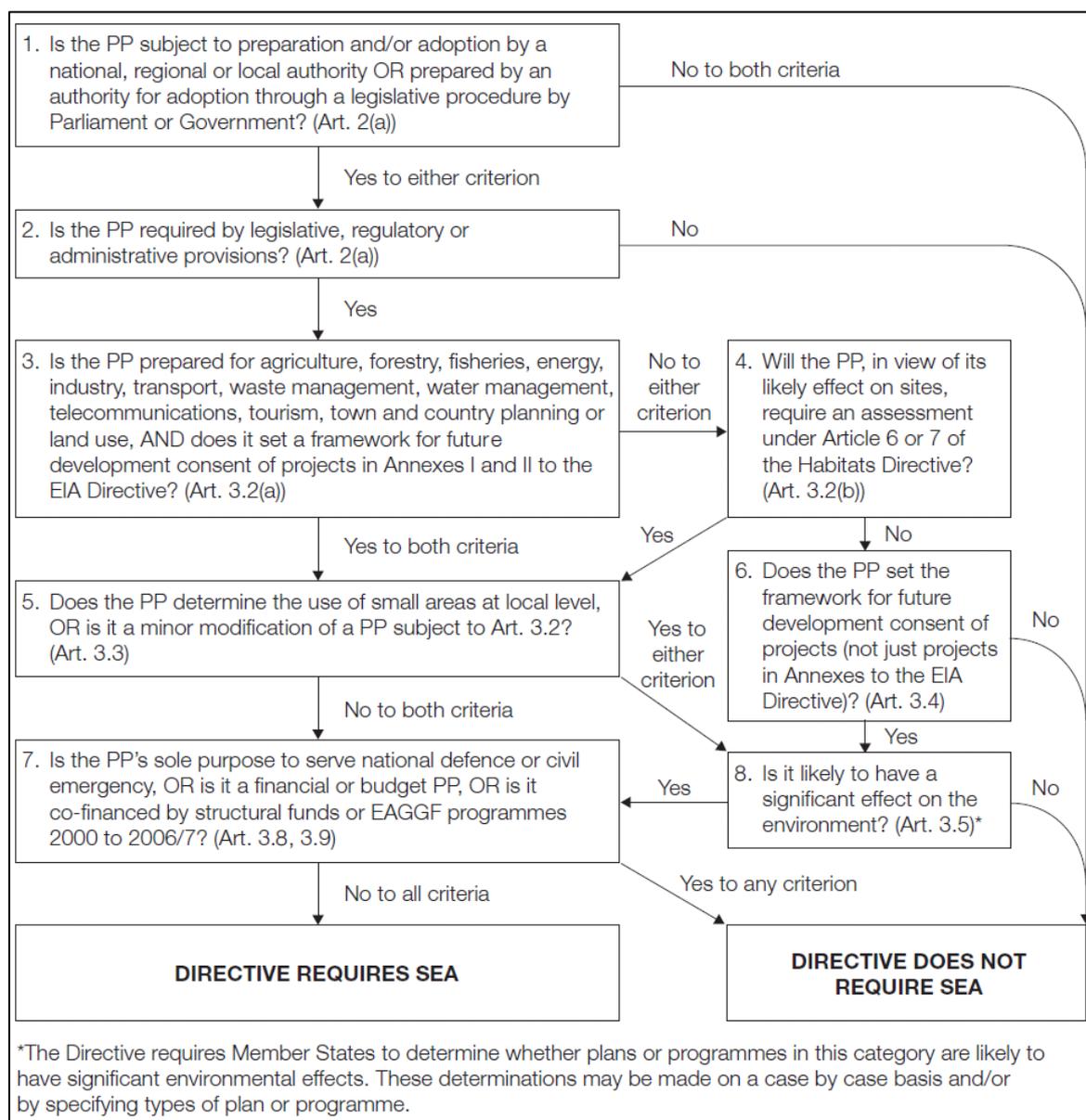


Figure 1: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes (from “A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive”)

2.1.3 This assessment is therefore split into two parts. Part 1 runs the draft plan through the questions outlined in the diagram above and includes

commentary of whether the need for SEA is triggered. Part 2 further assesses stage 8, on whether there is a likely significant impact. The screening opinion takes a 'precautionary approach' and when it is unclear as to how the Directive may be applied it is assumed that there are possible likely significant effects.

## 2.2 Part 1 – Application of the Directive to the draft NDP

Table 1. Establishing the need for SEA by following the flowchart in Figure 1.

No.	Question	Y/N	Justification
1	Is the plan or programme (PP from hereon) 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	NDPs are prepared by parish councils under the provision of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011.  <b>GO TO STAGE 2</b>
2	Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Y	It is not a requirement for a parish to produce a NDP. However, once "made" the plan forms part of the statutory Development Plan and will be used when making decision on planning applications.  <b>GO TO STAGE 3</b>
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	Y	The NDP is being prepared for town and country planning and land use.  Although the NDP supports planning applications for specific development types such as

No.	Question	Y/N	Justification
	projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))		housing developments, it does contain a general framework for all future development consent and thus this could be incorporated projects listed in Annex II of the EIA Directive.  <b>GO TO STAGE 5</b>
4	Will the PP, in view of its likely effects on sites require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2(b))		<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>
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)	Y	The NDP does not allocate land for a specific purpose but does show preference for the type and form of development at local level.  <b>GO TO STAGE 8</b>
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)		<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>
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)		<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>
8	Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	<b>SEE TABLE 2</b>

## 2.3 Part 2 – Likely Significant Effects on the Environment

2.3.1 Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below, together with a commentary on whether the draft NDP would trigger the need for a full assessment.

Table 2 Assessing Likely Significant Effects (LSE)

SEA Directive Criteria	LSE Y/N	Justification
<b>1. The Characteristics of Plans and Programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</b>		
a) 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	N	The NDP does not allocate or direct development towards specific locations, but instead guides the nature and design of development.  The NDP contains numerous policies that reference support for applications that demonstrate sensitivity to and enhancement of the natural and built environment. Such policies are intended to protect the environment thus LSE are unlikely.
b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	N	If the NDP is not delivered, the Borough's emerging and existing Local Plan is not affected. The Local Plan is subject to a full SEA.

SEA Directive Criteria	LSE Y/N	Justification
c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	N	<p>In line with preparation of a Sustainability Appraisal, the NDP group have compiled extensive environmental baseline information for the Parish and used this to guide policy making.</p> <p>In addition, the Parish's desire for sustainable development is referred to repeatedly in the plan and is inherent in many policies including the plan objectives.</p> <p>The Parish have prepared a Sustainability Assessment which summarises how the main objectives of sustainable development are considered by the various NDP policies.</p> <p>Finally, it is noteworthy that previous iterations of the Plan have been subject to SEA and that this process has provided the group with detailed environmental information to inform the plan further. [Note: The iteration of the plan subject to SEA included site allocations which have since been removed from the plan.]</p>
d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	N	<p>There are no specific environmental problems relevant to this NDP.</p> <p>At the time of writing, no specific site allocations had been identified. As many environmental problems are site specific, this screening assessment should be revisited if</p>

SEA Directive Criteria	LSE Y/N	Justification
		site allocations are made in the future.
e) 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)	N	The NDP will not affect implementation of European Community environmental legislation. The Water Framework Directive will need to be taken into account.
<b>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b>		
a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	N	The NDP does not allocate land for development, but instead only directs the type, scale and form of any future development. Some effects such as pollution are currently unknown because they are highly dependent on where development takes place. However, significant effects are considered to be unlikely.
b) The cumulative nature of the effects	N	Significant effects are considered unlikely thus negative cumulative effects from the NDP are not predicted.
c) The transboundary nature of the effects	N	The Parish of Cranbrook and Sissinghurst lies close to the boundary with East Sussex and other districts. However, no significant trans boundary effects from the NDP are expected.

SEA Directive Criteria	LSE Y/N	Justification
d) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	N	The NDP does not create any significant 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)	N	The NDP covers the Parish of Cranbrook and Sissinghurst which contains the settlements of Cranbrook, Sissinghurst, Wilsley Green, Cranbrook Common and Hartley. Significant effects are not predicted across or outside of this geographical area.
f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, (iii) intensive land-use,	N	<p>(i) The High Weald AONB washes over the southern portion of the parish, amounting to 63% of the total parish land area. The parish is rich in heritage assets containing 3 Conservation Areas and numerous listed buildings. The area is also rural in nature and has a wealth of biodiversity and natural habitats. Supporting high density development in general locations such as village and town centres could affect Conservation Areas or the setting of listed buildings. However, the NDP seeks to prevent these impacts through numerous historic environment related policies to ensure that significant environmental issues are not created. Environmental protection is one of the objectives of the NDP.</p> <p>(ii) The NDP is not predicted to exceed standards or environmental limits.</p> <p>(iii) The NDP seeks to make efficient use of land by directing high density development to the settlement centres in the Policy entitled Making Efficient Use of Land policy.</p>

SEA Directive Criteria	LSE Y/N	Justification
g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	<b>N</b>	<p>Whilst there are no areas within Tunbridge Wells borough that are EC or internationally protected, the Ashdown Forest SPA/SAC European designation is sited in an adjacent authority area (Wealden) which affects the south-west of the Borough. Proposals in this NDP are unlikely to impact upon this designated site as the parish is outside of the 7km zone of influence (as determined by the Habitats Regulations Assessment screening assessment for the Borough).</p> <p>At national level, the High Weald AONB washes over more than half of the parish and the NDP has numerous policies designed to protect this important landscape. This approach complements the 'great weight' afforded to the AONB at national policy level.</p> <p>There are two SSSIs in the Parish: Robins Wood (south west of Harley) and Sissinghurst Park Wood (north of Sissinghurst). At Cranbrook Common, Hartley and Sissinghurst the Impact Risk Zone suggests housing developments of 50 units or more would create potential risk to the SSSI. NDP policies for Special Sites for Nature Conservation, Special Ecological Protection &amp; Enhancement, Protection and Enhancement of Priority Habitats, and Protection of Priority Species have been drafted specifically to protect sites with high nature conservation value.</p> <p>Two stretches of land designated as flood zone 2 and 3 are found in the northern half of the parish and outside of the main settlements. NDP policies for Sustainable Drainage, and Local Protection &amp;</p>

SEA Directive Criteria	LSE Y/N	Justification
		Enhancement of the Crane Valley are intended to mitigate against flood risk and restore and protect the water features associated with the AONB.
<b>Part 2 Overall Conclusion</b>		<b>The Cranbrook and Sissinghurst NDP is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment.</b>

## 2.4 Screening Outcome

- 2.4.1 As a result of the assessment in section 3, it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the draft NDP. As such, it does not require a full SEA to be undertaken. This conclusion was sent to the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England for consideration who are in agreement. Their responses are included in Appendix A.

# Appendix A: Statutory Environmental Body Responses

Date: 10 September 2020  
Our ref: 325788  
Your ref: Cranbrook & Sissinghurst NDP



Katie McFloyd  
Town Hall  
Royal Tunbridge Wells  
Kent, TN1 1RS

**BY EMAIL ONLY**  
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T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms McFloyd,

## **Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Neighbourhood Development Plan – SEA and HRA Screening**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020 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**

Natural England considers that, based on the material supplied with the consultation, in so far as our strategic environmental interests are concerned, significant environmental effects resulting from the neighbourhood plan are unlikely. We therefore agree with the conclusion of the SEA screening report that a full Strategic Environmental Assessment would not be 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](#).

### **Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening**

Natural England welcomes the consideration given to the Habitats Regulations. We agree with the conclusion of the report of no likely significant effect upon the named European designated sites:

- Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) – approx. 23km away
- Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – approx. 23km away

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 new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

Yours sincerely

Victoria Kirkham  
Consultations Team

RE: SEA Screening Request - Cranbrook & Sissinghurst NDP



KSLPlanning <KSLPLANNING@environment-agency.gov.uk>  
To: Katie McFloyd

Reply Reply All Forward ...  
Thu 20/08/2020 14:01

Katie

Thank you for consulting us. We have no comments to make.

Jo

Jo Beck Sustainable Places Team Leader (Kent), Kent, South London and East Sussex  
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Fw: SEA Screening Request - Cranbrook & Sissinghurst NDP



Lloyd Sweet, Robert <Robert.LloydSweet@HistoricEngland.org.uk>  
To: Katie McFloyd

Reply Reply All Forward ...  
Mon 07/09/2020 12:26

Dear Katie

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the draft screening opinion for the Cranbrook and Sittingbourne Neighbourhood plan.

I am happy to confirm that Historic England agree that, within areas of interest to Historic England, we considered it unlikely that there would be likely significant environmental effects that would merit completion of and SEA for the neighbourhood plan.

We retain the right to review this opinion should the plan change significantly in scope at a later stage of development.

Yours sincerely

Robert Lloyd-Sweet

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