Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion

Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan and Wadhurst Design Code (Pre-Regulation 14)

October 2022

Prepared by Wealden District Council

1. Introduction

1.1 This screening report is designed to determine whether the draft Wadhurst Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), including the Wadhurst Design Code, require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC ("The SEA Directive")1 and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (The "SEA Regulations")2.

1.2 A neighbourhood plan may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to comply with the SEA Directive where it is likely to have significant environmental effects. It is the Council's responsibility to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects taking account of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, and in consultation with the Environmental Agency, Historic England and Natural England.

1.3 In order to decide whether a proposed neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment it is 'screened' at an early stage once the plan remit and objectives have been formulated. This report assesses the draft of the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan dated 15 August 2022 and the Wadhurst Design Code dated March 2022 (Pre Regulation 14 stage).

1.4 If, after the screening assessment and consultation with the statutory bodies, the responsible authority determines that the neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, then a full Environmental Assessment will be required. Conversely, if it is determined through screening and consultation with the statutory bodies that the neighbourhood plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects, then the neighbourhood planning group need not concern itself with subsequent stages of the SEA process.

1.5 The Council advises neighbourhood plan groups to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal to assess the impact of the Neighbourhood Plan against social, environmental and economic factors. This is good practice and can provide evidence for how the neighbourhood plan meets the requirement to promote sustainable development.

[1] European Directive 2001/42/EC

[2] The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

2. Overview of the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan and Wadhurst Parish

2.1 The Wadhurst NDP has previously been out to Regulation 14 consultation. However, the neighbourhood plan changed substantially between the Regulation 14 and Regulation 15 Stages, including the addition of new policies and a new Design Code. On this basis and on the advice of Wealden District Council, Wadhurst will undertake a Regulation 14 consultation on their revised neighbourhood plan to provide an opportunity for the community to have their say on the revised neighbourhood plan as well as the Design Code that will accompany the neighbourhood plan. Prior to a second Regulation 14 consultation it is necessary to re-screen the Neighbourhood Plan and also screen the Design Code given its policy connection in that there are a number of policy hooks in the NDP which require compliance with the design guide. In addition, since the Design Code will apply to heritage assets, such as Conservation Areas, in principle it is capable of requiring an SEA.

2.2 The plan covers Wadhurst Parish, which is located wholly within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The parish contains large areas of Ancient Woodland and Bewl Water Reservoir, which is identified as a Local Wildlife Site and Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA). There are a number of other Local Wildlife Sites within the parish including Butchers Wood, Colesgrove Wood Complex and Snape House Meadow. The western most part of the parish falls within the Medway, Ouse, Rother Watershed BOA and part of the southern parish boundary is within the Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods BOA.

2.3 There are no Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar sites, Sites of Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserve or Local Nature Reserve designations within the neighbourhood area. However, Eridge Park Site of Special Scientific Interest abuts the neighbourhood area boundary to the west of the parish.

2.4 In terms of Heritage Assets, in Wadhurst Parish there are two Conservation Areas (Wadhurst Conservation Area and Pell Green and Cousley Wood Conservation Area), a Grade II Registered Park and Garden at Wadhurst Castle and over 150 Listed Buildings. There is also a Scheduled Monument, Riverhall Blast Furnace, on the border with Frant Parish, and a number of Archaeological Notification Areas within the parish.

2.5 The Plan sets out a vision, objectives and policies covering a plan period to 2036. The Plan **does not allocate sites for development**. The Plan sets out a vision statement:

Wadhurst Parish will continue to be a collection of friendly and vibrant distinct communities. The Parish will retain and support its rural 'village feel', historic character and heritage. Justifiable, sensitive and sustainable development will be supported, whilst robustly protecting the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Parish economy and its popular High Street will be revitalised by improvements to the roads, traffic control, parking and active support of businesses. Sustainable ways of improving travel and leisure activities and facilities, which promote wellbeing, will be sought wherever possible.

2.6 The plan's objectives are:

- **Objective 1 – Character, Heritage and Design**: To provide sympathetically designed high quality housing for parishioners that meets local housing needs while enhancing the distinctive natural and built character of the Parish through justified, sensitive, sustainable development and healthy placemaking. Recognising and protecting the individual and distinctive settlements that comprise the Parish.
- **Objective 2 – Getting Around:** To address local transport issues, including traffic and parking issues and promoting sustainable transport options by improving connectivity to facilities within and beyond the Parish by integrating and, where possible, extending the existing network of footpaths and bridleways.
- **Objective 3 – Local Economy:** To support and extend business, employment and associated training opportunities – including provision of infrastructure required – to grow the local economy, and to support the development of the Parish as a sustainable and environmentally friendly destination for those visiting the High Weald.
- **Objective 4 – Environment:** To enhance and maintain the rural character and landscape features of the Parish, that led to the area's designation as the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This includes promoting opportunities for supporting and improving biodiversity, safeguarding valued green spaces and access to these, and protecting key viewpoints afforded by the Parish's ridgeline location.
- **Objective 5- Community Wellbeing and Leisure:** To retain and, where possible, expand the range of facilities and amenities available for local residents.

3. SEA Screening Assessment

3.1 The screening assessment for the SEA is undertaken in two parts and will firstly assess whether the Wadhurst NDP and Design Code require an SEA as per the detailed guidance contained within 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' that is shown in Figure 1 that follows below[3]. The second element of the assessment will consider whether the Wadhurst NDP and Design Code are likely, in their current form, to have a significant effect on the environment, using the criteria drawn from Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. Figure 1 below is a guide as to how the criteria for the application of the Directive should be assessed.

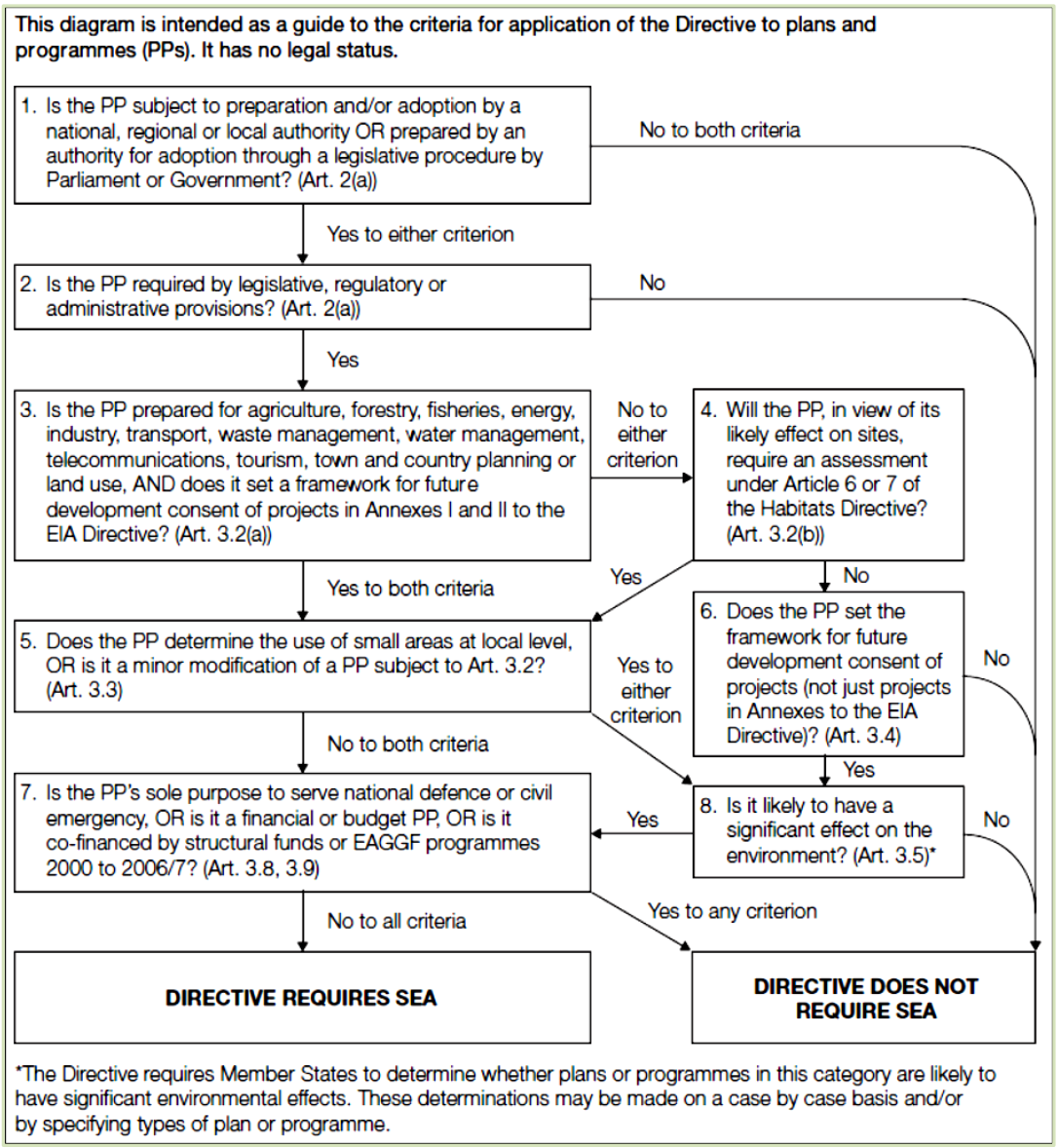

Figure 1: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

[3] See page 13 of A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2005) and Figure 2 – Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes for the original diagram.

3.2 The process in figure 1 has been undertaken in terms of the Wadhurst NDP and the findings can be viewed in Table 1. This establishes whether this NDP would require an 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 the 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**	The Wadhurst NDP has been prepared by Wadhurst Parish Council under the provision of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and the associated Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012 as amended. Once the NDP is 'made', Wealden District Council will adopt it. Go to Stage 2
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	**Yes**	The Wadhurst NDP is not a requirement and is optional under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended by the Localism Act 2011). However, once 'made' the Wadhurst NDP would form part of the statutory development plan, and will be used when making decisions on planning applications within the designated neighbourhood plan area. Therefore, it is considered necessary to establish whether there is a need for an SEA. Go to Stage 3
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste	**Yes**	The Wadhurst NDP is being prepared for both town and country planning and land use

Stage	Yes/No	Reason
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))		and therefore meets the first part of this question. The NDP contains a general framework for all future development consent, which could include projects that would be listed in Annex II of the EIA Directive Go to Stage 5
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2(b))	**Not applicable.**	
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 Wadhurst NDP does not allocate land for a specific purpose but does show preference for the type and form of development at a local level. Go to Stage 8
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)	**Not applicable**	
7. Is the PP's sole purpose to serve 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)	**Not applicable**	

Stage	Yes/No	Reason
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	**No**	This question is considered within the screening assessment itself that follows in Table 2 below.

3.3 The table below sets out the Council's assessment on the likely environmental effects of the draft Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan and Design Code with reference to the criteria specified in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations[4].

Table 2: Determining the likely significance of effects

SEA Directive criteria	Wealden District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
Characteristics of the Neighbourhood Plan (including Design Guide), having regard to:		
(a) the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	The NDP would, if 'made', form part of the statutory Development Plan and as such does contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects. However, the neighbourhood plan must sit within a wider policy framework having regard to National Policy while also being in general conformity with the strategic policies of the District's Development Plan. The NDP does not seek to allocate sites for development. It instead provides policies to help guide development by providing certain criteria in relation to residential, commercial, tourism and community uses.	**No**

[4] The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

SEA Directive criteria	Wealden District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
	No specific detail is provided in relation to scale, type and form of development (in terms of specific sites). However a design policy and Design Code are provided to guide design across the neighbourhood area. In general terms, the framework of policies seeks to guide projects, which are local in nature.	
(b) the degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The NDP must have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and must be in general conformity with the strategic polices of the Council's Development Plan. The NDP may have a limited degree of influence over the formation of other documents and policies. However, the extent of impact is unlikely to be significant in this regard given the Plan's position within the policy hierarchy and its limited geographic scope.	**No**
(c) the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	Wadhurst NDP does not allocate sites for development. The criteria based policies and local designations are designed to promote sustainable development in line with the requirement that all neighbourhood plans contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. In particular, Policy WAD4: Sustainability and Design aims to ensure that proposals incorporate sustainable design features and Policy WAD7: Safe and Sustainable	**No**

SEA Directive criteria	Wealden District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
	Movement encourages more sustainable modes of transport. The Wadhurst Design Code encourages the use of sustainable materials and development layouts that promotes sustainable forms of travel e.g. walking and cycling. It also promotes the use of sustainable drainage systems. It will be advised for the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan to be accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal.	
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan	Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan area does not contain Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Ramsar Sites, SSSIs, LNRs or NNRs. The area does contain Ancient Woodland and several Local Wildlife Sites, but these designations are unlikely to be affected by the policies in the plan. Eridge Park Site of Special Scientific Interest abuts the neighbourhood area boundary in the west of the parish but is unlikely to be affected by the policies in the plan. The neighbourhood plan does not allocate sites for development and includes strong protection for the High Weald AONB and measures to reduce traffic and protect dark skies. The plan also supports biodiversity net gain and proposals that increase connectivity between wildlife areas.	**No**

SEA Directive criteria	Wealden District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
	There are some policies that provide support for residential, commercial, tourism and community uses subject to various criteria but these policies do not provide detail on scale, location, type or form of development and should such development come forward will be assessed in relation to any environmental issues as part of the planning application process. It is not possible to assess this now as there are no site specific locations or design details available. Policy WAD14 Bewl Water Reservoir for example, provides support for local community uses in the Bewl Water area but does not allocate a specific site or provide further detail as to form or scale.	
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The NDP will not affect the implementation of environmental legislation. The Habitats Regulations screening concludes that the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan will not result in a 'likely significant effect' on any SACs, SPAs or Ramsar sites.	**No**

SEA Directive criteria	Wealden District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:		

SEA Directive criteria	Wealden District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	Wadhurst NDP plan period runs until 2036. The plan does not allocate sites for development but will set policies to help shape and guide development over that period and development that comes forward in the Neighbourhood Plan area will be assessed as part of the normal planning application process. It is unlikely that there will be significant environmental effects as a result of the policies and criteria in themselves.	**No**
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects of the plan	The scope of the policies proposed within the NDP are local in nature. There are some policies that provide support for certain types of development (e.g. residential, commercial, tourism, community uses). However, the scale, location, type and form of development is not known and will therefore be assessed as part of the normal planning application process should development come forward. The policies and criteria in themselves will not result in a significant cumulative environmental effect. The Design Code may result in cumulative effects but these will be largely beneficial e.g., the use of better quality materials or local design features could cumulatively create a higher quality built environment.	**No**

SEA Directive criteria	Wealden District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects	There are not expected to be any trans-boundary effects on other parishes, local authority areas or wider.	**No**
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	There are no significant risks to human health or the environment. A number of policies seek to improve human health by ensuring safe pedestrian access, promoting active travel and supporting additional leisure facilities.	**No**
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The Wadhurst NDP covers an area of 15.5 square miles or 40.14 km2 with a population of 4,883 at the 2011 census. The Plan therefore covers a relatively small geographic area with a modest population. The plan is not allocating sites for development and the effects of the plan are likely to be largely limited to the neighbourhood area.	**No**
(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; and (iii)intensive land-use	(i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage **The Neighbourhood Plan** <u>Cultural Heritage</u> The Neighbourhood Area contains a Grade II Registered Park and Garden at Wadhurst Castle. Part of this land has been designated as a Green Gap (see Green Gap 8). Policy WAD1 applies in this area that seeks to prevent coalescence of settlements. The designation and policy is not considered to negatively affect the historic significance of the Castle or the Park and Garden.	**No**

SEA Directive criteria	Wealden District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
	There are two Conservation Areas (Wadhurst Conservation Area and Pell Green and Cousley Wood Conservation Area), over 150 Listed Buildings, one Registered Park and Garden and one Scheduled Monument within the neighbourhood area. The potential exists for non-designated heritage assets to be present within the neighbourhood area, both in the form of buildings and archaeology. There are a number of Archaeological Notification Areas within the parish and the potential for further sites of archaeological interest. The Wadhurst NDP provides policies to protect and enhance the parish's heritage assets. This includes designated heritage assets such as the Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings and also non-designated heritage assets in the form of buildings but also above and below ground archaeology. It also contains policies seeking to protect the wider historic environment. The design policies aim to protect Wadhurst's distinct local identity and preserve Wadhurst's heritage. <u>The Natural Environment</u> The NDP also provides policies to conserve and enhance the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to protect distinctive and highly valued views and to increase biodiversity. Other policies at National and District level will also ensure no significant environmental issues.	

SEA Directive criteria	Wealden District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
	The Wadhurst Design Code <u>Cultural Heritage</u> The Wadhurst Design Code is a guidance document. It aims to protect the distinct identity of Wadhurst by providing guidance on the design of new development. It covers areas protected for their cultural heritage such as the two Conservation Areas and sites with Listed Buildings but provides minimal specific guidance on works to buildings within/ with these designations. The Design Code is overall quite prescriptive and there is the possibility that the code will impact on the financial viability of projects for example replacement shopfronts or new housing developments. There is also the possibility that by being so prescriptive this could encourage increased homogenisation of the area, with a resultant impact upon heritage assets, rather than allowing each application to respond to the specific locality and circumstances on a 'case by case' basis. The entire parish (including heritage assets) is within the High Weald AONB to which a fairly prescriptive housing design guide already applies. Heritage assets are also covered by specific legislation and policies within the Local Plan which minimise the likelihood of significant effects occurring as a result of the Design Code. The heritage policies in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan look to preserve	

SEA Directive criteria	Wealden District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
	and enhance heritage assets in the parish and the proposed design policy aims to promote a sense of place and local distinctiveness. Ultimately, the Design Code does not propose any new development by itself and will only be considered design **guidance** to applicants/ developers and as a material consideration within the planning process. The Design Code will add detail / guidance to existing Local Plan policies and National Policy rather than override them. It will also be used as relevant and on a 'case by case' basis. Whilst the Wadhurst Design Code has potential to impact design considerations, it is not considered that it would have a likely significant environmental effect on the parish's cultural heritage due to it only being design guidance and in consideration that legislation, the NPPF, Local Plan policies and indeed the emerging neighbourhood plan policy would be in place (once adopted). It is also not possible to identify at this stage where or when development will occur, the type or scale of development or which heritage assets may be affected and any detailed assessment of impact will need to take place with the determination of a planning application. <u>The Natural Environment</u> The Design Code provides guidance on promoting biodiversity, the use of street trees, protecting the AONB landscape and preventing light	

SEA Directive criteria	Wealden District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
	pollution. Other policies at National and District level will also ensure no significant environmental issues. (ii)The neighbourhood plan does not allocate sites. It is not expected that criteria based policies in themselves will lead to an exceedance of environmental quality standards or limit values. Any development that does come forward will be considered through the normal planning application process. (iii)The neighbourhood plan seeks to make efficient use of land by supporting brownfield development and directing development to the built up area as well as suitable uses of appropriate scale in more rural areas.	
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status	The HRA screening assessment has not identified any likely significant environmental effects. Eridge Park SSSI adjoins the border with Wadhurst Parish but is unlikely to be affected by the policies in the plan. The neighbourhood area is located within the High Weald AONB. The neighbourhood plan is not proposing sites for development and contains policies that seek to protect and enhance the AONB. The Ashdown Forest SPA/SAC European designation is sited in Wealden District, however Wadhurst Parish is entirely outside of the 7km zone of influence in relation to the SPA	**No**

SEA Directive criteria	Wealden District Council assessment	Likely significant environmental effect?
	and the HRA has concluded 'no likely significant effect' in relation to the SAC.	
Conclusion	**The Wadhurst NDP is not likely to have a significant effect on the environment and as such an SEA is not required.**	

4. SEA Screening Conclusion

4.1 As a result of the assessment at Section 3, it is considered by Wealden District Council that an SEA will not be required for the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan (including the Wadhurst Design Code).

4.2 This report was sent to the three statutory bodies for comment (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England). Each body agreed with the Council's conclusion that the Wadhurst NDP is not likely to have a significant effect on the environment and an SEA is therefore not required. The consultee's responses are provided at Appendix 1.

4.3 This screening opinion is considered to be a 'snapshot in time' and if the scope and/or policies contained within the Wadhurst NDP should change, then a new screening process will need to be undertaken to determine whether an SEA would be required at that time.

Date: 11 October 2022
Our ref: 407452
Your ref: Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan

[redacted]
Planning Policy
Wealden District Council

BY EMAIL ONLY
planning@wealden.gov.uk

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T 0300 060 3900

Dear [redacted]

Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan – Review SEA & HRA Screening

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 09 September 2022.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils) are concerned, that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

Neighbourhood Plan
Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in light of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), is contained within the National Planning Practice Guidance. The guidance highlights three triggers that may require the production of an SEA, for instance where:

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

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that in our view the proposals contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies / proposals within the plan. It remains the case, however, that the responsible authority should provide information supporting this screening decision, sufficient to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected.

Notwithstanding this advice, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all potential environmental assets. As a result the responsible authority should raise environmental issues that we have not identified on local or national biodiversity action plan species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites or local landscape character, with its own ecological and/or landscape advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local landscape and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by this plan, before determining whether an SA/SEA is necessary.

Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA/SA screening stage, should the responsible authority seek our views on the scoping or environmental report stages. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening
Natural England agrees with the report's conclusions that the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European Site, either alone or in combination and therefore no further assessment work would be required.

For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]
Consultations Team

From: [redacted]@HistoricEngland.org.uk>
Sent: 12 October 2022 13:58
To: [redacted]@wealden.gov.uk>
Subject: RE SCREENING / Wadhurst NP SEA Screening

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To whom it may concern

Thank you for your letter regarding the above consultation. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process. Therefore we welcome this opportunity to review this request for a Screening Opinion. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the neighbourhood plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied with the Screening Opinion.

The supporting information supplied with the consultation indicates that within the plan area there is a range of designated historic environment assets. There is also likely to be other features of local historic, architectural or archaeological value, and consideration should also be given to the wider historic landscape.

However as with our previous comment (02/07/2021) the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects within our areas of interest and, as such Historic England concurs with the Council's view that a Strategic Environmental Assessment will be not be required.

Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the relevant local authorities are closely involved throughout the preparation of the plan and its assessment. They are best placed to advise on; local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the Historic Environment Record (HER), how the allocation, policy or proposal can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets.

We should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by you with your correspondence below. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the SEA process and, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan/guidance) where we

consider that, despite the SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

Please do contact me, if you have any queries.

Best wishes

[redacted]

[redacted]
Historic Places Advisor , Historic England , London and South East Region

Historic England

Work with us to champion heritage and improve lives. Read our Future Strategy and get involved at historicengland.org.uk/strategy.
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From: [redacted]@environment-agency.gov.uk>
Sent: 21 October 2022 14:51
To: [redacted]@wealden.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Re-screening of Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan (Pre-Regulation 14)

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Hi [redacted]

Thank you so much for re-sending this. I can confirm that having reviewed the revised documents the Environment Agency position hasn't changed. Based on the information provided and the fact that the plan is not allocating sites for development, considering the issues within our remit, it is our opinion that the NP would not have a significant environmental effect and as such would not require an SEA.

Kind regards

[redacted]
Sustainable Places
Solent and South Downs

Tel: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@environment-agency.gov.uk