

***The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004
and the
Habitats and Species Regulations (2010), as amended***

**Screening Statement for the
Alderton Neighbourhood Plan**

In accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (The 2004 Regulations) and European Directive 2001/42/EC, this document is the screening determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Alderton Neighbourhood Plan. It also covers the need for Habitats Regulations screening.

Under the regulations, SEA must be undertaken for land-use and spatial plans where there is a likelihood that they will have significant environmental effects. Neighbourhood plans (NP) are development plan documents that are required to be screened to see if they require SEA.

Regulation 9 requires the 'responsible authority' (i.e. the authority by which or on whose behalf the NP is prepared) to determine whether or not a plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This is determined by a screening process, which should use a specified set of criteria (set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations). The results of this process must be summarised in an SEA screening statement, which must be made publicly available.

The government's planning portal advises that the local planning authority should put in place a process to provide a screening opinion to the qualifying body on whether the proposed NP will require a SEA. The qualifying body should work with the local planning authority to be sure that the authority has the information it needs in order to provide a screening opinion.

The determination has been made that the Alderton Neighbourhood Plan falls within the scope of the 2004 Regulations on the basis that:

- The NP is a plan and programme as defined in Regulation 2;
- The NP is prepared for town and country planning or land use as defined in Regulation 5;
- The NP will determine the use of a relatively small area at a local level but, depending upon its content, has the potential to have significant environmental effects.

The assessment below has been prepared on the basis of the information set out in the email from Tamsin James (1 June 2015) and subsequent information provided by the consultation bodies and related local bodies.

The screening process set out in Regulation 9 and Schedule 1 of the 2004 Regulations includes two sets of characteristics for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment. These relate firstly to the characteristics of the NP and secondly to the characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected. There are a number of

criteria relating to each of these characteristics, the responses to which are set out below.

Table 1: Assessment of Significance of Effects

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Likely significance of environmental effect	Assessment and Justification
1. The characteristics of the plans and programmes, having regard in particular to;		
(a) 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.	Yes, but unlikely to have significant effects on the environment	The Alderton Neighbourhood Development Plan (NP) provides a local policy framework for Alderton Parish. A specific site is proposed for housing to the west of the existing village of Alderton.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	Yes, but unlikely to have significant effects on the environment	<p>The Alderton NP has been prepared taking into account the National Planning Policy Framework, the Draft Joint Core Strategy for Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough and the Draft Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan. The Parish Council's view is that it does not conflict with any of the provisions of these documents.</p> <p>Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan must generally conform to current development plans prepared by principal planning authorities, it could in turn inform preparation of the emerging Joint Core Strategy, the Tewkesbury Borough Plan and any supplementary planning documents, development briefs or site specific guidance notes covering the Alderton Parish area.</p>
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	Yes, but unlikely to have significant effects on the environment	The Alderton NP has been drawn up with the objective of achieving sustainable development in the Parish.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme and;	Yes, but unlikely to have significant effects on the environment	The Alderton NP will address some environmental, economic and social issues in the Alderton Parish area. Within the area are: national and local landscape designations (Cotswolds AONB and special landscape area); nature sites (Alderton Quarry Hill SSSI and Dixton Wood SAC); historic assets (23 listed buildings, of which two are Grade II*). These assets are already largely protected and the plan seeks to support this.

(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	Yes, but unlikely to have significant effects on the environment	The Alderton NP is prepared on the basis of community legislation in the Localism Act 2011 and Neighbourhood Planning regulations 2012.
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular to;		
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects	Significant effects on the environment are unlikely	The Alderton NP sets the local vision, objectives and policies to guide new development in Alderton Parish area. These need to be in line with strategic saved policies in the Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan and those likely to emerge in the Joint Core Strategy and Tewkesbury Borough Plan. Based on the information provided it is unlikely that the NP as currently framed will have significant environmental effects.
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects	Significant effects on the environment are unlikely	There are unlikely to be local cumulative effects arising from and between the different policies proposed in the Alderton NP.
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects	Significant effects on the environment are unlikely	There are no transboundary effects arising from the Alderton NP.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	Significant effects on the environment are unlikely	A specific site is allocated to the west of Alderton village but there are unlikely to be significant environmental risks as a consequence of the plan.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	Significant effects on the environment are unlikely	The Alderton NP will guide new developments in the Alderton Parish designated area only, and are unlikely to affect an extensive population.
(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	Whilst there are some of these within or proximate to the area significant effects on the environment are unlikely	The Alderton NP covers the Alderton Parish area where there are a number of important interests of acknowledged importance: historic assets, for example scheduled monuments and 23 listed buildings and structures; the nature sites of Dixon Wood SAC and Alderton Hill Quarry SSSI. The NP is unlikely to generate environmental effects on those designations due to the plan not allocating sites that are proximate to these designations or including policies that would be contrary to the purposes of designating these sites.

(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	Whilst there are some within or proximate to the area significant effects on these aspects are unlikely due to the allocated site being viewed in the context of the existing village and recently permitted housing site to its north.	There is the national landscape designation of the Cotswolds AONB and the local (Tewkesbury Borough Council) special landscape area designation in Alderton Parish. The main impact of the NP is likely to be the impact of the proposed housing site to the west of Alderton within the special landscape area.
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Consultation

Regulation 9 requires the responsible authority to consult the ‘consultation bodies’ (these are English Heritage, Natural England and the Environment Agency). This was undertaken initially by email on 3 June 2015 by Tewkesbury Borough Council on behalf of Alderton Parish Council. Local bodies (Lead Local Flood Authority, County Highways, County Ecologist, County Archaeology) were consulted along with Tewkesbury Borough Council officers in order to provide the basis for the draft screening opinion. The advice received has been summarised below:

Historic England (English Heritage)

I can confirm that we are happy with your conclusion that no SEA is required.

Environment Agency

Having regard to those matters within our remit, we have no reason to consider the NP for Alderton would give rise to significant environmental effects.

Natural England

It is our advice, based on the information accompanying the consultation, that it is unlikely that any significant environmental effects will result from the implementation of the Alderton Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst the Parish includes the Dixton Woods SAC and part of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty the proposed policies would not significantly impact on these designations. We therefore agree with the Screening Report’s conclusion that a full SEA would not be required.

County Archaeology

I have no reason to believe that this plan will have a significant impact on archaeological elements of the historic environment. The description of the historic development of the parish and of the vernacular architecture are to be commended, and the importance of the wider historic landscape is fully acknowledged. Significant archaeology has been discovered during investigations related to the proposed developments listed at Appendix C but while there is not a specific policy that applies to underground archaeology in the plan, this will be well protected by NPPF provisions and JCS and Tewkesbury Local Plan policies.

County Highways

SEA is not required on highways/transport grounds. My only comment is that draft policy F2 parking standards is not in accordance with paragraph 39 of The Framework, which requires

car parking for new developments to be based on local car ownership levels (Policy subsequently amended 23/9/15).

Lead Local Flood Authority

No response received (but see flood risk response below from TBC).

Tewkesbury Borough Council flood risk management engineer

Having considered the neighbourhood development plan, I do not believe the proposals will have a significant environmental impact from a flood risk standpoint.

Tewkesbury Borough Council Development Management Section (including conservation)

The DM view is that the plan would not result in a significant effect on the environment in the context of the regulations.

Tewkesbury Borough Council One Legal

The policy options put forward in the draft plan will not have a relevant environmental impact. SEA is not therefore required.

Tewkesbury Borough Council landscape consultant

The proposed extension site is certainly within an area I identified as having some capacity to accommodate new development (medium landscape and medium visual sensitivity). It does however seem somewhat at odds with the prevailing settlement form, especially in light of the refusal of Land West of Willow Bank Road.

I suggest the southern and western boundaries of any development within this site should be treated with particular care / restraint to maintain the “clustered” character of the village without appearing as a prominent intrusion into the countryside.

In some ways one could say that the south western corner of this site is more prominent than the proposed development West of Willow Bank Road that has been refused at appeal.

The level of harm delivered by development on this extension site will depend entirely upon the final numbers of dwellings to be delivered, the amount of open space remaining within the red line (preferably to the south and west), the layout and the relationship with the Beckford Road development. These are issues that need to be addressed at the time of a planning application and are unlikely to be resolved by an SEA. I suggest that before any detailed proposals are submitted on this site that a south western threshold to built development is established and agreed.

I suspect this doesn't need an SEA, but it does need careful consideration at detailed design stage.

Cotswolds AONB Conservation Board

The Cotswolds Conservation Board raises no comment in respect of the screening advice for the Alderton NDP.

The AONB is considered to be a “sensitive” area for EIA purposes and there is a legal requirement under Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000 down to Parish Council level, to consider the purposes of conserving and enhancing the nationally protected AONB.

The Alderton NDP makes numerous references to the AONB and its Management Plan, Position Statements and national policy, so the Board is satisfied that due regard has been given to the purposes of conserving and enhancing the AONB and its setting.

Therefore, in terms of impact on the AONB the Board has not identified any significant environmental effects at this point in time.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

The purpose of Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of plans is to ensure that the protection of the integrity of European sites is part of the planning process. The requirement for HRA of plans or projects is outlined in Article 6(3) and (4) of the European Communities (1992) Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ("Habitats Directive").

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

SACs are areas which have been given special protection under the European Union's Habitats Directive. They provide increased protection to a variety of wild animals, plants and habitats and are a vital part of global efforts to conserve the world's biodiversity.

In Gloucestershire there are 7 SACs:

1. Rodborough Common.
2. Dixon Wood.
3. The Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites.
4. The River Wye.
5. The Wye Valley Woodlands.
6. The Severn Estuary.
7. Cotswold Beechwoods.

Dixon Wood SAC is situated within Alderton Parish area. The primary reason for selection of this site is on the basis of Annex II species (1079 Violet click beetle, *Limoniscus violaceus*). The violet click beetle *Limoniscus violaceus* was discovered at Dixon Wood in 1998 and it has been found at the site on a single occasion subsequently. It is a small site with large number of ancient ash *Fraxinus excelsior* pollards, and supports a rich fauna of scarce invertebrate species associated with decaying timber on ancient trees.

Special Protection Areas (SPA)

SPAs are areas which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within European Union countries. They are European designated sites, classified under the 'Birds Directive 1979' which provides enhanced protection given by the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status all SPAs also hold.

In Gloucestershire there are 2 SPAs:

1. Walmore Common.
2. The Severn Estuary.

Aside from Dixon Wood SAC the nearest other European designated sites to the Alderton NP area are Walmore Common SPA (within Forest of Dean District) and the Severn Estuary SPA/SAC. Both sites are outside of the NP area.

County Ecologist (SEA and HRA comments)

It is my view that the draft plan for Alderton would not facilitate development of a type and scale and location that would be likely to have a significant effect on the environment (SEA purposes) or likely significant effect on Dixon Wood SAC (HRA Screening). As respects HRA

screening it would be worth ensuring you receive a written response from Natural England as the SAC actually lies within the parish boundary (see below).

Natural England (Habitat Regulations Assessment comments)

Natural England also agrees with the screening report's conclusions that the Alderton Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European Site either alone or in combination and therefore no further assessment work under the Habitats Regulations would be required.

Conclusion

Following an analysis of the above information, the determination has been made that by virtue of the nature of the type and scope of policies and proposals contained in the draft Alderton Neighbourhood Plan that it does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Effects on European sites have been screened out by virtue of the nature of the type and scope of policies and proposals contained in the draft NP. It is therefore concluded that HRA is not required.

Copies of the final determination, together with the reasons for the determination, will be circulated to the statutory consultation bodies in line with the regulations.

20 October 2015