

Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan

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



December 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

This screening report is designed to determine whether or not the content of the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

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

- the Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites for development;
- the Neighbourhood Plan 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 the SEA of the Local Plan in the area.

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

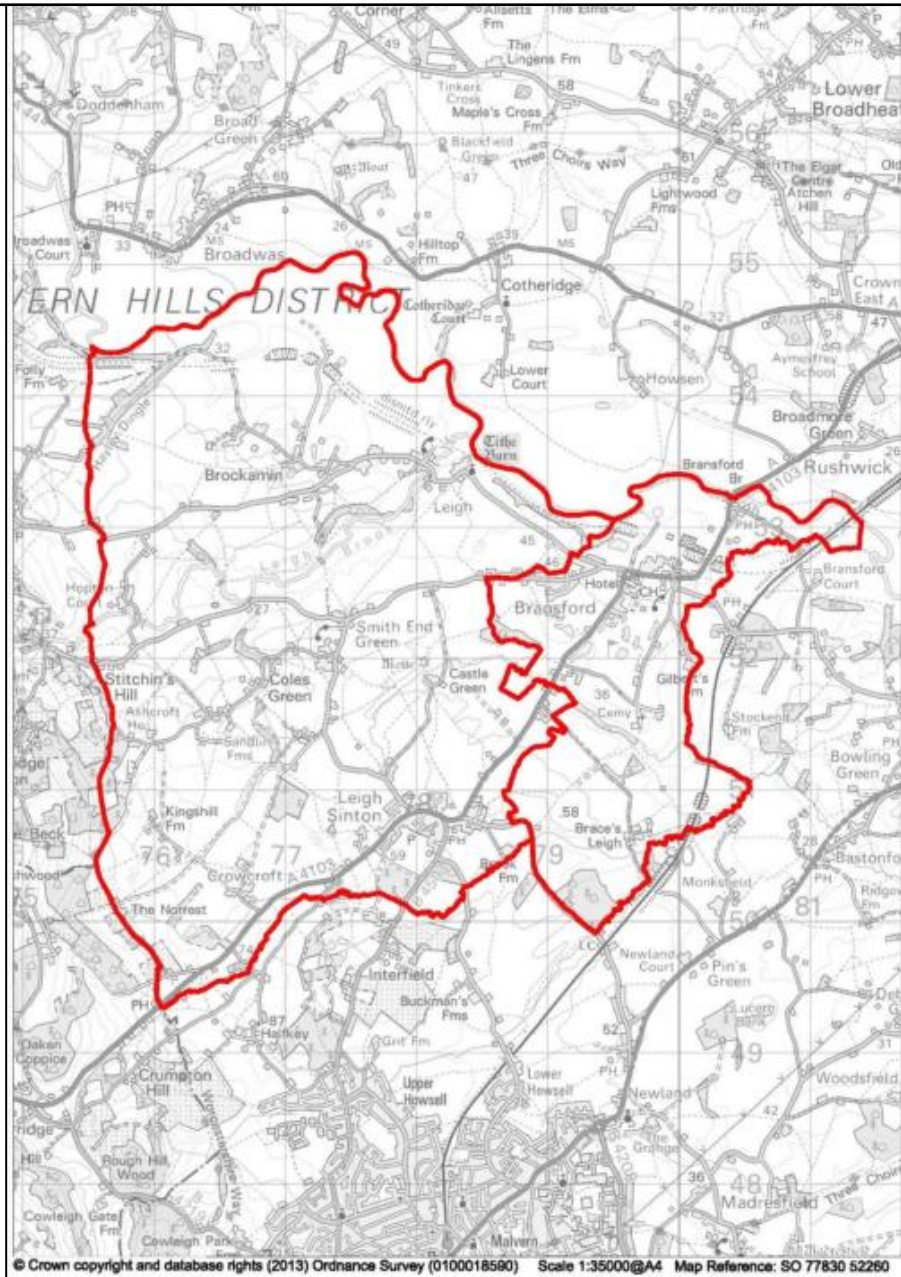
When deciding on whether the proposals are likely to have significant effects, the local authority is required to consult Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. Where the local planning authority determines that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and,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

1.2 DRAFT LEIGH AND BRANSFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUMMARY

The Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan is essentially a community-led framework for guiding future development and growth of the parishes to the year 2041. Thirty-six draft policies have been proposed, focusing on topics including Housing; Design; Landscape, Heritage and Biodiversity; Infrastructure and Energy; Tourism; and Amenity, Health and Well Being.

1.3 LEIGH AND BRANSFORD DESIGNATED NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

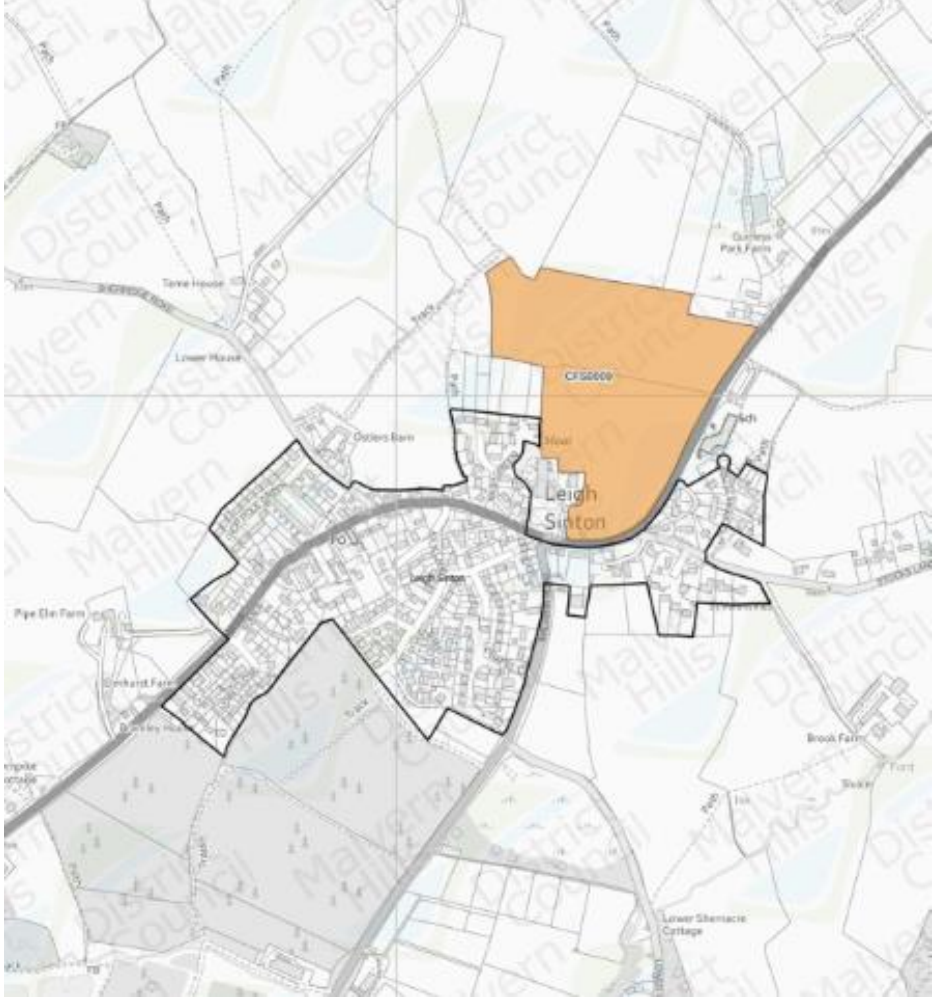
Figure 1 – Designated Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Area



1.4 DRAFT LEIGH AND BRANSFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICY SUMMARIES

Thirty-six policies are proposed in the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan (LBNP); they are detailed below.

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
<i>HOUSING</i>	
LB/H/1	Policy LB/H/1 supports new residential development within the Leigh Sinton Development Boundary providing the proposal does not lead to the loss of community or recreation facilities, or local employment opportunities, and it accords with other relevant policies of the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan and the South Worcestershire Development Plan.
LB/H/2	Policy LB/H/2 supports new residential development in the open countryside (outside any Development Boundary) providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. There is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside; or b. It is affordable housing on an exception site is required to meet an identified local need; or c. It is a replacement of an existing dwelling with established use rights and where the replacement dwelling does not exceed the original footprint by more than 30%; and d. It accords with other relevant policies of the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan and the South Worcestershire Development Plan.
LB/H/3	Policy LB/H/3 seeks to retain the Significant Gap between Malvern and Leigh Sinton in order to maintain the existing character of the area, including the views from and to the Malvern Hills (AONB), and to maintain the separation between Leigh Sinton and Malvern that protects their individual identities.
LB/H/4	Policy LB/H/4 allocates land off A4103, Leigh Sinton for approximately 50 dwellings, to meet the indicative housing requirement allocated by Malvern Hills District Council.

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	
DESIGN	
LB/D/1	<p>Policy LB/D/1 requires new development to enhance and reinforce the local distinctiveness of an area. Designs should respond to and integrate with local surroundings. The general scale, mass, and layout of the site, building, or extension should fit in with the “grain” of the surrounding area. New development should be of a scale, mass, and built form which responds to the characteristics of the site and its surroundings. Care must be taken to ensure that building height scale and form, including the roofline, does not obstruct the visual amenities of the street scene and impact on any significant wider views. Materials should be chosen to complement the development and add character to the surrounding environment.</p>
LB/D/2	<p>Policy LB/D/2 requires development proposals to provide evidence to show how the existing conditions and the locally distinctive character of the area have been assessed, and how any new development, including extensions, is in keeping with these features. Similarly, evidence must be presented to show how assessments of the surroundings have been</p>

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	translated into designs for new buildings individually (or by type in larger developments); assessments will include but not be restricted to: materials, roofline, set-back from road, and density.
LB/D/3	Policy LB/D/3 requires new infill development to be in keeping with the local character and in scale to surrounding properties. Neighbouring properties should not be adversely affected in privacy, outlook, or amenity.
LB/D/4	<p>Policy LB/D/4 requires new development to provide adequate in-curtilage parking spaces. Parking provision will comply with Worcestershire County Council's Streetscape Design Guide (Winter 2018). In addition:</p> <p>a. dwellings with four bedrooms or more require 4 spaces, and 2 cycle spaces; and</p> <p>b. off- road parking provision for visitors is required at one space for every five houses.</p>
LB/D/5	Policy LB/D/5 requires the design of all dwellings to incorporate sufficient private garden amenity space.
LB/D/6	Policy LB/D/6 requires the design of all buildings and dwellings from which refuse is collected to include consideration for adequate storage for recycling/ wheelie bins, particularly to minimise visual impact.
LB/D/7	Policy LB/D/7 requires that where larger dwellings are divided, or extended, for flats or institutional use, there must be provision for management of the maintenance and use of shared space gardens. Consideration should be given to the provision of adequate parking. In the case of institutions, sufficient staff parking must be provided in addition to resident parking.
LB/D/8	Policy LB/D/8 requires evidence to be provided to show that consideration has been given to the re-use of waste arising from the construction process. In particular, consideration should be given to topsoils and subsoils arising from the development process on site, for such purposes as landscaping, levelling of sites, the construction of bunds, embankments or features for noise attenuation. Such proposals will be considered against relevant Environment Agency advice and policies in the Waste Core Strategy.
LB/D/9	Policy LB/D/9 requires proposals to demonstrate how the routing of construction vehicles, deliveries, and parking for operatives and tradespeople will be managed.

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
<i>HERITAGE, LANDSCAPE AND BIODIVERSITY</i>	
LB/HLB/1	<p>Policy LB/HLB/1 requires development proposals to make a positive contribution to the character of the surroundings, and wider landscape by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. avoiding inappropriate development in gardens of existing houses; b. being guided by Conservation Area Appraisals in Conservation Areas; c. preserving significant views of the landscape; and d. enhancing the visual as well as the ecological value of ditches, streams, ponds and rivers.
LB/HLB/2	<p>Policy LB/HLB/2 advises that street lighting should not be adopted unless deemed necessary for safety or security. Where street lighting is required it should be sympathetic to the local area and designed to reduce light pollution, interference with nocturnal species, and to protect the “dark sky”.</p>
LB/HLB/3	<p>Policy LB/HLB/3 requires that, where appropriate, landscaping proposals in new development take account of the latest Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment and its guidelines in accordance with SWDP25. Developments should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. maintain and enhance hedgerows; b. conserve ancient woodland sites and plant new woodlands with locally occurring native species; and c. conserve and restore tree cover along ditches, streams, and rivers.
LB/HLB/4	<p>Policy LB/HLB/4 identifies two Local Green Spaces to be protected from development except for in exceptional circumstances.</p>
LB/HLB/5	<p>Policy LB/HLB/5 identifies three Protected Views which should be protected. Where development is proposed that would impact on these views an assessment must be carried out to ensure the combination of views to the distant landscape and skyline, and the immediate view and local character are not interrupted.</p>
LB/HLB/6	<p>Policy LB/HLB/6 requires the renovation or alteration of assets/ buildings identified on the Local Heritage List to be designed sensitively, and with careful regard to the heritage asset’s historical architectural interest and setting. Proposals requiring consent which affects an asset/ building on the Local Heritage List (following adoption by Malvern Hills District Council) must demonstrate how they protect or enhance the heritage asset. Where a proposal would result in harm to the significance of an</p>

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	asset on the Local Heritage List, the extent of harm and the significance of the asset should be balanced against the benefits of the proposal.
LB/HLB/7	Policy LB/HLB/7 requires proposals for development to include evidence indicating how the impact of proposed development upon existing individual buildings and monuments, the local landscape, and heritage have been assessed, and how the specific features identified in the assessment have influenced design and layout.
LB/HLB/8	Policy LB/HLB/8 requires development proposals in areas shown on maps in the Historic Environment Record (HER) for Leigh and Bransford Parish to take into account the known surface and subsurface archaeology and ensure known and potentially significant deposits are identified and appropriately considered during development. For all developments, the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record should be consulted at an early stage in the formulation of proposals. Worcestershire County Council Archive and Archaeology Service must be consulted at an early stage in the formation of proposal, and where evidence of archaeology is encountered.
LB/HLB/9	Policy LB/HLB/9 requires the redevelopment, alteration or extension of historic farmsteads and agricultural buildings within the Neighbourhood Area to be sensitive to their local distinctiveness and character, materials and form and take into account their contribution to the character of the landscape. Due reference and consideration should be made to the Worcestershire Farmstead Assessment Framework.
LB/HLB/10	<p>Policy LB/HLB/10 requires development proposals that impact on local wildlife and habitats to demonstrate how biodiversity will be protected and enhanced. Proposals should ensure that there is no net loss of biodiversity and a net gain wherever possible whether on site or within the local ecological network. Development proposals should provide evidence that the following have been considered, where they are appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. protect and enhancing/restoring features such as mature/ancient/veteran trees, traditional orchards, rivers, streams, ponds, existing areas of woodland, verges, and important and species-rich hedgerows and all features of high nature conservation of landscape value. b. provide habitat links, restoration and creation, and long term positive management for existing important habitats, in line with the South Worcestershire Development Plan and Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Framework. c. include proposals for re-naturalisation of watercourses, incorporation

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	<p>of ponds, woodland planting, and installation of roosting/nesting boxes for small birds, owls and bats. Priority should be given to on-site enhancement measures for particular opportunities for horseshoe bats, barn owls and dormice.</p> <p>d. maintain, and where possible, increase, priority species populations in line with the NERC Act Schedule 41 in relation to, “species of principle conservation importance” and the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - replanting boundaries with species rich hedgerows - using original tree, plants and seed materials when creating new semi-natural habitats. <p>e. After completion of the development a statement of conformity, confirming that any measures required have been properly carried out, shall be provided by a qualified and competent person. Monitor the effectiveness of biodiversity measures in relation to species and habitats: There will be an expectation that, wherever possible, results (including base data) should be supplied to Worcestershire Biological Record Centre for a period of 5 years.</p>
LB/HLB/11	<p>Policy LB/HLB/11 requires new development, where appropriate, to ensure the protection and enhancement of the green infrastructure assets and the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure networks as part of a master planning, landscaping and building design. These networks should contribute to the ecological enhancements, flood risk and water quality management, landscape and historic character of Leigh and Bransford. The proposal should demonstrate how these networks will be achieved, and maintained, in perpetuity.</p>
LB/HLB/12	<p>Policy LB/HLB/12 requires proposals for development to include evidence indicating how the local landscape, heritage, and biodiversity have been subject to an appropriate level of technical assessment, and how the specific features identified have influenced design and layout.</p>
RENEWABLE AND LOW CARBON ENERGY	
LB/RLCE/1	<p>Policy LB/RLCE/1 advises that any new developments within the Neighbourhood Area should be connected to mains gas utility services unless it can be demonstrated through consultation with providers that this would not be possible, practicable, or economically viable.</p>
LB/RLCE/2	<p>Policy LB/RLCE/2, in association with SWDP27, supports the development of renewable or low carbon energy schemes where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. its design and placement seeks to minimise impact on the visual

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	<p>amenity, character or appearance of the surrounding area; and</p> <p>b. its design and siting does not have an unacceptable effect on historical features and buildings, visually sensitive landscape or views.</p>
LB/RLCE/3	<p>Policy LB/RLCE/3 advises that where retro-fitting of insulation and energy efficient measures to historic buildings (designated and undesignated/ locally listed buildings) is proposed, advice should be sought to avoid harm to the special interest of the building through physical damage and loss of character.</p>
LB/RLCE/4	<p>Policy LB/RLCE/4 requires any new developments within the Neighbourhood Area to be connected to mains foul sewers unless it can be demonstrated through consultation with providers that this would not be possible, practicable, or economically viable.</p>
INFRASTRUCTURE	
LB/IFD/1	<p>Policy LB/IFD/1 requires all developments to:</p> <p>a. adopt the general principals of the CIRIA Report C753, “The SuDS Manual”;</p> <p>b. show that post development run-off will show a 20% reduction in surface water run-off compared with the pre-development situation.</p> <p>c. provide full test results from guidance in BRE Digest 365 “Soakaway Design” where any soakaway drainage/ infiltration are proposed.</p> <p>d. take opportunities for drainage (ditches, swales, balancing ponds etc) to enhance biodiversity and biodiversity corridors; and</p> <p>e. provide details of future maintenance requirements for solutions adopted.</p>
LB/IC/2	<p>Policy LB/IC/2 expects all new developments that generate additional need for broadband will be expected to include provision for full fibre gigabit capable network infrastructure Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) to enable broadband services for all occupiers from first occupation and with sufficient capacity to facilitate mid-haul / back-haul for wider applications to allow for a minimum of two superfast operators.</p> <p>Policy LB/IC/2 also expects all new developments that generate a need for additional electronic communications to consult with a minimum of two telecommunications providers to explore the need for other telecommunications technology including mobile (5G and future iterations), fixed wireless and Wi-Fi. If additional technology infrastructure is required, space should be made available within the</p>

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	development to provide any such infrastructure.
LB/IC/3	<p>Policy LB/IC/3 supports the improvement and development of new mobile telecommunication infrastructure provided that:</p> <p>a. its design and placement seeks to minimise impact on the visual amenity, character or appearance of the surrounding area; and</p> <p>b. Its design and siting does not have an unacceptable effect on historical features and buildings, visually sensitive landscape or views.</p>
LB/IMA/4	Policy LB/IMA/4 advises that proposals for development should consider provision for enhancing the opportunities for walking and cycling, particularly for local trips, and for access to public transport.
AMENITIES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING	
LB/AHWB/1	Policy LB/AHWB/1 identifies the Royal Oak Public House, Leigh Sinton as an important community amenity. Any proposal that would result in the loss of this community facilities will only be supported if the criteria set out in policy SWDP37 B are met.
LB/AHWB/2	<p>Policy LB/AHWB/2 supports development proposals which contribute to the health and wellbeing of local communities. Evidence must be provided to show how developments have been designed to meet the needs of all sectors of the community:</p> <p>a. provision of facilities that support public transport use or opportunities for active travel, enabling convenient, safe and attractive access to employment, homes, schools, and other facilities;</p> <p>b. provision of opportunities for fresh food growing; and</p> <p>c. provision of opportunities for outdoor social interaction including seating and shaded areas.</p>
LB/AHWB/3	<p>Policy LB/AHWB/3 requires Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) to accompany certain development proposals, to demonstrate how the above priorities (as appropriate) will be delivered and how any negative and cumulative impacts will be addressed. A HIA must be undertaken on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - residential development sites of 10 dwellings or more, or residential sites with an area of 0.5 ha or more. - non-residential developments for new or net additional floor space of 1,000 m² or more or non-residential development on sites or 1 ha of more.

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
	- any other proposals considered by the local planning authority to require a HIA.

1.5 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) PROCESS

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

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

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

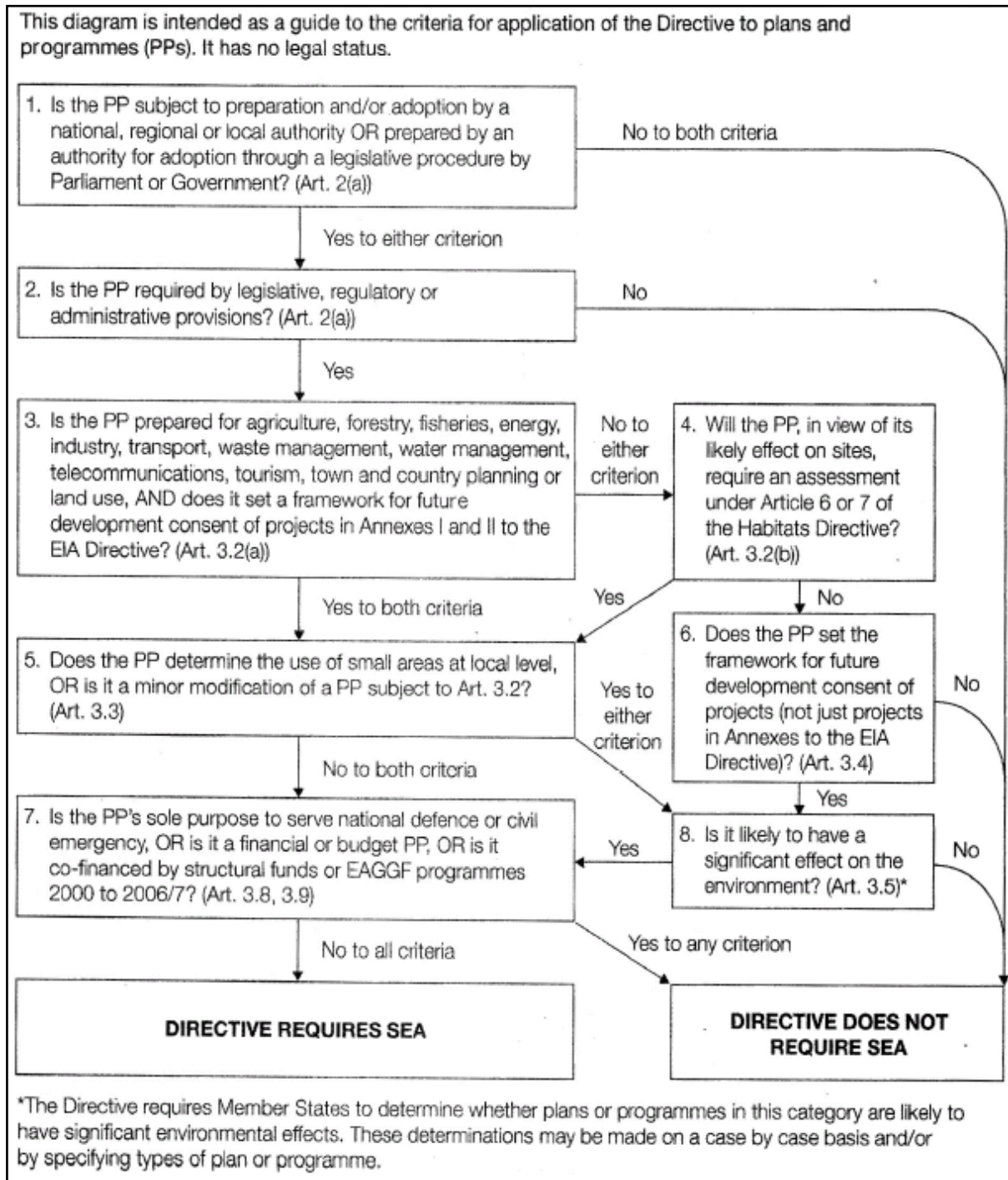


Figure 2 – Application of the SEA Directive to Plans and Programmes

Table 1: Assessment of the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan using SEA Directive Criteria

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Y	This is a Neighbourhood Plan that is being prepared by a qualifying body the Localism Act 2011. If the Plan is passed by means of an Examination and Referendum, it will be formally adopted by the Local Planning Authority. It will then form part of the local development framework and be afforded significant weight in planning decisions.
2. Is the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	N	Neighbourhood Plans are not mandatory requirements, and the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared voluntarily by the local qualifying body in line with the provisions of the Localism Act. If the Plan is adopted however it will form part of the statutory development plan, and it is therefore considered necessary to answer the following questions to determine if a SEA is required.
3. Is the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	Y	The Plan is prepared for town and country planning and sets out a framework for future development consent of projects, including the allocation of a specific area of land for development.
4. Will the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	N	See Screening Opinion for HRA in Section 3 of this report.
5. Does the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan determine the use of small areas at local level,	Y	The Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan is made up of a number of policies which, when adopted, will form part of the

OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)		Local Development Framework and so will have significant weight in planning decisions.
6. Does the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Y	When adopted, the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan will be a statutory planning document. It will form part of the Local Development Framework and so will have significant weight in planning decisions. The responsibility for issuing development consent will remain with the Local Authority.
7. Is the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan'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)	N	Not Applicable
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	Y	The Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan could potentially have a significant effect on the environment, mainly owing to the proposed housing allocation in Policy LB/H/4. To investigate the likelihood of potential impacts further a case-by-case assessment has been conducted, the full results of which can be found in Table 2.

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

1.6 HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT (HRA) PROCESS

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

In addition to SPAs and SACs, Ramsar sites are also designated areas which, as a matter of government policy, are to be treated in the same way as European wildlife sites (although

they are not covered by the Habitats Regulations). European wildlife sites and Ramsar sites are collectively known as internationally designated wildlife sites.

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

2. SEA SCREENING

2.1 SEA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

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

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

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

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)	Likely to have significant environmental effects?	Summary of significant events
1(a) the degree to which the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	YES	The Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan would, if adopted, form part of the statutory Development Plan and as such would contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects.
1(b) the degree to which the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	NO	Other than an additional housing allocation proposed in the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan, the policies are considered to be in general conformity with the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) , and will be used alongside this document and any subsequently adopted review of the SWDP, in the determination of planning applications when formally 'made' (adopted).
1(c) the relevance of the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a	NO	The policies of the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan are not considered to have a significant impact on the integration of

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

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)	Likely to have significant environmental effects?	Summary of significant events
Bransford Neighbourhood Plan;		Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan.
2(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	NO	The policies of the Neighbourhood Plan apply to the entirety of Leigh and Bransford parishes and are unlikely to significantly affect areas beyond the Neighbourhood Area boundary.
2(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use; and	NO	The draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan will not have any substantial impact on these factors.
2(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	NO	The policies of the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to have a negative impact on any environmental designations in the Neighbourhood Area.

2.2 SEA SCREENING OPINION

Table 2 assesses the likelihood of significant environmental effects arising from the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan in its current form.

In general, the policies and proposed allocation in the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan are in-line with the strategy of the adopted SWDP, which has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The policies of the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan seek to avoid or minimise environmental effects through the provision of guidance on issues which are specific to the neighbourhood area. It is therefore likely that the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan will have, both directly and indirectly, a positive environmental impact rather than

negative, by setting out guidance addressing how developers can minimise impacts on a number of environmental receptors.

The emerging plan does, however, identify a potential housing allocation for approximately 50 dwellings on land off the A4103 which is also currently a proposed allocation in the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (at Preferred Options stage). Whilst the proposed site was not featured in the adopted SWDP, and therefore does not form part of the SWDP SEA, it has been included in the Sustainability Appraisal work carried out for the SWDP Review, available at https://www.swdevelopmentplan.org/?page_id=14112. The SWDPR Sustainability Appraisal Preferred Options Report identifies no significant negative environmental impacts of the proposed site allocation against the SA Objectives, however the SWDPR has not yet been examined and therefore holds limited weight.

Pending the responses of the consultation and the formal views of the statutory environmental bodies, the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan may require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

3. HRA SCREENING

3.1 HRA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

There are no internationally designated wildlife sites within the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Area. For the purposes of this screening assessment, sites that fall within a 20km radius are also considered. There are two sites identified within this range – Lyppard Grange SAC and Bredon Hill SAC which are approximately 8.55km east and 19km south-east of the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Area respectively.

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

Bredon Hill SAC is an area of pasture woodland and ancient parkland situated approximately 4.5km south-west of Evesham. The site provides habitat for the Violet Click Beetle *Limoniscus Violaceus*, which develops in the decaying wood either of very large, old hollow beech trees (Windsor Forest) or ash trees (Worcestershire and Gloucestershire border sites). Currently the key site attributes which Natural England understands the species to require is related to the abundance and condition of the ancient trees on the designated site within which it develops.

The potential impact of development on these sites was examined by a full HRA as part of the production of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP). The HRA screening of the SWDP concluded that there was uncertainty with regard to the potential for significant effects on two sites as a result of increased disturbance, in particular due to increased recreational activity. Concerns were raised specifically relating to the Lyppard Grange SAC and the potential impact of proposed development on water levels and quality.

As a result of the concerns raised, a full Appropriate Assessment (AA) was conducted (this can be viewed on the SWDP website – www.swdevelopmentplan.org). The AA concluded that the policies of the SWDP (including land allocations) were not likely to have adverse effects on the integrity of Lyppard Grange SAC or Bredon Hill SAC. In addressing concerns relating to possible increased disturbance at the SACs, it was concluded that the location of the sites in relation to proposed developments and also the availability of more suitable areas of open space for recreation in close proximity would keep potential impacts to a minimum. It was also considered that the policies of the SWDP would sufficiently mitigate the potential impact of proposed developments on the water environment, leading to minimal effect on the SAC sites.

The policies in the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan are considered to be in general conformity with the SWDP, and although the draft Plan does propose an additional land allocation over and above that in the SWDP, the scale of such allocation is considered small enough not to have an impact on any internationally designated wildlife sites. With this

and the SWDP AA in mind, it is considered that the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan will have no negative impact on internationally designated wildlife sites.

3.2 HRA SCREENING OPINION

As a result of the above assessment, it is considered that the policies of the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan are in general conformity with those contained in the SWDP. Although the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan does deviate from the land allocations contained within the SWDP, the level of such allocation is considered small enough not to have an impact on internationally designated wildlife sites. It is therefore concluded that the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have a negative impact on any internationally designated wildlife sites and as such, the recommendation is made that a full AA is not required.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The preceding assessment exercises have examined whether the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan is likely to require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment or a Habitats Regulation Assessment Appropriate Assessment.

The SEA screening exercise featured in Section 2 concludes that the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan may require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken. This is because the Neighbourhood Plan proposes a land allocation for development, and whilst the land allocation is identical to that proposed in the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review and features in the SWDPR Sustainability Appraisal, the SWDPR has not yet reached examination and therefore holds limited weight.

The HRA screening exercise featured in Section 3 concludes that the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan does not require a full Habitats Regulation Assessment Appropriate Assessment to be undertaken. There are no internationally designated wildlife sites within the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Area, with Lyppard Grange SAC and Bredon Hill SAC falling within a 20km radius. The impact on these sites as a result of the land allocations contained within the SWDP has been assessed in the SWDP HRA AA, and although the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan does deviate, the level of such allocation is considered small enough to conclude that it is unlikely to have a negative impact on any internationally designated wildlife sites and as such, the recommendation is made that a full AA is not required.

Both of the above-mentioned recommendations were subject to consultation with the statutory environmental bodies (i.e. the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England); the five week consultation period ran from Wednesday 5 August until 5pm on Wednesday 9 September 2020.

With regard to the requirement for a full SEA, the Environment Agency and Natural England were in agreement that a full SEA was unlikely to be required, however Historic England were of the view that a full SEA may be required, advising as follows:

“Historic England concurs with your view that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment may be required.

That said, we do note that the draft plan proposes a series of excellent policies designed to protect both the historic and natural environments and in this respect has clearly benefitted from detailed advice from the Worcestershire Archaeology and Archives Service, such that the Plan evidence base is very well informed by reference to the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record. In addition, there is no indication that statutorily protected heritage assets will be adversely affected by the housing allocation proposed and we note that the allocation site has been subject to sustainability appraisal as part of work on the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP), albeit that document has yet to be formally adopted.

Therefore, from a national historic environment perspective Historic England does not consider that the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to result in significant environmental effects.

In this context we would be quite content for the local authority to reach its own conclusions on any requirement for SEA based on the evolving status of the SWDP, detailed local knowledge and advice from your own historic environment staff”.

Further to Historic England’s advice, input was sought from Malvern Hills District Council’s Senior Conservation Officer and Archaeology and Planning Advisor, with the following conclusions drawn:

“It is considered that the proposed housing allocation site, if developed, would not cause substantial harm to the heritage assets in the vicinity, though a lower level of less than substantial harm could result. Consequently, it is not considered that the proposal would require a Strategic Environmental Assessment”.

“In terms of archaeological potential, it is high around Leigh, lower in Bransford. I would suggest that the archaeological potential is such that we can review any and all applications in their own right rather than have an overriding archaeological requirement”.

On the basis of all of the advice available, it is determined that a full SEA is not required as part of the on-going development of the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan.

With regard to the requirement for a HRA AA, there was agreement that a HRA AA was not required.

All consultation responses and further advice received is provided at Appendix 1.

APPENDIX 1 – CONSULTATION RESPONSES AND FURTHER ADVICE RECEIVED

Date: 26 August 2020

Your ref: Leigh & Bransford SEA/HRA Screening



Reiss Sadler
Planning Officer (Policy)
Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils
Civic Centre
Queen Elizabeth Drive
Pershore
WR10 1PT



BY EMAIL ONLY

Reiss.Sadler@wychavon.gov.uk

Dear Mr Sadler,

Leigh and Bransford Draft Neighbourhood Plan - Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 4th 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

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

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that in terms of The Malvern Hills SSSI, the development plan proposals will not be in, adjacent to, or in close proximity so as to give rise to significant adverse effects.

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/HRA 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.

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 Council's conclusion of no likely significant effect upon the named European designated sites:

- [Lyppard Grange Ponds](#) Special Area of Conservation located approximately 8.55km away
- [Bredon Hill](#) Special Area of Conservation located approximately 19km 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.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Kirkham
Consultations Team

Mr Reiss Sadler
Wychavon District Council
Civic Centre
Queen Elizabeth House
Persnore
Worcestershire
WR10 1PT

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

8 September 2020

Dear Mr Sadler

LEIGH AND BRANSFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN- SEA AND HRA SCREENING

Thank you for your consultation and the invitation to comment on the SEA and HRA Screening Document for the above Neighbourhood Plan.

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

Our comments are based on the information supplied with the screening request. On the basis of the information supplied and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of the 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with your view that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment may be required.

That said, we do note that the draft plan proposes a series of excellent policies designed to protect both the historic and natural environments and in this respect has clearly benefitted from detailed advice from the Worcestershire Archaeology and Archives Service, such that the Plan evidence base is very well informed by reference to the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record. In addition, there is no indication that statutorily protected heritage assets will be adversely affected by the housing allocation proposed and we note that the allocation site has been subject to sustainability appraisal as part of work on the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP), albeit that document has yet to be formally adopted.

Therefore, from a national historic environment perspective Historic England does not consider that the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to result in significant environmental effects. In this context we would be quite content for the local authority to reach its own conclusions on any requirement for SEA based on the evolving status of the SWDP, detailed local knowledge and advice from your own historic environment staff.

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

The views of the other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for a SEA is made. If a decision is made to undertake a SEA, please note that Historic England has published guidance on Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Historic Environment that is relevant to both local and neighbourhood planning and available



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
HistoricEngland.org.uk





Historic England

at: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>

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

Yours sincerely,



Historic Places Advisor



cc:




HistoricEngland.org.uk



Malvern Hills District Council
Forward Planning
Civic Centre
Queen Elizabeth Drive
Persnore
WR10 1PT

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Your ref:

Date: 09 September 2020

F.A.O: Mr. Reiss Sadler

Dear Sir

LEIGH AND BRANSFORD DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT (SEA) AND HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT (HRA) SCREENING OPINION CONSULTATION.

Thank you for referring the above consultations, which were received on 4 August 2020. We would offer the following comments to assist your consideration at this time.

Strategic Environmental Assessment: The European Union directive 200142/EC requires a SEA to be undertaken for certain types of plans and programmes that would have 'significant' environmental effect(s). Furthermore paragraph: 046 in the Flood Risk and Coastal Change section of the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (Reference ID: 11-046-20150209) states "*a strategic environmental assessment may be required, for example, 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 is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan*".

Whilst, in consideration of the matters within our remit, the Neighbourhood Plan is considered unlikely to have significant environmental impacts we note that a full SEA may be required as the Plan deviates from land allocations made within the SWDP.

Habitats Regulation Assessment: *Article 6(3) of the European Habitats Directive (1992) requires that any plan (or project), which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site (also known as a "Natura 2000" site), but would be likely to have a significant effect on such a site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to an 'appropriate assessment' of its implications for the European site in view of the site's conservation objectives.*

Environment Agency
[REDACTED]

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

Cont/d..

To assist your Council's determination of the HRA Screening opinion, we advise that based on the Screening Report submitted, and in consideration of the matters within our remit, the Neighbourhood Plan is considered unlikely to have significant effects on the European designated sites.

Going Forwards: We sent your Council a copy of our Neighbourhood Plan pro-forma guidance for distribution to Parish Councils. The purpose of the guidance is to assist the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans, including an appropriate evidence base. This includes consideration of some of the relevant environmental issues that should be considered, including flood risk (from rivers and sea), water quality, water resources and includes latest Climate Change recommendations for flood risk. Since we produced this guidance we have updated our climate change allowances for planners. I have enclosed a copy to further assist.

For each proposed site allocation, we recommend completing the pro-forma to check the environmental constraints. This will help collect evidence, identify challenges, inform policy and assist delivery of sustainable solutions.

We note the proposed land allocated for development at Leigh Sinton (indicated of Map 2) appears to be located in Flood Zone 1, in accordance with our Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea). Regards to any additional housing allocations proposed within the draft Plan we would only make substantive further comments if the Plan was seeking to allocate sites for development in Flood Zones 3 and/or 2 (the latter being used as the 1% climate change extent). Furthermore, we do not offer detailed bespoke advice on policy but advise you ensure conformity with your Local Plan and refer to our guidance. This might assist with your consideration of a local environmental enhancements or improvement policies that may be necessary.

I trust that the above is of use to you at this time.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Anita Bolton
Planning Advisor

[Redacted signature block]

[Redacted]

From: Aidan Smyth
Sent: 22 September 2021 10:35
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: RE: Leigh and Bransford Draft Neighbourhood Plan - Requirement for a full SEA

Hi Reiss,

In terms of archaeological potential, it is high around Leigh, lower in Bransford. I would suggest that the archaeological potential is such that we can review any and all applications in their own right rather than have an overriding archaeological requirement.

I hope that helps.

Thanks,

Aidan.

Aidan Smyth
Archaeology And Planning Advisor

Wychavon and Malvern Hills District Councils

[Redacted]

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From: Reiss Sadler [Redacted]
Sent: 21 September 2021 16:02
To: Sarah Lowe [Redacted]; Aidan Smyth [Redacted]
[Redacted]
Subject: Leigh and Bransford Draft Neighbourhood Plan - Requirement for a full SEA

Colleagues,

At the request of the Parish Council as part of the on-going work on the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan, Malvern Hills District Council produced a SEA / HRA Screening Opinion on the draft Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan. This was subject to consultation with the three statutory

environmental bodies. All three agreed that there was no requirement for a HRA AA, and whilst the Environment Agency and Natural England agreed that a full SEA was not required, Historic England deferred to internal colleagues:

“Therefore, from a national historic environment perspective Historic England does not consider that the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to result in significant environmental effects. In this context we would be quite content for the local authority to reach its own conclusions on any requirement for SEA based on the evolving status of the SWDP, detailed local knowledge and advice from your own historic environment staff”

On that basis, are you able to advise from your own professional perspective whether you think that the Leigh and Bransford Neighbourhood Plan requires a full SEA or not, providing reasons for your conclusions.

Thanks in advance, if you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact David Clarke or I.

Regards,

Reiss

Reiss Sadler BSc (Hons), MA, MRTPI
Senior Planning Officer (Policy)
Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils
Civic Centre
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Persnore
WR10 1PT



LEIGH AND BRANSFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

SEA SCREENING OPINION

HERITAGE RESPONSE

BACKGROUND

The draft Neighbourhood Plan contains Policy LB/H/4 which relates to the allocation of land off A4103 to the east of Leigh Sinton for approximately 50 houses. This is intended to meet the indicative housing requirement allocated by MHDC.

Within the parishes of Leigh and Bransford there are a total of 45 listed buildings and 2 scheduled monuments.

IMPACT OF HOUSING ALLOCATION ON HERITAGE ASSETS

There are no listed buildings within the proposed site boundary. Therefore, development proposals within the site would not directly impact on any historic fabric.

In terms of indirect impact on heritage assets, the proposed housing site would be within the setting of two listed buildings: one to the south west of the site and the other to the south east with both being across the road from the site allocation.

The building to the south east consists of three dwellings, Iris Cottage, Jasmine Cottage and Peony Cottage. This building is grade II listed and dates from about 1700. It is a timber-framed building under a tiled roof with two end chimneys. The building faces the main road and the proposed site. Its setting, at the eastern edge of the village, currently has open agricultural fields to the front and an informal cluster of buildings to the sides and rear.

The proposed allocation would have the effect of closing off the remaining view of the heritage asset from open countryside by surrounding the grade II heritage asset with built form. This would clearly change the setting of the building and would be an indirect impact on the listed building. The open agricultural setting of the row of cottages is considered to contribute to a modest level to the significance of the heritage asset. Therefore, the housing site proposed would detrimentally impact the heritage asset though that harm is not considered to be substantial.

The listed building to the south west of the proposed allocated site dates from about 1600 but with earlier remains. It is a grade II listed dwelling now known as Ahimsa but formerly known as Malvern House Cottage. The position of the property has always been more central to the village of Leigh Sinton and has been less directly connected to open fields or agriculture.

The proposed allocation would remove the last element of openness in the setting of the heritage asset. It is considered however that openness within the setting does not contribute significantly to the historic significance of the asset. The potential loss of the remaining openness is not considered to be a substantial harm to the heritage asset.

CONCLUSION:

It is considered that the proposed housing allocation site if developed would not cause substantial harm to the heritage assets in the vicinity, though a lower level of less than substantial harm could

result. Consequently it is not considered that the proposal would require an Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Signed: **Sarah Lowe**, Senior Conservation Officer

Date: 17 December 2021