

**Strategic Environmental
Assessment and Habitats
Regulations Assessment for the
Alcester Neighbourhood
Development Plan (December
2025 Pre-Submission Consultation
Version)**

**SEA and HRA Screening Document
prepared by Stratford on Avon District
Council**

March 2026

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This screening report has been prepared to determine whether the Alcester Neighbourhood Development Plan 2025 – 2035 (NDP) should be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations).
- 1.2 This report screens the December 2025 Pre-Submission Consultation Version of the Alcester Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 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 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.
- 1.4 Section 4 of this report considers the need for Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). HRA considers the potential adverse impacts of plans and projects on designated Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), classified Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and listed Ramsar sites.
- 1.5 Conclusions on the screening outcomes are presented in Section 5 of this document.

2. Legislative Background

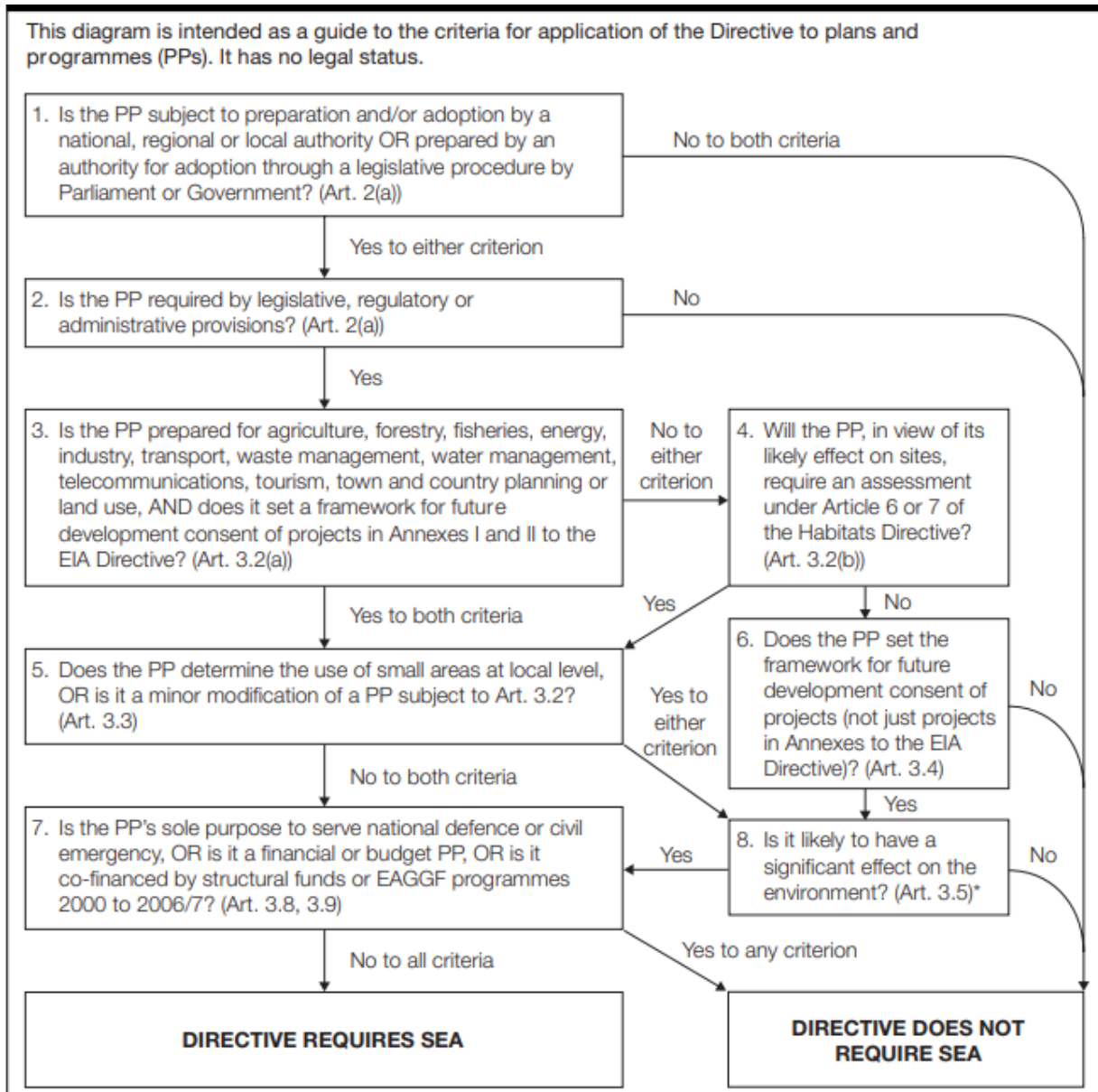
- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations.
- 2.2 Whether a Neighbourhood Plan requires 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 which may have environmental impacts.
 - 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 a Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan for the area.
- 2.3 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 authority determines that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require a SEA) it should prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.
- 2.4 Screening for HRA is required by the Conservation of Habitats and Species

Regulations 2017.

3. Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

3.1 Figure 3.1 presents a diagram taken from [A Practical Guide](#) to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2005). This shows the application of the SEA process to plans and programmes. The sequential approach in the flow diagram can be used to screen the Alcester NDP.

Figure 3.1 Application of SEA to Plans and Programmes



a) Table 3.1 uses the questions in Figure 3.1 to establish whether there is a need for SEA of the Alcester NDP.

Table 3.1 Establishing Whether there is a need for SEA

Stage	Y/N	Reason
Is the PP (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 an NDP (Neighbourhood Development Plan) that is being prepared by a qualifying body (Alcester 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, NDPs are statutory planning documents. They will form part of the Local Development Framework and have significant weight in planning decisions.
Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	N	The preparation of an NDP is not a mandatory requirement; it is being prepared voluntarily at the discretion of the local qualifying body (The Town Council) in line with the provisions of the Localism Act.
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))	N	The NDP is a land-use plan and sets the framework for future development consents within the Alcester Neighbourhood Area. However, the NDP is unlikely to set a framework for consent of projects in Annex 1 of the EIA Directive.
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))	N	Refer to Chapter 4
Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Y	A Neighbourhood Plan can set out detailed, localised policies to reflect local aspirations, concerns or issues. The Neighbourhood Plan can also determine the use of sites in its neighbourhood plan area by making site specific land use allocations. The Alcester Neighbourhood Plan does not identify any new allocations beyond what is already included in the adopted Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy 2011 - 2031.

Stage	Y/N	Reason
Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Y	The NDP does set the framework for future development consent of projects. When adopted, NDPs are statutory planning documents and form part of the Local Development Framework. The responsibility for issuing development consent will remain with the Local Planning Authority.
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)	N	N/A
Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	No specific development is proposed through the NDP, and no land is allocated for development. It can therefore be considered that the plan would not have a significant effect. The HRA screening exercise carried out in Chapter 4 of this report indicates that significant impact on any nearby Natura 2000 sites is unlikely.

4. HRA Screening Process

4.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment screening

4.1.1 HRA screening is a requirement of the [Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#).

4.1.2 HRA considers the potential adverse impacts of plans and projects on designated Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), classified Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and listed Ramsar sites. This is in accordance with the Habitats Directive¹ and the Birds Directive². SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

4.1.3 Should a development, plan or project be considered likely to have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 site, the HRA proceeds to an appropriate assessment. If likely significant effects cannot be avoided, mitigated or compensated to the extent that the conservation status of the EU site will not be undermined, the HRA proceeds to Imperative Reasons of Overriding Interest (IROPI).

¹ EU Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora

² EU Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of wild birds

4.2 Determination of likely significant effects

- 4.2.1 The nearest Natura 2000 sites to Alcester Parish are Bredon Hill SAC, located approximately 17.5km south west and Lyppard Grange Ponds SAC which is located approximately 18km west. Due to this distance and the nature of the policies contained within the NDP there is unlikely to be any impact on the SAC. Based on the available information, a significant impact of the NDP on any Natura 2000 site can therefore be objectively ruled out at this stage.

5. Conclusions

5.1 SEA Screening outcome

- 5.1.1 This screening report has explored the potential effects of the proposed Alcester NDP with a view to determining whether an environmental assessment is required under the SEA Directive.
- 5.1.2 As a result of the screening assessment in section 3, it is considered unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Alcester Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.1.3 It is concluded that the Alcester Neighbourhood Plan does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.

5.2 HRA Screening outcome

- 5.2.1 This screening report has explored the potential effects of the proposed Alcester NDP with a view to determining whether a habitats regulations assessment is required.
- 5.2.2 It is recommended that the Alcester NDP should not be screened into the HRA process.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 This screening report was sent to Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England on 15 December 2025 for a five week consultation period, ending on 19 January 2026.
- 6.2 The responses from Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England concluded that, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, a SEA or HRA is not required.
- 6.3 Full consultation responses have been presented in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: Consultation Responses

Date: 18 March 2026
Our ref: 536304
Your ref: Alcester NDP



Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Policy Team

Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Policy Team

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report for the Alcester Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 15 December 2025 which was received by Natural England on the same day. We apologise for the late response on this matter.

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

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:

- **significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,**
- **significant effects on Habitats sites¹, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.**

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the [Planning Practice Guidance](#). This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

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

¹ Habitats sites are those referred to in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (Annex 2 - glossary) as "any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites".

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's [standing advice](#) on protected species.

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission [standing advice](#).

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to

Yours faithfully

Sustainable Development
West Midlands Area Team

Stratford On Avon District Council
Planning Policy
Elizabeth House Church Street
Stratford-upon-Avon
Warwickshire
CV37 6HX

Our ref: SV/2023/111849/SE-
01/SC1-L01

Your ref:

Date: 17 December 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

Alcester Neighbourhood Plan – Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion consultation

Thank you for consulting us on the above SEA and HRA Screening Report, our comments are as follows.

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).

The Neighbourhood Planning Section of the NPPG (paragraph 073) states that:

A neighbourhood plan may require a [strategic environmental assessment](#) if the draft neighbourhood plan falls within the scope of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. This may be the case if it is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. This may be the case, for example, where a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development.

Paragraph: 046 in the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal Guidance (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 or other strategic policies for the area".*

Having reviewed the Screening Report submitted, and in consideration of the matters within our remit, we concur with the conclusion that, given the lack of specific site allocations within the Neighbourhood Plan, the Alcester Neighbourhood Plan is

unlikely to have significant environmental impacts and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not therefore required.

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.

Having reviewed the submitted Screening report, and in consideration of the matters within our remit, we concur the Alcester Neighbourhood Plan is considered unlikely to have significant effects on the European designated sites.

We note that no European or Ramsar Sites have been identified within the plan area and there does not appear to be any obvious pathways to sites in neighbouring plan areas.

We would likely only make substantive further comments on the NDP if the plan were seeking to allocate sites in areas where there are significant environmental concern relating to matters within our remit, such as an allocation in Flood Zones 2 and 3 or within Source Protection Zone 1.

I trust that the above is of assistance.

Yours faithfully

Miss. Fiona Flower
Planning Officer
Environment Agency – West Midlands Area





Historic England

Mr Richard Pew
Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Elizabeth House
Church Street
Stratford-upon-Avon
Warwickshire
CV37 6HX

Direct Dial: [REDACTED]

Our ref: PL00483522

26 February 2026

Dear Mr Pew

ALCESTER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SEA & HRA SCREENING OPINION CONSULTATION

Thank you for your consultation and the invitation to comment on the SEA 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 is not required.

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 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,



THE FOUNDRY 82 GRANVILLE STREET BIRMINGHAM B1 2LH

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HistoricEngland.org.uk

Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any Information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.



Historic England

Rose Thompson

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Historic Places Adviser



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