

**Strategic Environmental Assessment  
Screening Report  
Oakley Neighbourhood Plan  
February 2019**

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This screening report is used to determine whether or not the content of the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan (NP) 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. These require an SEA to be undertaken for:
  - i. Plans which are prepared for town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive; or
  - ii. Plans which have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive.
- 1.2 Plans which determine 'the use of a small area at local level' or which only propose 'minor modification to a plan' might be exempt if they are unlikely to have significant environmental effects. NPs containing land allocations for development that are not included in the local authority's plan, are more likely to require an SEA. The main determining factor as to whether SEA is required on a NP is if it is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.
- 1.3 Section 2 of this report outlines the regulations that set the need for this screening exercise. Process and criteria of the assessment are set out in Section 3. A brief summary of the draft Oakley NP is provided in Section 4.
- 1.4 The screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the NP is set out in Section 5 and the decision on the screening is provided in Section 6.

## 2. Legislative Background

- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments 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. Regulation 9 sets out the process as follows:

“Determinations of the responsible authority

9. (1) The responsible authority shall determine whether or not a plan, programme or modification of a description referred to in –

(a) paragraph (4) (a) and (b) of regulation 5;

(b) paragraph (6)(a) of that regulation; or

(c) paragraph (6) (b) of that regulation, is likely to have significant environmental effects.

(2) Before making a determination under paragraph (1) the responsible authority shall –

(a) take into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 to these Regulations; and

(b) consult the consultation bodies

(3) Where the responsible authority determines that the plan, programme or modification is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), it shall prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.

The regulations define that a responsible authority as:

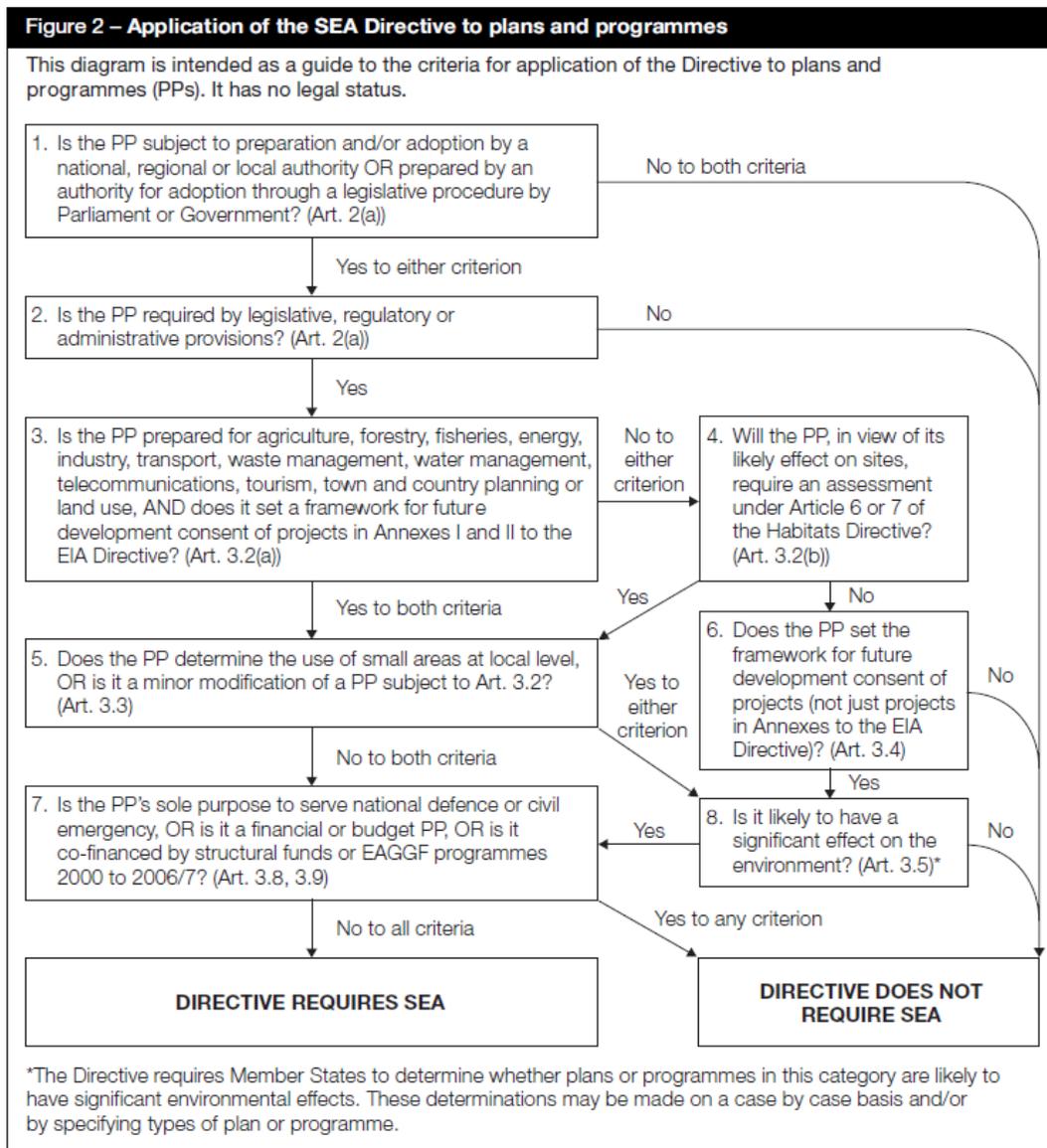
*(a) the authority by which or on whose behalf it is prepared; and*

*(b) where, at any particular time, that authority ceases to be responsible, or solely responsible, for taking steps in relation to the plan or programme, the person who, at that time, is responsible (solely or jointly with the authority) for taking those steps;*

- 2.2 The Government has stated that Sustainability Appraisals are not needed for Neighbourhood Plans (NPPG). It must however be demonstrated how the NP contributes to achievement of sustainable development in the area.

### 3. Screening assessment process

- 3.1 The screening opinion assessment is undertaken in two parts: the first part will assess whether the plan falls into a category of plans requiring SEA; and the second part of the assessment will consider whether the NP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, using criteria drawn from Schedule 1 of the EU SEA Directive and the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 3.2 The government guidance ‘A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 2005; sets out the following approach to be taken in determining whether SEA is required, shown in the figure below.



- 3.3 The criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC and Schedule 1 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 are set out below:

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to

- 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,
- the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
- environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
- 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).

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
- the cumulative nature of the effects,
- the transboundary nature of the effects,
- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
  - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
  - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
  - intensive land-use,
- the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

Source: Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC

3.4 The three statutory consultation bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England) are to be consulted to determine whether they agree with the findings and conclusions of this screening opinion, in establishing whether the Oakley NP requires an SEA and whether it may have a significant environmental effect.

## 4. Summary of Oakley Neighbourhood Plan

### 4.1 Policies

#### ONP HG1: Housing Growth in Oakley

This policy is for any new housing that is in addition to the sites already allocated in the Oakley NDP 2021-2030.

Housing development will be supported where it involves development of allocated sites or sites within the Settlement Policy Area and where it does not encroach into the rural area outside of the Settlement Policy Area.

Housing development outside of the settlement policy area will be supported, where it meets the following requirements:

- It comprises infill development within an existing housing row or cluster;
- It would complement the existing housing and not lead to where the proportion of under developed parts of the site is significantly higher than in sites in the surrounding context, so that the development would change the established village character to one of a more dense and built up nature.
- It would result in existing housing or the proposed housing having adequate garden space to support outdoor seating, drying of clothes, play and other typical garden uses.
- It would avoid the creation of further linear or ribbon development along roads in and around the settlement.

The policy does not deal with exception sites. There is no intention to modify Local Plan policies on exception housing. For clarity an exception site is a site for affordable housing only outside of the settlement policy area.

#### ONP HG2: Housing Mix

Housing developments of 5 houses or more must include a balanced mix of house types to meet local need. The mix of housing should include 1 and 2 bedroom housing to meet the needs of first time buyers and those wishing to downsize. This includes at least one house of 1 or 2 bedrooms per 5 houses.

Developers must justify the mix of housing in any planning application, based on evidence of local housing need.

In considering housing mix, the requirements for room sizes and storage are set out in the Government's Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard, March 2015 (or any equivalent standard superseding and replacing that document).

#### ONP BE1: Business

Business (B1) development will be supported in the following locations:

- within the Highfield Park, Willow Vale and Station Road business parks.
- within existing business or industrial sites, providing there is no significant harm to the amenities of nearby residents or to local landscape and rural character.

#### ONP BE2: Retail and Community Facilities

New retail and professional services (A1, A2) and other community facilities will be supported within the existing centre of Oakley which is bounded by Lovell Road, Station Road, High Street and Church Lane, where there would be no significant harm to the amenities of nearby residents.

#### ONP BE3: Public Houses

Development proposals involving the use and development of existing public houses will be supported, providing:

- the use as a public house continues as part of the scheme;
- there is no significant adverse impact on the amenities of any nearby residential properties.

#### ONP BE4: Broadband Connectivity

New development, including new housing and commercial schemes, should wherever reasonably possible incorporate High-speed Internet connectivity.

#### ONP LE1: Significant Landscape Areas

New development must not adversely impact on significant landscape areas as listed below and identified on map.

To be considered for approval, new development adjacent to significant landscape areas must not cause harm, including to hedgerows and hedrow trees, ecology, flora and fauna, wildlife or views through open landscape.

New development within the setting of significant landscape area must preserve or enhance that setting.

For the purposes of this policy, significant landscape areas are:

- The River Ouse and River Valley area;
- the woodland areas Browns Wood and Judge's Spinney;
- the area surrounding Stafford Bridge including Lynch Furlong and the allotments;
- The Limestone Bridges and surrounding area.

## ONP LE2: Local Green Space

Designated Local Green Space must remain as open green spaces and the construction of new buildings will be regarded as inappropriate. Exceptionally, a small-scale building such as a shed may be allowed, providing:

- The open and green character of the space is maintained and not compromised;
- The new development comprises facilities to support the community use of space.
- The community, wildlife, amenity and other values as a Local Green Space are preserved or enhanced.

## ONP LE3 Coalescence with Neighbouring Villages

New development must not compromise the open character of landscape that provides separation between Oakley Village and Villages of Clapham, Bromham, Stevington and Pavenham.

## ONP DH1: Design

New development should incorporate sustainable urban design. This includes:

- Complementing and integrating with the local surroundings in terms of scale, height, massing, spacing, urban grain and set-back from street frontages;
- designing parking as an integral part of layout, so that it does not dominate the street scene;
- providing active frontages to streets and public spaces, so as to provide natural surveillance;
- creating attractive, safe, permeable and convenient pedestrian environments;
- providing screened bin storage, away from road frontages;
- using permeable materials for hard surfaces.

## ONP DH2: Local Character

New development must complement the existing character of the village. This includes:

- Comprising site specific design to complement the character of the village, rather than generic design solutions that fail to respond to local character;
- Using high quality and durable materials to complement the existing palette of materials used in the surrounding area;
- Retaining existing front hedges and trees;
- Designing other boundary treatments to complement the established local character through the use of hedges and limestone walls.
- Ensuring development fronting the village green maintains the open character based on front gardens with minimal planting and no fences to the frontages;
- Designing extensions to historic buildings to be subordinate to the scale of the original building, whilst complementing the building in terms of quality of materials and finishes.

Creative, carefully designed, contemporary design solutions are particularly encouraged.

### ONP DH3: Local Heritage

New development must preserve or enhance the architectural or historic character of non-designated local heritage and its setting. The non-designated local heritage to which this policy relates is:

- The Duke of Bedford Cottages in High Street and Station Road;
- Oakley War Memorial, junction of High Street and Station Road;
- Lovell Homes inter-war memorial houses in Lovell Road.

### ONP TR1: Balanced Transport Provision

New development must contribute to a balanced transport provision, including:

- giving priority to the needs and convenience of pedestrians and cyclists in the layout of new roads and paths;
- supporting improvement of the cycle/pedestrian link from Oakley to Clapham and Bedford;
- providing secure, weatherproof and convenient facilities for storage of cycles.

Particular attention will be paid to impacts of development on road capacity, congestion and safety, in particular avoiding adverse impacts on:

- narrow roads;
- roads with only one footway;
- Ouse Valley Bedford cycle route to Pavenham and Bromham;
- roads around the schools and post-office.

The contribution of the network of narrower roads to the character of Oakley must be taken into account. Highway expansion to increase capacity and accommodate development must only take place where it would not cause significant harm to the character of Oakley.

## 4.2 Development Sites Selected

Following the presentation by developers the full Parish Council, at their meeting on 1st May 2018, considered the three developments as to which site(s) best met Oakley's needs.

The Parish Council decided that to alleviate additional traffic issues, take account of consultation feedback about small developments and acknowledging the comments made by Urban Vision consultants, that a two-site approach would be taken.

It was therefore agreed that **site 171 rear of High Street** – up to 20 dwellings and **site 170 Station Road (northern part only)** – up to 30 dwellings would be their choice of development sites for the Neighbourhood Plan. The development of each site will accord with the Bedford Borough Council (BBC) Highways Assessment and the Habitat Regulation Assessment; which will need to ensure that hydrological impacts are checked and there is adequate mitigation, if required. They will be required to follow the criteria of the BBC Local Plan and the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan policies of Landscape, Green Spaces, Housing and Transport.

Following the 6-week statutory consultation period a number of concerns were raised for both sites. The Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group reviewed these concerns and concluded that site 171 rear of High Street would be best served by no more than 10 dwellings. The landowner's agent agreed to this request and provided an indicative plan of 10 dwellings with a mixture of single storey and two-story houses. The

decision to reduce **site 171 to a maximum of 10 dwellings** was endorsed by the Parish Council at their meeting of 5th March 2019. The **Station Road site 170 (northern part only) remains unchanged at a maximum of 30 dwellings.**

The Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group have, by making a balanced assessment of the sites always recognised the impact on individual residents. Their judgement was based on what the residents told us, the planning system from government, the impact on individual residents and the impact on the whole village.

The Parish Council will support these sites, when submitted to Bedford Borough Council to obtain planning permission, subject to the development proposals aligning with the Oakley Neighbourhood Plan and statements made at the presentation on 26th April 2018 being effected.

## 5. Assessment

- 5.1 The first part of the assessment is to establish the need for the SEA. The table below shows the assessment determining whether the Oakley NP falls into a category of plans requiring SEA. The references to Articles are from Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Council on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
1. Is the NP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Article. 2(a))	Y	The local authority has a statutory obligation to make a Neighbourhood Plan once it has successfully passed the stages as set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Article. 2(a))	Y	While it is not mandatory for a Neighbourhood Plan to be prepared, however once made, it is part of the development plan for assessing planning applications.
3. Is the NP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Article. 3.2(b))	N	The Neighbourhood Plan is prepared for town and country planning and land use purposes but does not explicitly set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I or II of the EIA Directive.
4. Will the NP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	N	An appropriate assessment has been carried out which determined that, some rewording of the text and policies of the Oakley Neighbourhood Development Plan are recommended to ensure that the examiner is made aware that the potential for likely

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
		significant effects on European sites has been evaluated and that avoidance or mitigation measures are in place.
5. Does the NP determine the use of small areas at local level OR is it a minor modification of a plan/programme (Article 3.3)	Y	Yes, the Neighbourhood Plan relates to the local area of the designated Neighbourhood Area.
6. Does the NP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Article. 3.4)		N/A
7. Is the NP's sole purpose to serve national defence or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Article. 3.8 & Article. 3.9)		N/A
8. Is the NP likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Article. 3.5)	N	See the following table.

5.2 The next step in the screening assessment is to establish whether the Oakley NP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The criteria for determining the likely significance of effects are drawn from Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC and is also set out in Schedule 1 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, 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.	The draft plan provides for up to 50 new dwellings on 2 sites.	<b>N</b>
1b The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The plan will be complementary to the Bedford Borough Development Plan.	<b>N</b>
1c The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	The achievement of sustainable development is one of the basic conditions that a Neighbourhood Plan must meet.	<b>N</b>
1d Environmental problems relevant to the plan.	There are no environmental problems relevant to the plan in this parish.	<b>N</b>

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
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 or renewable energy generation)	The plan does not relate to waste management or water protection.	<b>N</b>
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to—		
2a The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	The plan includes allocations for up to 50 dwellings and considering that the sites were put forward during the process, it is highly likely that these sites will be developed.	<b>N</b>
2b The cumulative nature of the effects	The plan covers a small area and considering that the plan is for a small number of dwellings up to 2030, the cumulative effects impacts are considered to be minimal.	<b>N</b>
2c The transboundary nature of the effects	Given the small scale development proposed, it is not considered that the effects will have any impact outside the borough or indeed the parish.	<b>N</b>
2d The risks to human health or environment (e.g. due to accidents)	The allocations are only for housing and it is not considered that this will cause a risk to human health or the environment due to accidents.	<b>N</b>
2e The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of	The population as measured from the 2011 census was 2,493 and there were 974 dwellings. The area of the parish was 595 hectares	<b>N</b>

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
the population likely to be affected)	which equates to a population density of 4.2 people per hectare.	
<p>2f The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;</li> <li>• Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or</li> <li>• Intensive land use</li> </ul>	<p>The plan includes policies to ensure that cultural heritage is either preserved or enhanced. There are no other special natural characteristics that are related to the allocated development sites or within the village.</p> <p>The proposed development is not considered to be an intensive land use due to the scale of development.</p>	<b>N</b>
<p>2g The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.</p>	<p>There are no national or internationally recognised areas or landscapes within the parish.</p>	<b>N</b>

## 6. Screening Outcome

- 6.1 The screening assessment undertaken in Section 5 concludes that it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Oakley NP.
- 6.2 Based on the above information, the 'Responsible Body' being Oakley Parish Council concludes that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

Note: The Oakley NP SEA screening report was sent to the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England for comment. All replies received are shown at Annex A.

## Annex A

The Oakley NP SEA screening report was sent to the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England for comment. All replies are shown below.

### Environment Agency

**Sent:** 20 March 2019 08:53

**To:** 'parishclerk@oakleyvillage.co.uk' <[parishclerk@oakleyvillage.co.uk](mailto:parishclerk@oakleyvillage.co.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: 180315/DT14 FW: ONDP - SEA Document

Dear Ann

We agree with the conclusions reached in your SEA screening report.

Kind regards

**Neville Benn**

Senior Planning Advisor

Sustainable Places

East Anglia Area (West)

✉ Environment Agency, Bromholme Lane, Brampton, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE28 4NE

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