

Whitnash Neighbourhood Plan

**Strategic Environmental Assessment
Screening Opinion**

October 2014

**Whitnash Neighbourhood Plan
Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report**

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Whitnash Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

1. Introduction

1.1 This screening report is designed to determine whether or not the content of the Whitnash 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.

1.2 The purpose of the Whitnash Neighbourhood Plan is to provide locally derived and agreed guidance which will help inform planning decisions and shape the future of the town of Whitnash and other land and property interests within the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

1.3 The legislative background set out below outlines the regulations that stipulate the need for this screening exercise. Section 3, provides a screening assessment of the Whitnash Neighbourhood Plan which will be used to determine if there are likely to be any significant environmental effects and a requirement for a full SEA.

2. Legislative Background

2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations.

2.2 Sustainability appraisal of the type that is required for development plan documents is not required for neighbourhood development plans. This is because they are not 'Local Plans', or development plan documents as defined by the 2004 Planning Act. Neighbourhood development plans have their own designation: they are neighbourhood development plans produced by qualifying bodies under the Localism Act. Even when a neighbourhood development plan is made by a local authority following a successful referendum, and it becomes part of the development plan it does not change its designation into a development plan document (this does not mean it has any less status in terms of decision making though).

2.3 .Whether a neighbourhood plan requires a strategic environmental assessment, and (if so) the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed in the draft neighbourhood plan. A strategic environmental assessment may be required, for example where:

- a 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

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- 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 for the area.

3.1 When deciding on whether the proposals are likely to have significant effects, the local authority is required to consult English Heritage, 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.

3. Assessment

Neighbourhood Plan Screening Table/ Report

A: Summary of Plan

Details of Neighbourhood Plan	
Name of Neighbourhood Plan	Whitnash Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan 2014-2029
Geographic Coverage of Plan	The town of Whitnash and outlying area
Key issues / scope of plan	<p>The Whitnash Neighbourhood Plan has a vision for Whitnash: “In 2029 Whitnash will have a strong, local identity of a sustainable, thriving town which serves its local residents and businesses well, and continues to have close family and community support. Community facilities will be enhanced, green spaces and historical links maintained and a realistic number and mix of housing built in and around Whitnash will meet the needs of all ages and groups in the town”.</p> <p>The Plan intends to:</p> <p>Provide a New Community Hub: With the proposed new development in the Local Plan, Whitnash is likely to increase its population further but lacks a main focus/hub for local facilities. There is a need to bring the various facilities together to provide a focus for the town which meets the needs and aspirations</p>

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	<p>of all.</p> <p>Protect Existing Local Facilities: Existing facilities may be considered for improvement as part of proposed feasibility work around the need to provide a new community hub. Local health facilities will be put under increasing pressure from the increased population associated with the proposed new development and continued investment in these facilities is a priority.</p> <p>Preserve Whitnash’s Individual Identity: Whitnash has a local identity as a town, separate from Leamington Spa. The proposed areas of new housing development on the periphery of the town may dilute this sense of identity. A “green margin” of open space is proposed around the town to protect it from coalescence with other suburbs, and to strengthen boundary markings and signs using the town’s logo.</p> <p>Protect the Historic Environment: Whitnash Conservation Area covers two areas at Church Green and Chapel Green and includes several 17th Century black and white half-timbered houses. There are also a number of Statutory Listed Buildings in Whitnash. These and other significant buildings must continue to be protected/enhanced.</p> <p>Protect and Enhance the Natural Environment: There may be opportunities to enhance the Brook Valley Nature Reserve and create a ‘Whitnash Wood’ on land linking the golf course to the southern boundary of Whitnash.</p> <p>Protect Local Green Spaces: Green spaces are proposed to be protected and any further development in or around Whitnash include significant areas of green spaces and woodland. Any additions to the sports facilities along Harbury Lane should be carefully planned so as not to impact adversely on any future developments.</p> <p>Promote Walking and Cycling: Support for the work of “Sustrans”. The Neighbourhood Plan should support initiatives which encourage walking and cycling as part of an overall aim to make the town more</p>
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	<p>sustainable and to encourage a healthier environment for local people.</p> <p>Improve Infrastructure: Promoting Public Transport and Supporting Better Parking: Keen to promote improvements in local bus services and routes to serve proposed and existing residential areas and to link them to local facilities and those in nearby Leamington Spa. There may also be opportunities to promote the development of a new station facility on the Coventry / Oxford / London rail line over the longer term, with links to local bus routes, cycle paths and park and ride. New developments should provide adequate off street parking and include roads wide enough to allow on street parking which does not impact on safety and accessibility. Need to ensure that new developments provide adequate provision to meet education needs of new residents.</p> <p>Implement a Green Energy Strategy: Whitnash will become a more sustainable town where the use of low carbon energy and energy efficiency are promoted. New developments should be encouraged to incorporate low and renewable energy technologies.</p> <p>Provide a Suitable Housing Mix for Existing and Future Residents: There is a need for a greater mix of housing. More bungalows, starter homes, maisonettes and apartments are needed in the area</p> <p>Increase Local Employment Opportunities: Improve local employment opportunities to ensure that Whitnash does not become a “dormitory town” and make for a more sustainable settlement. Supports small /medium scale employment provision and promotes the inclusion of office space as part of the proposed new Community Hub.</p> <p>Reduce Flood Risk: Protect areas from development where flooding is an issue and promote development that is flood resilient and flood resistant wherever possible.</p>
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Date Screening opinion requested	August 2014
Person requesting screening opinion	Jenny Mason – Whitnash Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

B: Local Authority Details

Local Authority Details	Warwick District Council
Name and Job Title of officer producing Screening Opinion	Lorna Coldicott (Senior Planning Officer)
Date of Assessment	7 th October 2014
Conclusion of assessment - Is an SEA required Y / N	No
Reason for conclusion	<p>The characteristics of the Whitnash NDP and their likelihood for causing significant effects on the environment have been assessed. It is considered that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the scale and location of development allocations proposed in the Whitnash Neighbourhood Development Plan it is considered unlikely that there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Whitnash Neighbourhood Plan that were not given detailed consideration in the Sustainability Appraisal of the Warwick District Local Plan – Publication Draft April 2014. • The plan sets a framework for the consideration of a range of matters at the local level that due to their size, nature and location will not cause rise to significant environmental effects. • It is considered unlikely that the

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	<p>considerations set out within the Whitnash NDP will have such an influence on other plans and programmes so as to prejudice their sustainability/ cause significant environmental effects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Whitnash NDP ensures that any matters pertaining to the natural and historic environment are carefully managed / considered in future decisions. • Whilst identifying perceived local problems (such as traffic), it is not considered that these matters will cause any significant harm to the environment. • It is not considered that issues to be addressed by the plan will have any transboundary environmental effects of a significant nature. • The Whitnash NDP will help inform / shape planning decisions to ensure that there are no significant effects (individually or cumulatively) on the recognised special characteristics of the Whitnash conservation area and its buildings of historic value. • There are no proposals which would cause harm to the Brook Valley Nature Reserve • To conclude / summarise. <p>It is the opinion of this screening opinion/ report that the Whitnash Neighbourhood Plan does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.</p>
Name and Job Title of officer approving Screening Opinion	David Barber – Development Policy Manager
Date of approval	13.10.14

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C: Summary of Consultation

Internal Consultation	
Officer (name and job title)	Summary of Comments
External Consultation	
Officer (name and job title)	Summary of Comments

D: Assessment

Stage	Y / N	Reason
1. Is the plan or programme subject to preparation / 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 (Whitnash Town Council) under the Localism Act 2011. Once independently assessed and subjected to a referendum, it will need to be formally adopted by the Local Planning Authority to be brought into force. When adopted, Neighbourhood Plans are statutory planning documents. They will form part of the Local Development Framework and so will have significant weight in planning decisions.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	N	The neighbourhood plan is not a mandatory requirement; it is being prepared voluntarily at the discretion / choice of the local qualifying body (The Town Council) in line with the provisions of the Localism Act.

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<p>3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The plan is prepared for land use. Proposed use: Annex I- Not applicable (as no significant effects identified) Annex II- See sections 4 and 8 (below) The Plan will inform the determination of planning applications (a form of development consent)</p>
<p>4. Will the PP, 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))</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>In view of Whitnash NP's minimal environmental effects, and general conformity with the Local Plan the HRA screening report (May 2013) prepared for the Warwick District Council Local Plan - Publication Draft) is considered relevant. Therefore Whitnash NP does not require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive.</p>
<p>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)</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan proposes the provision and expansion of existing facilities to provide a new community hub at the local level.</p>
<p>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)</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>When adopted, Neighbourhood Plans will be statutory planning documents. They 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.</p>
<p>7. Is the PP's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan must be prepared in conformity with the Local Plan. The development of the Local Plan is subject to a detailed SA which is considered compliant with</p>

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	<p>European Directive 2001/42/EC the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. A Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) of the Local Plan has also been produced and reported on separately that is also considered relevant in the assessment of the environmental effects of the Whitnash Neighbourhood Development Plan. It is unlikely that the Whitnash NDP will have a significant effect on important Habitat / Biodiversity assets.</p>
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4 Screening Outcome

4.1 As a result of the screening assessment in section 3, it is considered unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Whitnash Neighbourhood Plan that were not covered/ addressed in the Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan. As such, it is considered that the Whitnash Neighbourhood Development Plan does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.