

**Strategic Environmental Assessment - Screening determination for
the Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan**

December 2015

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Legislative requirements
3. The Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan
4. SEA Screening assessment
5. SEA Screening decision

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document provides a screening determination of the need to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2. Bath & North East Somerset, as the 'Responsible Authority' under the SEA Regulations¹, are responsible for undertaking this screening process of the Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan. It will determine if the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, and hence whether SEA is required.
- 1.3. This process has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC², often known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive, which has been transposed into English law by the SEA Regulations.

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¹ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

² European Directive 2001/42/EC "on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment"

2. Legislative requirements

2.1. The Localism Act 2011 requires neighbourhood plans to comply with EU legislation. The screening procedure outlined in this report meets the requirements of the SEA Directive and Regulations, as introduced in Section 1 of this document.

2.2. **Regulation 5 of the SEA Regulations requires an environmental assessment of plans which:**

1. *are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use (Regulation 5, para. (2)(a), and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annex I or II to Council Directive 85/337/EEC (EIA Directive) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (Regulation 5, para. (2)(b)*

2. *in view of the likely effect on sites, have been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) (Regulation 5, para. (3)*

3. *set the framework for future development consent of projects³ (Regulation 5, para. (4)(b)*

4. *are determined to be likely to have significant environmental effects as determined under regulation 9(1) (Regulation 5, para. (4)(c)*

An environmental assessment need not be carried out for:

a) *plans which determine the use of a small area⁴ at local level (Regulation 5, para. (6)(a); or*

b) *plans which are a minor modification⁵ to a plan or programme (Regulation 5, para. (6)(b) unless it has been determined under regulation 9(1) that the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects.*

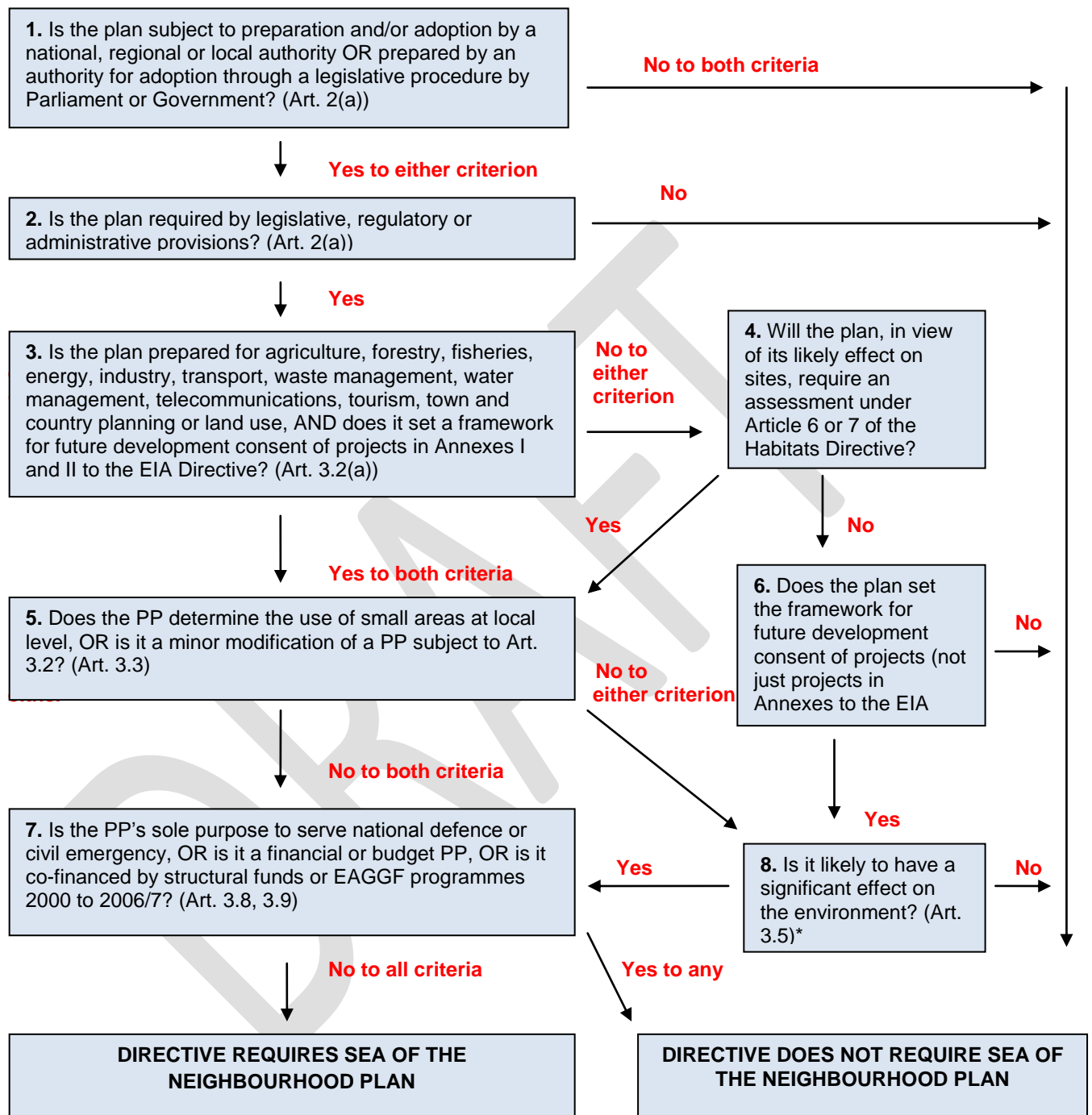
³ European Commission guidance states that plans and programmes which **set the framework for future development consent of projects** would normally contain 'criteria or conditions which guide the way a consenting authority decides an application for development consent'. **Development consent** is defined in the EIA Directive as "the decision of the competent authority or authorities which entitled the developer to proceed with the project" (Article 1(2) of the EIA Directive).

⁴ European Commission guidance suggests that **plans which determine the use of small areas at local level** might include "a building plan which, for a particular, limited area, outlines details of how buildings must be constructed, determining, for example, their height, width or design"

⁵ **'Minor modifications'** should be considered in the context of the plan or programme which is being modified and of the likelihood of their having significant environmental effects. A modification may be of such small order that it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

2.3. The diagram⁶ below shows the SEA Directive's field of application:

Application of the SEA Directive to neighbourhood plans



* Plans falling in this category (No.8) will be screened by B&NES Council to determine if they are likely to have significant environmental effects. This determination will be made on a case by case basis for neighbourhood plans coming forward in B&NES.

NB This diagram is intended as a guide to the criteria for application of the Directive to neighbourhood plans. It has no legal status.

⁶ Taken from *A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive* (ODPM, 2005)

3. The Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan

Background

- 3.1. The parishes of Chew Magna, Chew Stoke, Compton Martin, East Harptree, Hinton Blewett, Ubley and West Harptree are currently preparing a joint neighbourhood plan under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011.
- 3.2. The seven villages are well related both physically and functionally, and share common concerns over the need to provide affordable housing and protect the Green Belt and the Mendip Hills AONB.
- 3.3. The emerging Neighbourhood Plan seeks to actively plan for our future: preserving the distinctive varied built, the natural and historic characteristics that we care about and steering our growth to ensure we continue to have a thriving, vibrant rural community which meets the needs of all those who live and work in the Plan Area and of which everyone can be proud.

Steering Group

In 2014, the Chew valley Area Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was set up to prepare the plan and is led by the seven parish councils. The Group includes a cross section of community representatives that meet regularly to develop the Draft Neighbourhood Plan. Planning officers from B&NES Council have been informal members of the steering group and continue to act as 'link officers' in providing support and advice.

Neighbourhood area designation

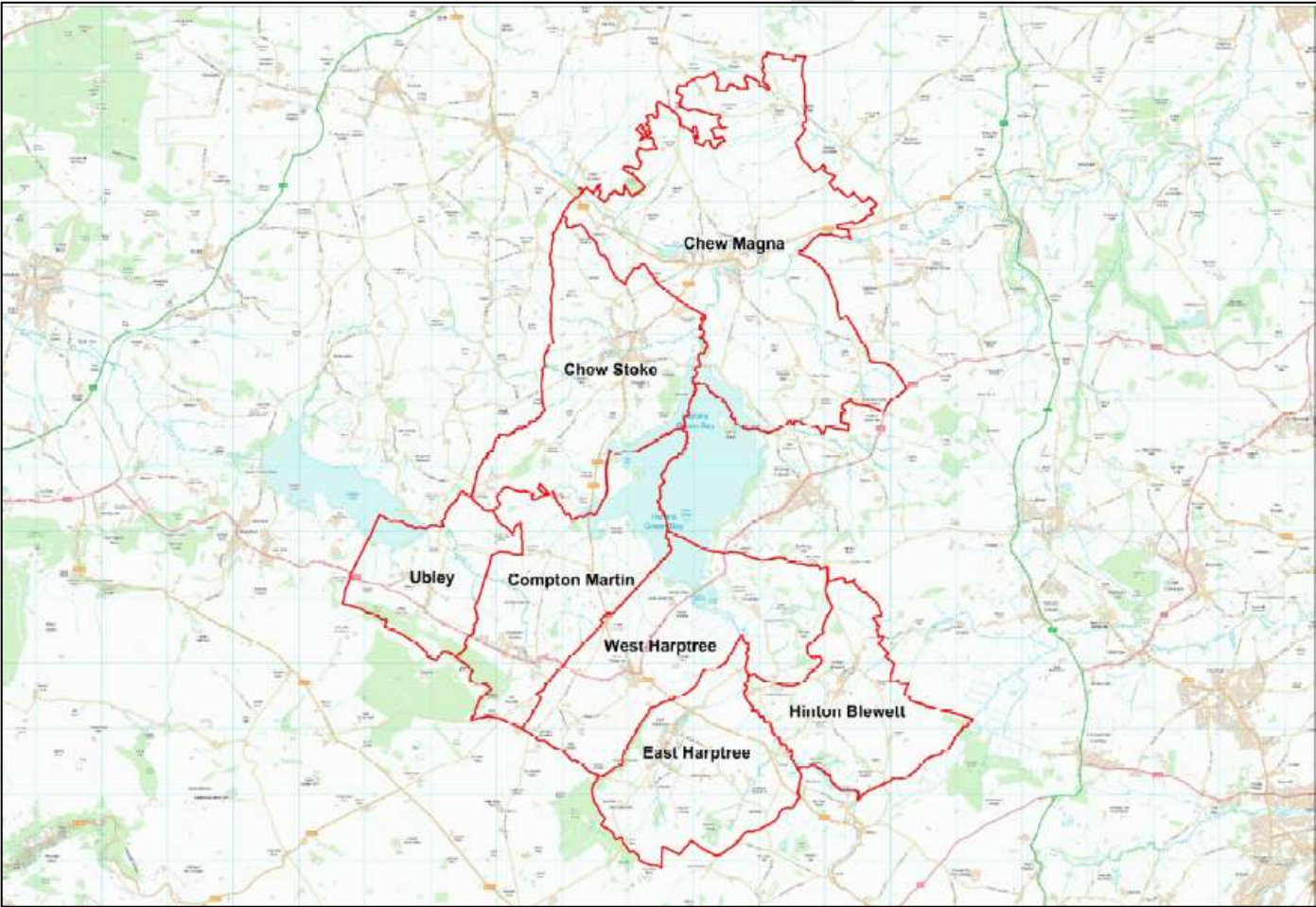
The designation of the Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Area was approved on 26th March 2014.

B&NES Council publicised the Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Area application for consultation over a time period of 6 weeks from 9am 29th January 2014 to 5pm 12th March 2015. No representations were received.

B&NES agree that the proposed Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Area (illustrated in figure 1) is coherent, consistent and appropriate in planning terms.

The Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Area application and designation documents are available to view online at: [Neighbourhood Planning B&NES- Chew Valley Area](#)

Figure 1 Map of the Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan



Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan (XX 20XX)

The latest version of the Draft Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan (and supporting documents) is available to view online at: <http://www.cvnnp.co.uk/>

The development of the Neighbourhood Plan has been driven by extensive community engagement, community drop in's and extensive evidence gathering. This work will culminate into a six week pre-submission consultation on the Draft Plan in Spring 2016. Following this consultation, the Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood plan Steering Group intend to submit their Draft neighbourhood plan and supporting documents to B&NES Council in Spring/Summer 2016, for local authority consultation and then examination.

The emerging Draft Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following vision:

“Thriving rural areas are essential in moving towards a more sustainable pattern of development and balanced communities. We hope that we can help to strengthen our local economies, meet people's social needs and improve local surroundings and transportation networks. In doing so we wish to conserve, enhance and make positive use of:

*Our historic environment, local character and rural setting,
The area's biodiversity (wildlife and habitats), water resources and natural environment*

For a thriving local rural economy, including tourism and additional employment opportunities the plan must include policies to encourage farm diversification that will help to strengthen the farming industry. Within our area the nature of employment is changing, there are fewer jobs in agriculture and, in some parts of the area farms struggle to be viable due to the economies of scale. In such cases, the Plan wishes to be supportive of business ideas to help maintain viability of our farms, including the conversion of barns into a farm shops, specialist tourist facilities thus maintaining or growing employment opportunities to sustain and enhance our economic vitality.

In addition, the plan wants to recognise that during the 21st century many more people will want to work from home, so the concept of rural business hubs should be supported and ultrafast broadband connection should become the “norm”.

The Draft Plan also identifies four key themes, housing development, environment, business and community facilities. From these themes, the Draft Plan will take forward 22 draft planning policies which relate to:

- Housing Development and Environment
- Business and Facilities

The draft policies proposed can be summarised as:

Housing Development and Environment

- Policy HDE1 - Rural Landscape Character
- Policy HDE2 - Settlement Build Character
- Policy HDE3 - Important Views
- Policy HDE4 - Skyline Policy
- Policy HDE5 - Housing Need
- Policy HDE6 - Sustainability
- Policy HDE7 - Traffic Impact
- Policy HDE8 - Parking for Domestic Dwellings

- Policy HDE9 - Sustainable Drainage to Minimise Flooding
- Policy HDE10 - Community Green Space Design
- Policy HDE11 - Protection of Designated Green Spaces
- Policy HDE12 - Tree and Ancient Hedgerow Conservation
- Policy HDE13 - Green Corridors and Biodiversity
- Policy HDE14 - Water Life Biodiversity
- Policy HDE15 - Dark Skies Policy

Business and Facilities

- Policy BF1 - Retention of Small Businesses
- Policy BF2 - Protecting Significant Facilities
- Policy BF3 - Diversification for Tourism
- Policy BF4 - Community Facilities
- Policy BF5 - Chew Valley School
- Policy BF6 - Parking for Non-Domestic Developments
- Policy BF7 - Fibre to the Premises Internet Connectivity

Planning Officers at B&NES Council have been engaged with the neighbourhood plan throughout the plan making process. As part of this involvement, internal meetings were held by the council in July 2015 to discuss possible draft options and identify potential issues at an early stage.

At this stage it is considered that the Draft Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan (and draft planning policies) broadly conform with higher level policy, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the B&NES Core Strategy. The Core Strategy set out the strategic objectives for B&NES, focussing on key issues and a delivery strategy for achieving these objectives, setting out how much development is intended to happen, where, when, and by what means it will be delivered.

Chew Magna and Chew Stoke villages are identified in the adopted Core Strategy as '*villages washed over by the Green Belt*'. In those villages washed over by the Green Belt development proposals will be considered in the context of national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. In addition the rural exceptions site Policy RA4 in the adopted B&NES Core Strategy will provide the opportunity for affordable housing based on local needs.

The villages of Ubley, Hinton Blewett, Compton Martin, West Harptree and East Harptree meet the criteria of a B&NES Core Strategy Policy RA2 village. In these villages there will be some limited residential development of around 10-15 dwellings will be allowed in those villages. Such development will only be permitted within the housing development boundary defined on the Policies Map.

The Draft Placemaking Plan (Part 2 of the B&NES Local Plan) provides details on site allocations for the RA2 villages and therefore the Draft Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan will not allocate any development sites.

4. SEA Screening assessment

B&NES Council, as the 'Responsible Authority', consider that the Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan falls within the scope of the SEA Regulations on the basis that it is a plan that:

- a)** is subject to preparation or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level (Regulation 2);
- b)** is prepared for town and country planning or land use and it is a plan that sets the framework for future development consent of projects generally (Regulation 5, para. 4); and
- c)** will apply to a wider area other than a small area at local level and is not a minor modification to an existing plan or programme (Regulation 5, para. 6).

A determination under Regulation 9 is therefore required as to whether the Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The screening requirements set out in Regulation 9 and Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations includes two sets of characteristics for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment. These relate to i) the characteristics of the Chew Valley Area neighbourhood plan and ii) the characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected by the seven parishes that make up the Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan Area. In making a determination, B&NES Council will take into account the criteria specified in Schedule I of the Regulations as follows:

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

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 the effects;
- (b)** the cumulative nature of the effects;
- (c)** the transboundary nature of the effects;
- (d)** the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);
- (e)** the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- (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; and

(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

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The screening assessment of the Draft Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan is set out below:

Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regs.)	Significant environmental effects likely?	Justification and evidence
1. The characteristics of plans , having regard, in particular, to:		
(a) 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	No	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is not seeking to allocate housing in any of the seven parishes (Chew Magna, Chew Stoke, Ubley, Hinton Blewett, Compton Martin, East Harptree and West Harptree).</p> <p>The Draft Neighbourhood Plan has draft policies on settlement built character and on housing need. The draft housing need policy is based on providing the types of property i.e. retirement homes, retirement complex, downsizing, sheltered accommodation, low cost and affordable housing that the Chew Valley Area need as demonstrated by the most recent housing needs survey. It is envisaged that this housing need will be meet through in-fill sites and the development of brownfield sites in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted B&NES Core Strategy Policy RA2 which has been subject to a separate SEA.</p>
(b) the degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	No	The neighbourhood plan is produced by the Chew Valley Area Steering Group and the local community to influence development at the local level. It does not influence Strategic plans higher up in the hierarchy.
(c) the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	No	<p>The draft neighbourhood plan is a land-use plan that promotes sustainable development; it is not specifically a plan for integrating environmental considerations. The Draft Chew Valley Area Plan makes many references to the protection of the Chew Valley area landscape and environment, including the Green Belt and the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.</p> <p>There are various draft policies within the Plan which seek to protect the environment, whilst encouraging sustainable in-fill development or redevelopment of brownfield sites.</p> <p>The Draft Plan also acknowledges the presence of protected European species and the proximity to the Chew Valley Lake Special Protection Area and seeks to protect the European species and the Chew Valley Lake.</p>
(d) environmental problems relevant to	No	The Draft HRA screening report makes reference that the Chew Valley Area

Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regs.)	Significant environmental effects likely?	Justification and evidence
the plan		<p>Neighbourhood Plan area falls within the buffer zones of two European sites - Chew Valley Lake Special Protection Area (SPA) and the North Somerset & Mendips Bat Special Area of Conservation (SAC).</p> <p>The Draft HRA screening report has made reference to the fact that The CVNP area falls within the buffer zones of two European sites - Chew Valley Lake Special Protection Area (SPA) and the North Somerset & Mendips Bat Special Area of Conservation (SAC). However, the plan does not allocate sites for development and is not promoting development over and above that contained within the adopted B&NES Core Strategy which have has been subject to SEA and HRA.</p>
(e) the relevance of the plan for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	No	The neighbourhood plan is not relevant as a plan for implementing community legislation.
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 the effects	No	Any environmental effects are not considered to be significant judging by the proposals in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan. Any effects of the limited amount of development proposed is likely to be localised and short-term and related to the construction stage. The Draft HRA screening identified opportunities for impact avoidance and mitigation which have been incorporated into the draft Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan.
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects	No	No cumulative effects considered to be significant.
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects	No	No transboundary effects considered likely to be significant.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	No	No environmental effects considered likely to risk human health or the environment.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and	No	The Draft Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan covers seven rural parishes with an area of approximately 4,423ha. The Chew Valley neighbourhood Plan covers has a population of

Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regs.)	Significant environmental effects likely?	Justification and evidence
size of the population likely to be affected);		approximately 4,370 residents (ONS census 2011). Significant effects due to the geographic size of the area and population size are not considered likely.
(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;	No	<p>The neighbourhood plan is located in the Chew Valley Landscape Character Area which is characterised by Low lying and undulating valley of the River Chew. There are SSSIs and local wildlife sites in the plan area and development has the potential to impact upon the North Somerset & Mendips Bats SAC.</p> <p>The importance of the cultural heritage of the area, including many ancient and listed buildings is acknowledged in the individual villages Placemaking Plan submissions which is a key evidence base for the Plan. Further Policies HDE1- Rural landscape Character and HDE2- Settlement Built Character will include a requirement for any new development to mindful of and sensitive to the physical and environmental context of the site and its location, and for the design, contemporary or traditional, to be a harmonious addition to the rural environment, complement the local built heritage, and sit well in the landscape. It is considered that the proposals put forward will not significantly affect the special natural characteristics or cultural heritage of the area, or lead to an exceedance of environmental quality standards.</p>
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	No	<p>There are national and European landscape/biodiversity designations within and on the edge of the plan area. However, the limited proposals of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan that accord with the emerging Core Strategy of the local authority and are not considered likely to lead to significant effects on these designations. The B&NES Core Strategy has been subject to SEA and HRA and this plan does not propose anything over and above what is contained in those higher-level plans.</p> <p>The Draft HRA screening identified opportunities for impact avoidance and mitigation which have been incorporated into the Draft Chew Valley Area Plan. Further planning applications would be required for any development and as there are no sites allocated this would provide additional safeguards.</p>

5. SEA Screening decision

Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations requires that the responsible authority shall determine whether or not a plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. The responsible authority shall —

- (a) take into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 to these Regulations; and
- (b) consult the consultation bodies.

Where the responsible authority determines that the plan 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.

B&NES Council consider that the proposed Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and accordingly does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This decision is made for the following key reasons:

1. The neighbourhood plan proposals are considered to be in general conformity with the Core Strategy documents of Bath & North East Somerset Council and this has been subject to SEA and HRA assessments.
2. The Draft Neighbourhood Plan is not proposing additional development over and above that described in the emerging Core Strategy document.

Chew Magna and Chew Stoke villages are identified in the adopted Core Strategy as 'villages washed over by the Green Belt'. In those villages washed over by the Green Belt development proposals will be considered in the context of national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. In addition the rural exceptions site Policy RA4 in the adopted B&NES Core Strategy will provide the opportunity for affordable housing based on local needs.

The villages of Ubley, Hinton Blewett, Compton Martin, West Harptree and East Harptree meet the criteria of a B&NES Core Strategy Policy RA2 village. In these villages there will be some limited residential development of around 10-15 dwellings will be allowed in those villages. Such development will only be permitted within the housing development boundary defined on the Policies Map.

3. The Draft HRA screening has confirmed that The Draft HRA that there are opportunities for impact avoidance and mitigation which have been incorporated into the draft Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Development Plan.

This Draft Screening Report has been sent to Natural England, Environment Agency and English Heritage for their opinions.

Appendix 1: Responses from Natural England and English Heritage

Follow up. Start by 22 February 2016. Due by 22 February 2016.
You forwarded this message on 22/02/2016 10:05.

From: Stuart, David [redacted]
To: Julie O'Rourke
Cc:
Subject: RE: Chew Valley Area Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan HRA and SEA Screening

Message: NP checklist.pdf (387 KB) NP schedule of information sources.doc (199 KB)

Sent: Wed 17/02/2016 10:05

Dear Julie

Thank you for your consultation on this neighbourhood plan SEA. I can confirm that we have no objection to the view that an SEA will not be required.

This is our first introduction to this neighbourhood plan and so we have taken the opportunity to see if the emerging document raises any issues which we think it would be helpful to highlight at this stage in its production.

We note that there are no site allocations and that there is an emphasis on preserving and enhancing the character of the plan area. We are pleased to see how the community has been able to identify those detailed aspects of local historic character such as views and hedges which are important, and that each settlement has been the subject of a build character assessment to inform any proposals for change. Information on or examples of the latter have not been made available and we couldn't find details which we could access on the plan website. We would be interested in viewing this evidence in due course, not to challenge its integrity or suitability for this purpose but so that we can see how it might provide an example of good practice that we can refer to other plan communities.

It appears that the scope of the plan and the likely range of themes, policies and proposals is quite well defined and there may be limited desire within the community to explore whether there are additional aspects of the areas historic environment or issues associated with it which the plan might accommodate. But our records indicate that the area is rich in designated heritage assets, for example, containing 5 Grade I, 9 Grade II* and 107 Grade II Listed Buildings, 5 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and 7 Conservation Areas.

I therefore have attached a schedule of sources of information which the community might still find useful together with a suggested checklist.

Otherwise, we would only want to congratulate the community in its progress to date and wish it well in the completion of its plan.

Kind regards

David

David Stuart | Historic Places Adviser South West
Direct Line [redacted]

Historic England | 29 Queen Square | Bristol | BS1 4ND

We have launched four new, paid-for Enhanced Advisory Services, providing enhancements to our existing free planning and listing services. For more information on the new Enhanced Advisory Services as well as our free services go to our website: HistoricEngland.org.uk/EAS

From: Julie O'Rourke [mailto:julie_orourke@bathnes.gov.uk]
Sent: 31 December 2015 10:36
To: Stuart, David
Subject: Chew Valley Area Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan HRA and SEA Screening
Importance: High

Dear Consultee,

Please find attached a Draft SEA Screening Report and Draft HRA for the Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan Area. This SEA Report has been prepared on behalf of the Chew Valley Area by Bath and North East Somerset Council. The Chew Valley Area Neighbourhood Plan consists of

DRAFT

Date: 19 February 2016
Our ref: 175270
Your ref: -



Julie O'Rourke,
Planning Officer
Bath & North East Somerset Council
BY EMAIL ONLY
Julie_O'Rourke@bathnes.gov.uk

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

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms O'Rourke

Chew Valley Area Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan HRA and SEA Screening

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 31 December 2015 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

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.

General

We find much to welcome in the draft Chew Valley Area Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan, which appears to be a thoroughly researched and generally positive document that reflects local aspirations for the area and accords with other policies.

The importance it places on the natural environment is particularly welcome, and is well reflected throughout the Plan, including in the Vision and the *wish to conserve, enhance and make positive use of:*

- *our historic environment, local character and rural setting,*
- *the area's biodiversity (wildlife and habitats), water resources and natural environment.*

The protection of the natural environment is also supported in the draft Plan objectives and policies, including those relating to Rural Landscape Character, Important Views, Skyline, Green Corridors Water Life Biodiversity, Tree and Ancient Hedgerow Conservation Community Green Space Design.

Strategic Environmental Assessment - Screening

We have considered the screening assessment of the Chew Valley Area Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan against the requirements of the criteria set out in the SEA Directive.

Based on the information provided we are satisfied that the proposed Plan is unlikely to have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect. The Council's screening decision that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required appears reasonable.

Habitats Regulations – screening

We have also considered the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) screening paper for the Chew Valley Area Draft Neighbourhood Plan

Based on the information provided we are satisfied that the proposed Plan will not result in significant effects on the Chew Valley Lake Special Protection Area (SPA) or the North Somerset & Mendips Bat Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and can be screened out from further stages of assessment because significant effects on these or other European Sites are unlikely to occur, alone or in combination.

Chew Valley Lake

We note the reference in the HRA screening report 'conclusions and recommendations' section to the Plan Aspiration to create a round lake path and the potential for this to impact directly on the Chew Valley Lake SPA. The HRA report goes on to say *Inclusion as a policy at this stage would be difficult, and would probably trigger a full Appropriate Assessment under the Habitat Regulations, and delay the wider plan.*

Natural England agrees that a route around the whole lake does have the potential to impact on the SPA and would require very careful consideration due to its location within/adjacent to the SSSI and SPA and the sensitivity of qualifying features to human disturbance. However we also understand there has been local support for the creation of a round lake path for quite some time and acknowledge the potential wider benefits such a route could bring. With this in mind we would be pleased to discuss potential route options, design and mitigation with respect to the designated sites with interested parties.

Protected species

We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies / proposals within the plan. It remains the case, however, that the responsible authority should provide information supporting this screening decision, sufficient to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact me on 07900 608311. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Grundy
Somerset, Avon & Wiltshire Area Team