

Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Statement

January 2025

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This screening statement considers whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment and / or full Habitats Regulation Assessment is required to be produced to accompany the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 1.2 The screening concludes that a SEA is not required for the SPD. It also concludes that the SPD would not need to be subject to full Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations Assessment.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 East Hampshire District Council is preparing an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to expand upon the following policies of the Joint Core Strategy (2014) which relate to affordable housing provision:
 - Policy CP13 - Affordable housing on residential development adopted in 2014
 - Policy CP14 – Affordable Housing for Rural Communities
 - Policy CP11 Housing Tenure, Type and Mix, and
 - Policy CSWB4 Housing (applied to Whitehill & Bordon).
- 2.2 The policy text is available in the [Joint Core Strategy \(2014\)](#).
- 2.3 This SPD responds to the identified need for affordable housing and offers clarification on the provision of affordable housing in East Hampshire, to ensure that the appropriate provision is being made where and how it should, and that affordable housing delivery is maximised.
- 2.4 The SPD only applies to that part of the District that falls within East Hampshire Local Planning Authority area and does not include the South Downs National Park (SDNP).
- 2.5 The SPD focuses on clarifying the policies listed and does not identify or allocate specific sites for development. Upon adoption, the SPD will be a material consideration in planning determinations in the district (outside the SDNP).
- 2.6 The 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and associated Regulations made all local development documents subject to Sustainability Appraisal, which met the requirements of Strategic Environmental

Assessment (SEA) as defined by the EU Directive 2001/42/EC. The 2008 Planning Act removed the requirement for SPDs to be subject to Sustainability Appraisal and, as such, the Council does not propose to carry out a sustainability appraisal of the SPD.

- 2.7 The requirement for local planning authorities to carry out an SEA of relevant plans and programmes before adoption is set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 2.8 However, there are exceptions to this and, in most cases, SPDs do not require an SEA. This is acknowledged in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)¹, which sets out that, “*supplementary planning documents do not require a sustainability appraisal but may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been assessed during the preparation of the relevant strategic policies*”. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the local planning authority to assess whether the plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment and make these conclusions public.
- 2.9 In addition, Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (as transposed into UK law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (as amended) (“the Habitats Regulations 2017) requires an assessment of the implications of a plan, both individually and in combination with other plans or projects, on designated ‘National Sites Network’². If it is determined that a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on these protected sites, an Appropriate Assessment should be undertaken.
- 2.10 The Council has therefore prepared this Screening Statement to determine whether the proposed Affordable Housing SPD should be subject to an SEA and/or Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)/Appropriate Assessment.

3. Scope of the SPD under preparation

- 3.1 The paragraphs below summarise the purpose, scope and intended content of the Affordable Housing SPD under preparation which is the subject of this SEA/ HRA Screening Report.
- 3.2 It should be noted that the document will not contain any new policies, proposals, or site allocations.

¹ PPG Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal Paragraph: 008 Reference ID:11-008- 20140306

² Including Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites (which are treated as the **national sites network**)

Affordable Housing SPD

- 3.3 The purpose of the Affordable Housing SPD is to clarify Joint Core Strategy policies; CP13 - Affordable housing on residential development adopted in 2014, Policy CP14 – Affordable Housing for Rural Communities, Policy CP11 Housing Tenure, Type and Mix, and Policy CSWB4 Housing (applied to Whitehill & Bordon) in the East Hampshire Joint Core Strategy (2014).
- 3.4 East Hampshire is one of the most unaffordable areas to live in Hampshire, with current affordability ratios at 12.88, suggesting the average person needs in excess of 13-times their salary to afford an average priced home. The Council’s Housing and Employment Needs Assessment (HEDNA) estimates that about 600 affordable homes each year are needed district-wide to meet affordable housing needs. The HEDNA 2022 says, “the analysis identifies a notable need for affordable housing, and it is clear that provision of new affordable housing is an important and pressing issue across the District.”
- 3.5 This SPD responds to that identified need and offers clarification on the provision of affordable housing in East Hampshire, to ensure that the appropriate provision is being made where and how it should, and that affordable housing delivery is maximised. This is key - as the HEDNA 2022 says, “the evidence does however suggest that affordable housing delivery should be maximised where opportunities arise”, which is supported by Policy CP11 which seeks to “maximise the delivery of affordable housing;”.
- 3.6 Further, Joint Core Strategy CP13 refers to the preparation of an SPD, saying “The general criteria for determining the size and type of affordable homes will be set out in SPD for particular locations. This would allow for the flexibility needed. The Council will set out the size and type of affordable housing likely to be needed on specific sites through the Local Plan: Allocations or a development brief SPD. This would allow the use of the most up to date information.”
- 3.7 The SPD clarifies the thresholds at which affordable housing provision is required, and sets out how commuted sums (financial contributions) are calculated if provision cannot be made on site, or the % contribution results in the requirement for a proportion of an affordable home. It also clarifies the Council’s priorities in terms of the type and size of affordable housing to be delivered, and which developments qualify for provision (for example referencing self build, older persons accommodation etc).

4. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- 4.1 As discussed in the Introduction above, an SEA is required for certain categories of plans and programmes where they are determined to be likely to have significant environmental impacts.
- 4.2 Regarding SPDs, the PPG indicates that an SEA will normally only be required in exceptional circumstances. The Council must therefore determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether an SEA is required for the SPD being prepared. This is referred to as a screening process.
- 4.3 As part of this, the Council must first determine whether the SPD is a “plan or programme” covered by Article 3(3) and 3(4). If it determines that it is, then the Council must carry out a screening to establish whether an SEA is required. This will depend on its potential to result in significant environmental effects.
- 4.4 In deciding whether significant environmental effects are likely, the Council must take into account the criteria in Schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, and to consult the specified Consultation Bodies.
- 4.5 The Council’s assessments of the SPD against Schedule 1 criteria are set out in **Table 1** below.
- 4.6 This Screening Report covers:
 - a. An assessment of whether the SPD is covered by Article 3(3) and Article 3(4)
 - b. An appraisal of the SPD takes account of the criteria in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004
- 4.7 The three consultation bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency, and Natural England) were consulted. Responses were received from all three consultation bodies. Their responses are attached within Appendix 1.

Table 1 Screening Assessment for Affordable Housing SPD

The SPD is considered to be a plan or programme covered by Articles 3(3) and 3(4) SCHEDULE 1 – Regulations 9(2)(a) and 10(4)(a)

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

SEA Directive Criteria	Response
1. The Characteristics of Plans and Programmes having regard to:	
1a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	<p>The SPD will provide additional guidance on existing policies (CP11, CP13, CP14, CSWB4) of the adopted Joint Core Strategy (JCS) that was subject to SEA (concluding no significant effects expected). The SPD provides clarification on the criteria expressed and thresholds.</p> <p>The SPD does not identify or allocate sites for development.</p>
1b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	<p>The JCS provides the adopted policy to which the SPD will supplement, the purpose of the SPD is to expand and provide more guidance on existing policies (CP11, CP13, CP14, CSWB4).</p> <p>The SPD does not introduce new policy.</p> <p>The SPD will be at the bottom of the hierarchy and will have no influence on the documents above it.</p>

<p>1c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>	<p>The SPD will contribute to sustainable development by providing more detail and guidance to support the implementation of affordable housing.</p> <p>The SPD particularly expands upon CP13 Affordable Housing on Residential Sites, where the policy references negotiations on a site by site basis for specific aspects of provision, the SPD provides clarification on what is likely to be the Council's priority and preference.</p>
<p>1d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.</p>	<p>The SPD supplements adopted planning policy and should not be considered in isolation from other adopted policies and SPD's.</p>
<p>1e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g., plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).</p>	<p>The SPD will help support the implementation of the JCS which in itself is contributing or responding to EU based legislation.</p>

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected:

2a) The probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects.	<p>The SPD supports the delivery of affordable housing through policies (CP11, CP13, CP14, CSWB4) within the JCS which has already been subject to SA/SEA.</p> <p>The SPD provides clarification to assist with the delivery of affordable housing, to help ensure the affordable housing that comes forwards best meets needs.</p>
2b) The cumulative nature of the effects.	<p>The SPD helps advise developers what the Council's priorities and preferences are in terms of new affordable housing. It does not change thresholds or require 'more' to be provided. As such, there are not considered to be 'cumulative' effects.</p>
2c) The trans boundary nature of the effects.	<p>The SPD will be local to East Hampshire district outside of SDNP.</p> <p>Any development sites that cross boundaries would have consideration to this and relevant policy from the adjoining planning authority.</p>
2d) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g., due to accidents).	<p>The SPD does not present any risks to human health or the environment.</p>

<p>2e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).</p>	<p>The SPD will be applied to all relevant planning applications in the district (outside of the SDNP). The effects of the SPD are more likely to be felt at a more local scale (i.e., by populations in and around the development sites to which the SPD is applied).</p>
<p>2f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage. ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values. iii) intensive land-use. 	<p>The SPD will apply to the whole of the East Hampshire District (outside of the SDNP) but it does not override other adopted policies protecting designated landscapes or areas identified for their environmental or heritage characteristics.</p>
<p>2g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.</p>	<p>In applying to the district of East Hampshire, the SPD potentially covers and may be applied to, areas protected for their special natural – environmental characteristics and various Conservation Areas. Any planning applications for development under the SPD will be required to satisfy the relevant policies for protection of the character of the area before permission is granted.</p>

Conclusions in respect of Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 4.8 The SPD will supplement and support the delivery of existing policies in the adopted Joint Core Strategy which was subject to SEA and SA. The SPD will not introduce new policies or proposals.
- 4.9 Having assessed the SPD being prepared against the relevant criteria and considerations in Schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as set out in above), the Council concludes that the Affordable Housing SPD will not give rise to significant environmental effects. **Strategic Environmental Assessment is therefore not required for the Affordable Housing SPD.**
- 4.10 This conclusion has been agreed with Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency and their responses are included in Appendix 1.

5. Habitat Regulation Assessment Screening

- 5.1 The European Directive (92/43/EEC) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna (the 'Habitats Directive') as transposed into UK law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (as amended) ("the Habitats Regulations 2017 sets out the means to protect habitats and species of European importance through the establishment and conservation of a network of sites known as the 'National Sites Network'. These include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). It is also Government policy for sites designated under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) to be treated as having equivalent status to National Sites Network. These are sites of exceptional importance in respect of rare, endangered, or vulnerable natural habitats and species within the European Community. In this report SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites will be collectively referred to as National Sites Network.
- 5.2 The purpose of an HRA is to assess the implications of a plan, both individually, and in-combination with other plans or projects, on these National Sites Network. The Habitats Directive applies the precautionary principle to National Sites Network. In normal circumstances, a land use plan can be brought into effect only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the National Sites Network site either alone or in- combination with other plans.
- 5.3 The first stage in the process is to establish, via screening, whether the plan is either directly connected with, or necessary to, the management of a European site. If not, a determination needs to be made as to whether the plan in itself or in combination with others is likely to have a significant effect on a European site. The Joint Core Strategy was subject to screening during 2007 in order to confirm that an Appropriate Assessment would be required, since significant effects on European sites could not be described as 'unlikely'.
- 5.4 The HRA of the pre-submission JCS assessed each policy in turn, and asked whether significant effects can be dismissed as unlikely without further consideration? Although with different policy references at the time to the adopted JCS, the response for policies CP11, CP13 and CP14 was yes – significant effects can be dismissed as unlikely without further consideration. The response for CSWB4, was no, as this policy sets the quantum of new housing for Whitehill & Bordon. However, the aspect of the policy with which this SPD relates is the % of affordable housing, rather than an amount of housing.
- 5.5 The [HRA](#) was then updated in July 2013, to reflect revised housing numbers being expressed in the JCS through Policy CP10 (and as such the quantum of affordable housing). The revised requirement was 10,060 dwellings to be delivered between 2011 and 2028 and included completions and 'commitment' sites (i.e. those which already have planning permission). The actual quantity of 'new' (i.e. uncommitted) housing included 2,725 dwellings as part of the Whitehill & Bordon strategic allocation and

3,200 elsewhere in East Hampshire. Part of the HRA is to assess in-combination impacts and in that respect various plans and strategies from neighbouring local authorities were included in the assessment. The 'in combination assessment' is often considered of greatest importance when the plan would otherwise be screened out because the individual contribution is inconsequential.

5.6 The 2013 HRA expressed in some detail the various ways in which land use plans can impact on European sites by following the pathways along which development can be connected with such sites, in some cases many kilometres away. Briefly defined, pathways are routes by which a change in activity associated with a development can lead to an effect upon a European site. The following indirect pathways of impact were considered relevant to the Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Joint Core Strategy:

- Urbanisation/urban edge impacts
- Recreational pressure
- Atmospheric pollution
- Water resources
Water quality

The HRA then assessed the JCS against each of the key sites and summarised the findings as :

European Site	HRA conclusion
Shortheath Common SAC	It is possible to conclude that significant effects on Shortheath Common SAC as a result of Joint Core Strategy development are inherently unlikely, other than recreational and air quality effects arising from Whitehill & Bordon and these will be rendered unlikely through the implementation of the recommendations generated by the Whitehill & Bordon HRA.
Wealden Heaths Phase 2 SPA and Woolmer Forest SAC	It has been possible to determine that significant urbanisation, air quality and water resource effects are unlikely to occur as a result of Joint Core Strategy development and that following the introduction of a policy to address the recreational pressure impacts of Whitehill & Bordon (responsible for 95% of all currently uncommitted

	housing within 5km of the SPA) the residual increase in recreational activity due to the small amount of development elsewhere in central Hampshire is unlikely to lead to significant effects and thus will not require further strategic mitigation.
Butser Hill SAC	It has been possible to determine that significant recreational pressure or air quality effects are unlikely to occur as a result of Joint Core Strategy development.
Thursley, Hankley & Frensham Commons (Wealden Heaths Phase 1) SPA, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC and Thursley & Ockley Bogs Ramsar site	It has been possible to determine that significant water resource, air quality and recreational pressure effects are unlikely to occur as a result of Joint Core Strategy development.
Solent European Sites	It has been possible to determine that significant water quality, water resource and air quality effects are unlikely to occur as a result of Joint Core Strategy development and that the Council's ongoing commitment to the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation project will enable adequate strategic mitigation to be delivered for recreational pressure.
Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC	It is possible to conclude significant effects of the Joint Core Strategy on Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC are unlikely to occur.
River Itchen SAC	It is possible to conclude that significant effects of the Joint Core Strategy on the interest features of the River Itchen SAC are unlikely to occur.

Conclusions in respect of Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening

- 5.7 Previous HRAs concluded that there were no likely significant effects on European sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, as a result of the policies within the JCS which the Affordable Housing SPD has been prepared to supplement.
- 5.8 Given the proposed SPD simply expands upon the criteria expressed in existing policies (CP11, CP13, CP14, CSWB4) and will not introduce new or amended planning policy, it is concluded that the SPD will not give rise to likely significant effects on any European sites. **It is therefore concluded that a full Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations is not required for this SPD.**
- 5.9 This conclusion has been agreed with Natural England and its response is included in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: Responses received

Consultation Body	Comments
Environment Agency	<p>We do not consider there to be any significant environmental impacts associated with this SPD, and therefore we agree that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will not be required.</p> <p>Natural England will be able to comment on the conclusion regarding the need for Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations Assessment.</p>
Historic England	<p>In terms of our area of interest, given the nature of the SPD, we concur with your assessment that the document is unlikely to result in any significant environmental effects and will simply provide additional guidance on existing policies within an adopted Development Plan Document which has already been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal / SEA. So, we endorse the Council's conclusions that it is not necessary to undertake a SEA of this particular SPD.</p> <p>The views of the other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for an SEA is made.</p>
Natural England	<p>Strategic Environmental Assessment</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Natural England does not have specific comments on the SEA HRA screening report for your Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document for East Hampshire District Council. We agree with the LPA's opinion that that a full Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations is not required for this SPD.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>

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.