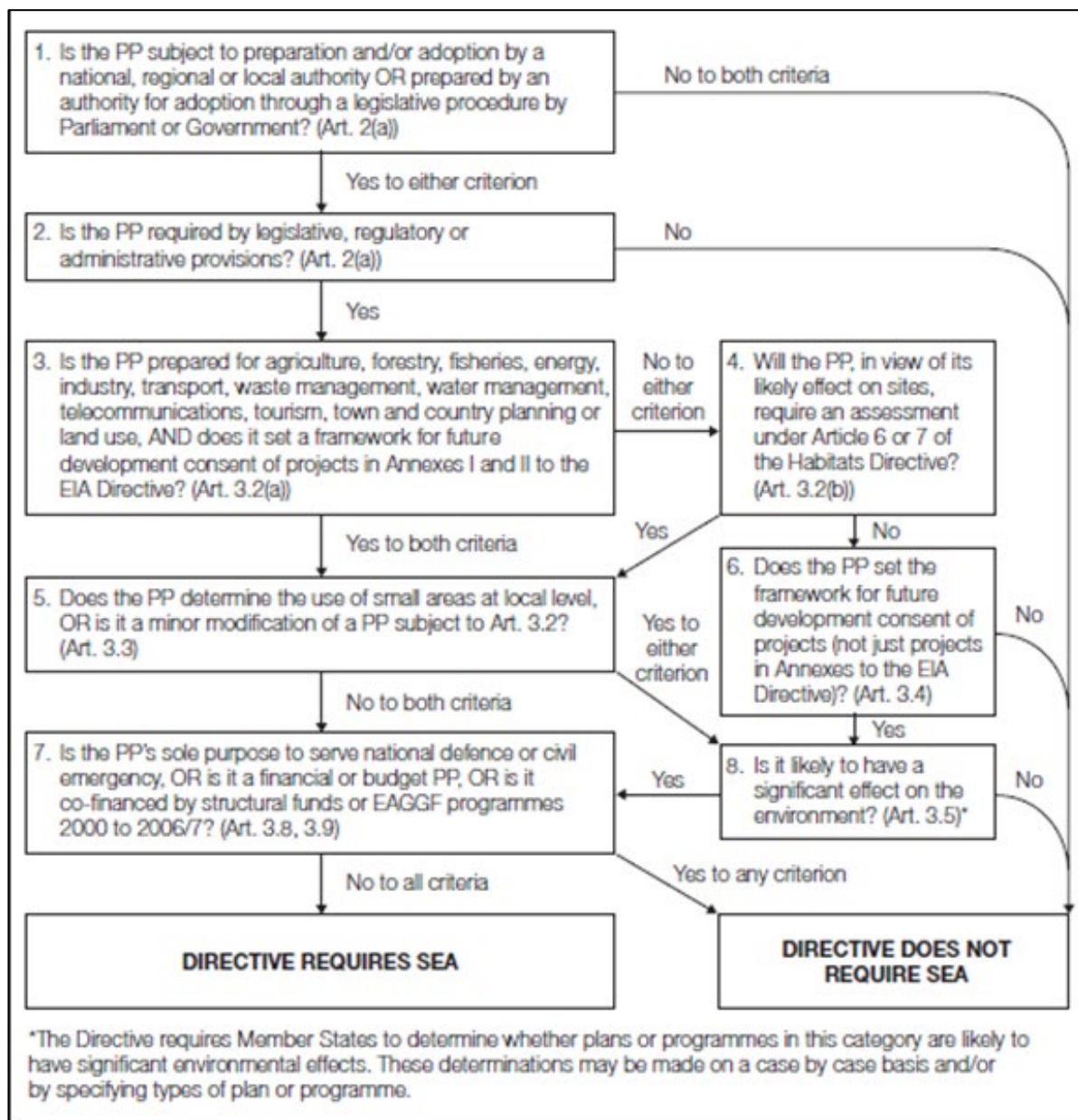


Strategic Environmental Assessment
and Habitat Regulations Assessment
Screening Report:
St Ives Pre-Submission Neighbourhood
Plan
September 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This screening report is designed to establish whether or not a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required for the St Ives Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. It is also intended to determine whether a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive and regulation 62 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). To meet the basic conditions the Neighbourhood Plan must be prepared in a manner which is compatible with European Union obligations.
- 1.2. The purpose of SEA is to secure a high level of protection for the environment and to integrate environmental considerations into the preparation of plans to promote sustainable development. To establish whether a SEA is required a screening assessment is undertaken which considers the proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan against a series of criteria set out in the SEA Directive. Figure 1 overleaf sets out the screening process and how the Neighbourhood Plan is assessed against the criteria.
- 1.3. Where the Neighbourhood Plan could have significant environmental effects it may require a SEA where for example:
 - The Neighbourhood Plan allocates a higher level of development than is already identified in the development plan
 - Where 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 effects that have not already been considered through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan
 - Where the cumulative impact of the policies and proposals when assessed together may give rise to a likely significant environmental effect.

Figure 1: Application of criteria of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes



1.4. The formal criteria for assessing the likely significance of effects are set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive, Schedule 1 of the Regulations and are shown in Figure 2 below.

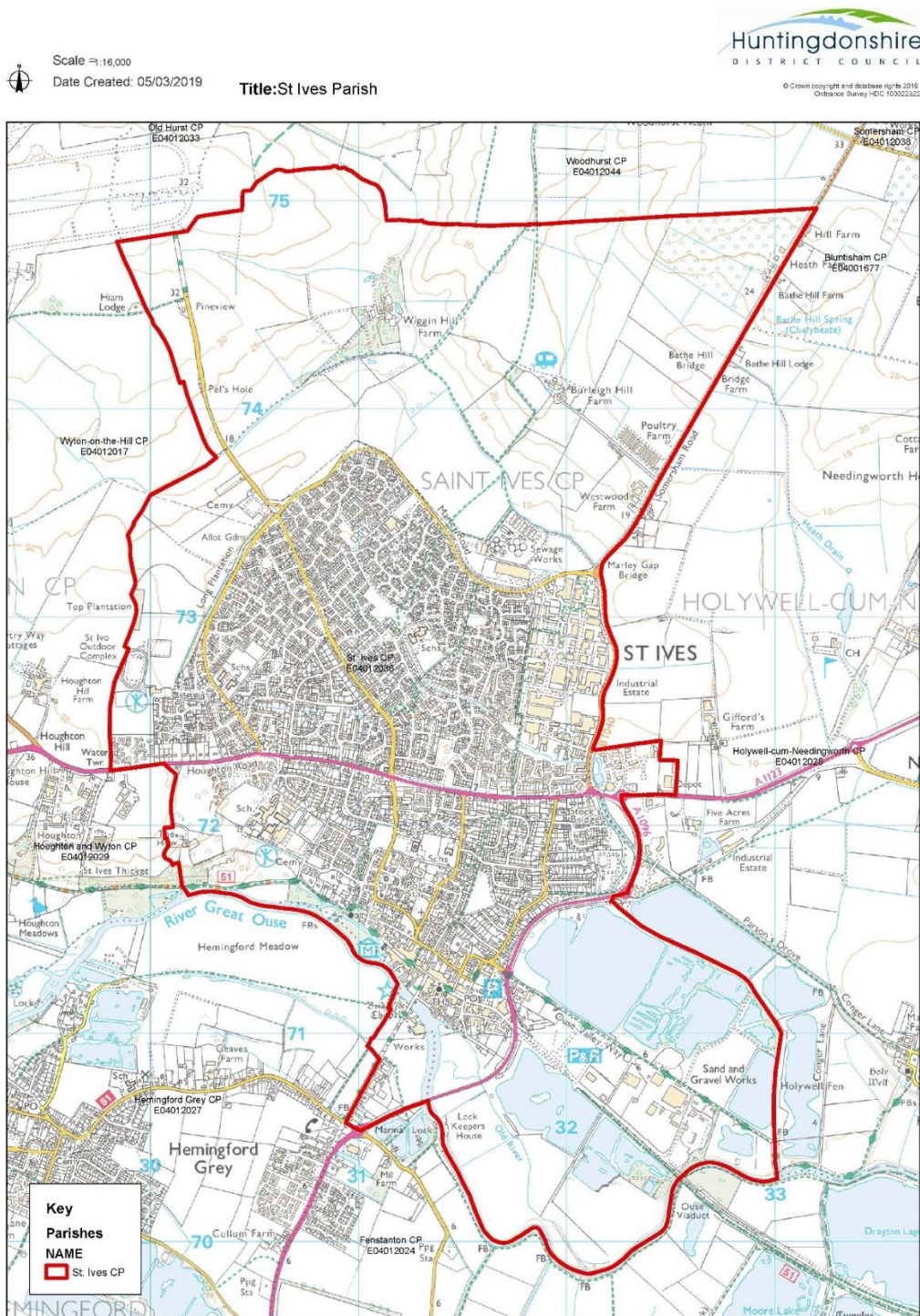
Figure 2: Criteria for determining likely significance of effects on the environment (from Article 3.5 of the SEA Directive)

1. The characteristics of neighbourhood plans, having regard, in particular, to
 - the degree to which the plan 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 influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
 - the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
 - environmental problems relevant to the plan,
 - the relevance of the plan for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or waste 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 trans boundary nature of the effects,
 - the risks to human health of 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.

- 1.5. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) may also be required to accompany the Neighbourhood Plan where the policies and proposals of the plan may give rise to significant effects on internationally designated wildlife sites. These are defined as any site of wildlife interest designated as a Special Protection Area under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) or as a Special Area of Conservation designated under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). In addition sites designated under the Ramsar Convention (Iran 1971 as amended 1992) are also considered. Generally, sites within 15kms of the Neighbourhood Plan boundary should be included within an HRA.
- 1.6. The process to establish whether a HRA is necessary starts with a screening exercise to determine whether any internationally designated sites might be exposed to likely significant effects as a result of implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan and therefore whether further stages of the HRA process are required.

2. St Ives Neighbourhood Plan

2.1. The St Ives Neighbourhood Area was designated on 4 March 2019 covering the whole of the parish area. St Ives Town Council, as the qualifying body for the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan has delegated the responsibility for its production to the St Ives Neighbourhood Plan Group. A map of the designated neighbourhood area is shown below.



- 2.2. The parish of St Ives is located in the east of the district. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Census 2021 ward and parish level population, household and dwellings estimates by Cambridgeshire Insight identified a resident population of 16,815¹.
- 2.3. The St Ives Neighbourhood Plan will cover all of the Local Plan period to 2036 or longer to align with the Local Plan Update and with the steer of the 'Vision for St Ives 2023'; a document commissioned by Huntingdonshire District Council and funded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. It establishes a vision for St Ives' and identifies projects that can help to regenerate St Ives and promote economic growth, enterprise and a renewed and enhanced public realm and townscape. The projects are illustrated and the key financial and economic outputs reviewed.
- 2.4. The St Ives Neighbourhood Plan will not be allocating sites, but contains policies that support regeneration opportunities in the town centre, high quality design, promote a green infrastructure network, support an active travel network, walkable neighbourhoods, incentivise Zero Carbon Buildings and support 'Urban Greening'.
- 2.5. A number of Cambridgeshire County Wildlife Sites including Holt Island, a former osier bed, a Conservation area, various Listed Buildings and areas that are subject to fluvial and surface water flooding from the River Great Ouse present severe constraints to development.
- 2.6. The Neighbourhood area does not include any sites which form part of the National Site Network (formerly Natura 2000 sites). However, the semi-natural grassland of the River Great Ouse corridor provides a near continuous semi-natural grassland habitat and is identified as a 'green infrastructure priority area'.

¹ [Cambridgeshire Insight – Document Library](#)

3. SEA Screening Assessment

3.1. Table 1 below shows the assessment of whether the St Ives Neighbourhood Plan will require a full SEA.

Table 1: Assessment of requirement for SEA

Stage	Question Path	Yes/ No	Assessment
1. Is the Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Article 2(a))	If 'No' to both SEA is not required If 'Yes' to either go to Question 2	Yes	St Ives Parish Council is the qualifying body preparing the Neighbourhood Plan under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. Subject to successful examination and referendum it will be 'made' by Huntingdonshire District Council.
2. Is the Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Article 2(a))	If 'No' SEA is not required If 'Yes' go to Question 3	Yes	Preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan is optional; there is no absolute legislative, regulatory or administrative requirement to do so. However, once 'made' the St Ives Neighbourhood Plan would form part of the statutory development plan for Huntingdonshire and be used in determining planning applications, so it is considered necessary to answer the remaining questions to determine further if an SEA is required.
3. Is the Plan 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? (Article 3.2(a))	If 'No' to either go to Question 4 If 'Yes' to both go to Question 5	Yes No	The St Ives Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared to set out a framework for town and country planning and the future development of a number of land uses within the parishes, although it does not anticipate managing development of the scale and nature envisaged by Annex I and Annex II.
4. Will the Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Article 3.2(b))	If 'No' go to Question 6 If 'Yes' go to Question 5	No	See screening assessment for HRA in Section 4.

Stage	Question Path	Yes/ No	Assessment
5. Does the Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Article 3.2? (Article 3.3)	If 'No' to both go to Question 7 If 'Yes' to either go to Question 8	N/A	N/A
6. Does the Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Article 3.4)	If 'No' SEA is not required If 'Yes' go to Question 8	Yes	The St Ives Neighbourhood Plan will contain policies against which planning applications within the neighbourhood area will be considered.
7. Is the Plan's sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget plan or programme, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Article 3.8, 3.9)	If 'No' to all SEA is required If 'Yes' to any SEA is not required	N/A	N/A
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Article 3.5)*	If 'No' SEA is not required If 'Yes' go to Question 7	No	No development is allocated however, the plan contains policies that support regeneration opportunities in the town centre, high quality design, promote a green infrastructure network, support an active travel network, incentivise Zero Carbon Buildings and support 'Urban Greening'. Certain parts of the Neighbourhood Area are subject to fluvial and surface water flooding from the River Great Ouse and the semi-natural grassland of the River Great Ouse corridor provides a near continuous semi-natural grassland habitat and is identified as a 'green infrastructure priority area'. No significant effect from these initiatives is considered likely.

*The Directive requires Member States to determine whether plans or programmes in this category are likely to have significant environmental effects. These determinations may be made on a case-by-case basis and/or by specifying types of plans or programmes.

3.2. Under criterion 8 of Table 1 it is necessary to undertake an assessment of the likelihood of the Neighbourhood Plan having a significant effect on the environment based on the criteria set out in Figure 2 (preceding). Table 2 below sets out this assessment.

Table 2: Assessment of likelihood of significant effects on the environment

Significant effect criteria	Assessment
The characteristics of the plan, having regard to:	
<p>The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources</p>	<p>No development is allocated however, the plan contains policies that support regeneration opportunities in the town centre, high quality design, promote a green infrastructure network, support an active travel network, incentivise Zero Carbon Buildings and support 'Urban Greening'. Certain parts of the Neighbourhood Area are subject to fluvial and surface water flooding from the River Great Ouse and the semi-natural grassland of the River Great Ouse corridor provides a near continuous semi-natural grassland habitat and is identified as a 'green infrastructure priority area'.</p> <p>No significant effect from these initiatives is considered likely.</p>
<p>The degree to which the Plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.</p>	<p>The St Ives Neighbourhood Plan will reflect and support the strategic policies of the Local Plan to 2036. It should not significantly influence other plans and programmes but may have a limited degree of influence over adjoining neighbourhood plans if they come forward.</p>
<p>The relevance of the Plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>	<p>The plan contains policies that promote a green infrastructure network, incentivise Zero Carbon Buildings and support 'Urban Greening'. Certain parts of the Neighbourhood Area are subject to fluvial and surface water flooding from the River Great Ouse and the semi-natural grassland of the River Great Ouse corridor provides a near continuous semi-natural grassland habitat and is identified as a 'green infrastructure priority area'.</p> <p>No significant effect from these initiatives is considered likely.</p>
<p>Environmental problems relevant to the Plan.</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>The relevance of the Plan for the implementation of Community</p>	<p>The considerations of such plans and European legislation were taken into</p>

legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	account in the production of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.
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.	<p>Policies within the St Ives Neighbourhood Plan are likely to facilitate new development, so some environmental change will occur. However, the objectives and policies are expected to ensure new development meets local needs and is sustainable. For example by promoting a green infrastructure network, supporting an active travel network, walkable neighbourhoods, incentivise Zero Carbon Buildings and support 'Urban Greening'.</p> <p>The frequency of effects is expected to be low. The duration and reversibility of effects arising from built development are long term.</p>
The cumulative nature of the effects of the Plan.	The cumulative effects of the policies and proposals of the St Ives Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to be significant on the local environment, many elements are intended to help protect it.
The trans-boundary nature of the effects of the Plan.	The St Ives Neighbourhood Plan will not have effect in any EU member states
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	The St Ives Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to impact on human health or the environment due to accidents. The draft Plan proposes to support regeneration opportunities in the town centre, high quality design, promote a green infrastructure network, support an active travel network and walkable neighbourhoods, all of which would positively contribute to human health and improve biodiversity in the neighbourhood plan area.
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected) by the Plan.	The Neighbourhood Plan area applies to the Parish of St Ives. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Census 2021 ward and parish level population, household and dwellings estimates by Cambridgeshire Insight

	<p>identified a resident population of 16,815². The area is approximately 1,008 hectares.</p>
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected by the Plan due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage • Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values • Intensive land use • The effects of the Plan on areas or landscapes which have recognised national, community or international protection status. 	<p>St Ives has a conservation area. Historic England's register lists three Scheduled Monuments and 154 listed buildings, many of which are focussed within the historic town centre. The Plan proposes a policy to ensure development plan policies sustain and enhance the special architectural and historic character of the St Ives Conservation Area and other heritage assets.</p> <p>The proposed policies and objectives in the Neighbourhood Plan are likely to be a benefit to environmental quality standards and avoid exceeding limit values through proposed policies to promote a green infrastructure network, incentivise Zero Carbon Buildings and support 'Urban Greening'.</p> <p>The St Ives Neighbourhood Plan is not proposing to allocate sites, but contains policies that support regeneration opportunities in the town centre and promote high quality design which have the potential to enhance the setting of cultural heritage within the town.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood area does not include any sites which form part of the National Site Network (formerly Natura 2000 sites). However, the semi-natural grassland of the River Great Ouse corridor provides a near continuous semi-natural grassland habitat and is identified as a 'green infrastructure priority area'.</p> <p>There are number of Cambridgeshire County Wildlife Sites including Holt Island, a former osier bed, and areas that are subject to fluvial and surface water flooding from the River Great Ouse which presents severe constraints to development. Policies relating to green and blue infrastructure, Urban Greening and flood risk and water</p>

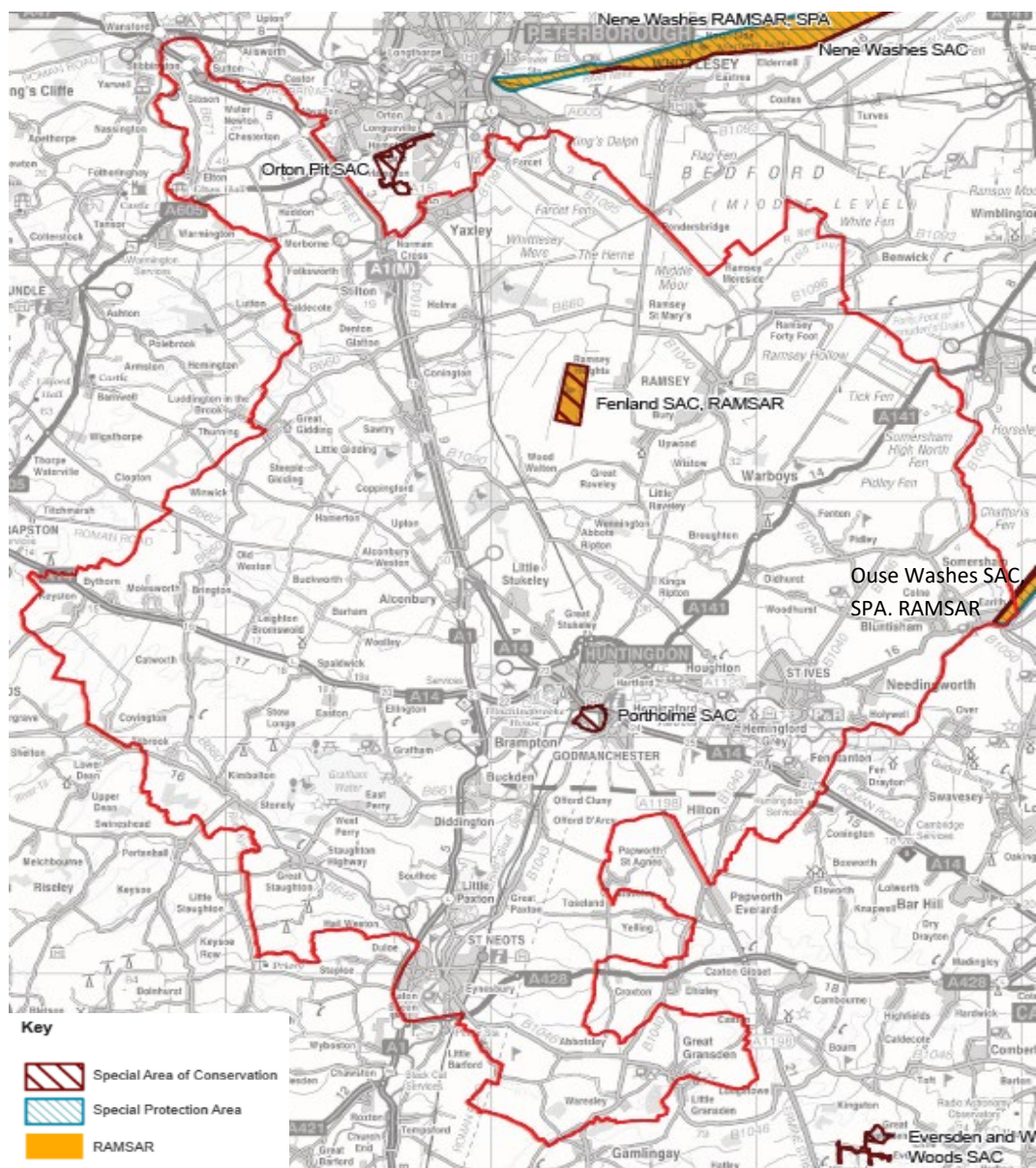
² [Cambridgeshire Insight – Document Library](#)

	management seek to mitigate any effects on these areas.
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4. HRA Screening Assessment

- 4.1. Internationally designated wildlife sites are accorded the highest level of protection under European legislation. The purpose of the screening assessment is to ascertain whether there is potential for implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan to have significant effect on any such site.
- 4.2. Figure 3 below shows the internationally designated sites within a 15km radius of the neighbourhood area boundary.

Figure 3: Internationally designated wildlife sites



- 4.3. The Portholme Special Area of Conservation, the Ouse Washes Special Area of Conservation, Ouse Washes Special Protection Area, Ouse Washes Ramsar site and Woodwalton Fen Ramsar site/Fenland SAC are located within 15kms of the St Ives neighbourhood area.
- 4.4. **Portholme SAC** is within Huntingdonshire District, close to the town of Huntingdon. It is designated as SAC for its lowland hay meadows. It is the largest surviving traditionally managed meadow in the UK, with 91ha of alluvial flood meadow (7% of the total UK resource). There has been a long history of favourable management and very little of the site has suffered from agricultural improvement, and so it demonstrates good conservation of structure and function. It supports a small population of fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris*. Portholme SAC occupies a similar area to Portholme Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- 4.5. **Ouse Washes SAC** was designated for its spined loach *Cobitis taenia* populations within the River Ouse catchment. The Counter Drain, with its clear water and abundant macrophytes, is particularly important, and a healthy population of spined loach is known to occur. The SAC only covers the Counter Drain and not adjacent land designated as SPA and Ramsar.
- 4.6. **Ouse Washes SPA** is a functional washland, with extensive winter flooding and traditional forms of agricultural management, including grazing and mowing of permanent grassland and rotational ditch clearance. It supports a great number of breeding and wintering wetland birds.
- 4.7. **Ouse Washes Ramsar site** supports nationally and internationally important numbers of wintering waterfowl and nationally important numbers of breeding waterfowl. It is also of note for the large area of unimproved neutral grassland communities which it holds, and for the richness of the aquatic flora within the associated watercourses.
- 4.8. **Fenland SAC** falls partly within Huntingdonshire continuing to the north east. The SAC and Ramsar site are made up of three component Sites of Special Scientific Interest, which are Woodwalton Fen SSSI, Chippenham Fen SSSI and Wicken Fen SSSI. The part of Fenland SAC within Huntingdonshire is Woodwalton Fen SSSI. Fenland SAC contains one of the most extensive examples of the tall herb-rich East Anglian fen-meadow. The individual sites within Fenland SAC each hold large areas of calcareous fens, with a long and well-documented history of regular management.
- 4.9. **Woodwalton Fen Ramsar site** occupies a similar area to Woodwalton Fen SSSI (a component site of Fenland SAC). The site is within an area that is one of the remaining parts of East Anglia which has not been drained. The fen is near natural and has developed where peat-digging took place in the 19th century. The site has several types of open fen and swamp communities. The site supports fen violet *Viola persicifolia* and fen wood-rush *Luzula pallidula* and a large number of wetland invertebrates including 20 British Red Data Book species. Aquatic beetles, flies and moths are particularly well represented.

- 4.10. Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC is in the South Cambridgeshire District to the southeast of St Neots. Eversdon is just over 15km away, there are therefore no other sites within 15km of the parish.
- 4.11. The criteria for determining if an individual policy, or a combination of policies, would have a likely significant effect, and require assessment, are based on the characteristics of the relevant European site and the objectives set by Natural England. The main factors to consider are:
- Development on or adjacent to the European site destroying part or all of the site, or changing the ecological functioning of the site (e.g. disrupting water flows or migration routes)
 - Increased public recreation, causing disturbance to birds, damage to vegetation, increased littering / flytipping or leading to management compromises (e.g. grazing being restricted).
 - Reduction in water levels or flow, from increased water demand in the District requiring greater water abstraction
 - Reduction of water quality, from increased discharges of sewage and surface water drainage, or from pollution incidents, either during, or after, construction
- 4.12. The implications of the policies and proposals of the St Ives Neighbourhood Plan have been assessed against each of the internationally designated sites within 15kms to establish the likelihood of a significant effect on the features which justified their designation. The outcomes are set out in Tables 3 to 5 below.

Table 3: Likely significant effects on Portholme

Site name	Portholme SAC
Distance to St Ives neighbourhood area	Approximately 5.7km
Reasons for designation	Lowland hay meadow
Vulnerability ³	This alluvial flood meadow has had a long history of favourable management and demonstrates good conservation of structure and function. Traditionally the site is cut for hay followed by aftermath grazing in late summer and autumn. Part of the site is subject to a Countryside Stewardship agreement aimed at maintaining the alluvial flood meadow. The Environment Agency has produced a Water Level Management plan
Impact as a result of the plan	The neighbourhood plan area is located east of Portholme SAC.

³ Data summarised from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Natura 2000 data forms

	<p>St Ives Neighbourhood Plan will not be allocating sites, but is likely to contain policies that support regeneration opportunities in the town centre, promote a green and blue infrastructure network, flood risk and water management, promote active travel and incentivise Zero Carbon Buildings and support 'Urban Greening'. These policies could contribute towards a more positive impact on water quality impacts or any other impacts on the SAC.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan does not envisage any scale of growth beyond that being planned for in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036. The policies will ensure that opportunities for additional unplanned growth is limited. As such the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to result in significant increases in public recreation, water demand, or discharges of sewage or surface water drainage.</p>
Significance of risk	Insignificant
Cumulative impacts with other plans	Impacts from the Local Plan to 2036 have been assessed separately and appropriate changes or mitigation put in place.

Table 4: Likely significant effects on Ouse Washes

Site name	Ouse Washes SAC/ SPA/ Ramsar site
Distance to St Ives neighbourhood area	Approximately 5.7 km
Reasons for designation	Support for breeding and over-wintering wetland birds. Spined loach population. Functional washland comprising unimproved neutral grassland. Diverse aquatic flora.
Vulnerability	Much of the conservation importance of the Ouse Washes is due to its continued use as functional washland, with extensive winter flooding and traditional forms of agricultural management, including grazing and mowing of permanent grassland and rotational ditch clearance. In recent years, summer flooding (April- May) has adversely affected both the breeding birds and the traditional washland management regime. This is now being managed through the Ouse Washes Management Strategy. Siltation and nutrient enrichment continue to be a problem.
Impact as a result of the plan	St Ives Neighbourhood Plan will not be allocating sites, but is likely to contain policies that support regeneration opportunities in the town centre, promote a green and blue infrastructure network, flood risk and water management,

	<p>promote active travel and incentivise Zero Carbon Buildings and support 'Urban Greening'. These policies could contribute towards a more positive impact on water quality impacts or any other impacts on the SAC.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan does not envisage any scale of growth beyond that being planned for in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036. The policies will ensure that opportunities for additional unplanned growth is limited. As such the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to result in significant increases in public recreation, water demand, or discharges of sewage or surface water drainage.</p>
Significance of risk	Insignificant
Cumulative impacts with other plans	Impacts from the Local Plan to 2036 have been assessed separately and appropriate changes or mitigation put in place.

Table 5: Likely significant effects on Fenland SAC/ Woodwalton Fen

Site name	Fenland SAC/ Woodwalton Fen Ramsar site
Distance to St Ives neighbourhood area	Approximately 11km to Woodwalton Fen
Reasons for designation	Fenland meadow on calcareous or peaty soil.
Vulnerability	The fenland grasslands are dependent upon traditional management practices of cutting and grazing by livestock. In recent decades scrub and woodland have spread at the expense of fen vegetation. The three constituent sites are all National Nature Reserves and the site management plans include actions to address this problem. Woodwalton Fen takes water in the summer months from the surrounding drains. In the winter months the fen is designed to be used as a flood storage area, although this occurs infrequently. In both these circumstances the water entering the Fen is high in nutrients from agricultural run-off.

Impact as a result of the plan	<p>The Fenland SAC and Woodwalton Fen lie within an area of highly managed drainage and is relatively remote from the neighbourhood area.</p> <p>St Ives Neighbourhood Plan will not be allocating sites, but is likely to contain policies that support regeneration opportunities in the town centre, promote a green and blue infrastructure network, flood risk and water management, promote active travel and incentivise Zero Carbon Buildings and support 'Urban Greening'. These policies could contribute towards a more positive impact on water quality impacts or any other impacts on the SAC.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan does not envisage any scale of growth beyond that being planned for in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036. The policies will ensure that opportunities for additional unplanned growth is limited. As such the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to result in significant increases in public recreation, water demand, or discharges of sewage or surface water drainage.</p>
Significance of risk	Insignificant
Cumulative impacts with other plans	Impacts from the Local Plan to 2036 have been assessed separately and appropriate changes or mitigation put in place.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. This report contains the assessments of the need for the St Ives Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment as required by the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and Appropriate Assessment as required by the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).
- 5.2. The assessment for both of these has been undertaken based on the policies and proposals set out in St Ives Neighbourhood Plan and within the strategic framework established in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036. The draft report concluded that a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment are not required. Consultation with statutory bodies was carried out with their responses in Appendix 1.
- 5.3. In relation to the requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken, the assessment set out in section 3 concludes that as the St Ives Neighbourhood Plan will not have significant effects on the environment. Therefore, an assessment is not required.
- 5.4. In relation to the requirement for Habitats Regulations Assessment to be undertaken, the assessment set out in section 4 concludes that as the St Ives Neighbourhood Plan will not have

an adverse effect on the integrity of any internationally designated sites either on its own or in combination with any other plans. Therefore, an assessment is not required.

Huntingdonshire District Council – Planning Policy

Pathfinder House

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Appendix 1: Consultation Responses

Responses to the consultation agreed with the conclusions of the screening report. The responses from the three statutory bodies of Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency are included below.

Natural England

Date: 15 September 2023
Our ref: 444779
Your ref: St Ives Neighbourhood Plan



Ms Frances Schulz
Huntingdonshire District Council

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

BY EMAIL ONLY

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Schulz

St Ives Neighbourhood Plan - SEA & HRA Screening Report

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 07 August 2023.

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 consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle
Consultations Team



Huntingdonshire District Council
Planning Policy
Pathfinder House St. Marys Street
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE29 3TN

Our ref: AE/2023/128660/01-L01
Your ref: St Ives SEA Screening
Date: 15 September 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

ST IVES STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

Thank you for consulting us on the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for the St Ives Neighbourhood Plan.

Flood Risk

Based on a review of environmental constraints for which we are a statutory consultee, we find that there are areas of fluvial flood risk and watercourses within the neighbourhood plan area. In particular, we note that the boundary does extend into areas of Flood Zones 2 and 3 of the designated main River Great Ouse.

On the basis that future development is steered away from the sensitive aspects of the environment highlighted, we do not consider there to be potential significant environmental effects relating to these environmental constraints. Nevertheless, we recommend the inclusion of relevant policies to cover the management of flood risk. Allocation of any sites and any windfall development delivered through the Plan period should follow the sequential approach. [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) paragraph 161 sets this out.

Local Environment

We encourage you to seek ways in which your neighbourhood plan can improve the local environment. For your information, together with Natural England, Historic England and Forestry Commission we have published joint guidance on neighbourhood planning, which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on

Environment Agency
Ioeni House Cobham Road, Ipswich, IP3 8JD.
Customer services line: 03708 506 506
www.gov.uk/environment-agency
Cont/d..

incorporating the environment into plans. This is available at: [How to consider the environment in Neighbourhood plans - Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#)

We trust this advice is useful.

Yours faithfully

Mr Alasdair Hain-Cole
Planning Officer



Historic England

From: [Fletcher, Will](#)
To: [Frances Schulz](#)
Subject: RE: St Ives Neighbourhood Plan Screening Opinion
Date: 22 September 2023 14:16:49
Attachments: [image033.png](#)
[image007.png](#)
[image009.png](#)

Hi Frances

Thanks, you for taking the time to email me with that wording – The .pdf version we had does not have that wording. Broadly speaking happy to confirm an SEA would not be required on heritage grounds.

Cheers

Will

Dr Will Fletcher FSA
Development Advice Team Leader: East Region

Historic England | Brooklands | 24 Brooklands Avenue | Cambridge | CB2 8BU
www.historicengland.org.uk



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From: [Fletcher, Will](#)
To: [Frances Schulz](#)
Subject: RE: St Ives Neighbourhood Plan Screening Opinion
Date: 14 September 2023 22:13:20
Attachments: [image018.png](#)

Dear Frances

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on this consultation. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment we are keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is considered at all stages and levels of the local planning process. We welcome this opportunity to review the Screening Report for this plan. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied with the Screening Opinion.

The Screening Report indicates that the Council considers that the plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We note that the plan does not propose to allocate any sites for development. However, the Historic Environment section does not specifically address the question above and the section on page 10 appears incomplete (e.g. para 1 *pp* 10 which ends abruptly).

On the basis of the information supplied, its not clear how the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of 'SEA' Directive], is applied to the Historic Environment and therefore whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment would be required.

The views of the other two statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for a SEA is made.

I should be pleased if you can send a copy of the determination as required by REG 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

We should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by you with your correspondence. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the SEA process and, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan) where we consider that, despite the SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the relevant local authorities are closely involved throughout the preparation of the plan and its assessment. They are best placed to advise on; local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the Historic Environment Record (HER), how the allocation, policy or proposal can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets.

Please do contact me, either via email or the number below, if you have any queries

Best wishes
Will Fletcher

Dr Will Fletcher FSA
Development Advice Team Leader: East Region



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