

11 April 2018

Mr David Hutchison

BY EMAIL to david.hutchison@btinternet.com

Dear Mr Hutchison,

Re: Modifications to Findon Neighbourhood Plan - Screening Opinion as to whether Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and/or Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) are required

I am writing in response to your request for a screening opinion to assess whether the Modified Findon Neighbourhood Development Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Sustainability Appraisal (SA) or a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

When adopted, Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) will be used by the local planning authority to determine planning applications for the Neighbourhood Areas that they cover. As the parish falls within the South Downs National Park, the policies for the NDP, once adopted, will form part of the planning policy framework for that part of the National Park in the Parish of Findon.

Background

The basis for SEA and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is the European Directive 2001 / 42 / EC which was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations.

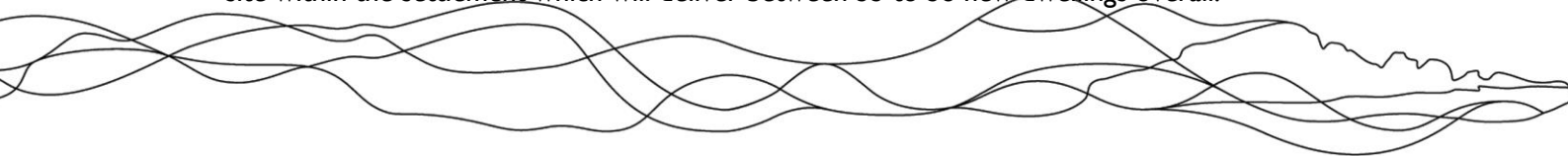
Whether a NDP requires SEA, and (if so) the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed in the draft plan. A SEA may be required, for example where:

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

When deciding on whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects, the local authority will consult with Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. Where the local planning authority determines that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment) it should prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.

Screening Opinion

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) has based its screening opinion on the understanding that the Parish Council will prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan that:

- will have policies consistent with national policy;
 - will have policies that are in general conformity with existing and emerging local plan policies;
 - will plan to allocate 3 greenfield sites adjacent to the settlement boundary and one brownfield site within the settlement which will deliver between 33 to 38 new dwellings overall.
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The SDNPA has consulted with the three main environmental bodies i.e. Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency regarding whether in their opinion a SEA or HRA are required for the proposed Modified Neighbourhood Plan. The results of this consultation are set out below:

Consultation

Natural England

SEA

In terms of national and international habitats, we accept that there are not likely to be significant effects, based on the current understanding of the possible location of proposed development in the context of the location and sensitivities of designated habitats (and landscapes).

HRA

We accept that the proposals set out in the Plan are unlikely to have a significant effect on Natura 2000 sites in plan area and in adjoining parishes and districts, and that a full Appropriate Assessment is not deemed necessary.

Historic England

We would expect the Historic Environment Record and the Authority's archaeological adviser to be consulted for potential archaeological records, particularly on the three greenfield sites proposed for allocation.

Provided those consultations do not identify any particular archaeological interest on any of the sites, we agree with the Authority's draft Opinion that the modifications to the made Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to have any significant effects on the historic environment, such that the Plan be subject to strategic environmental assessment. However, we may wish to review that opinion when we see the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

Environment Agency

Based on the information supplied, we do not feel that the modified plan has the potential to give rise to significant environmental effects for areas within our remit.

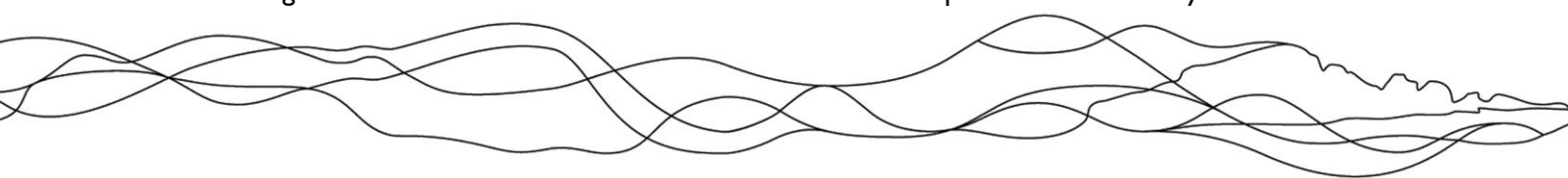
Please note however that the proposed allocated sites are located in sensitive groundwater areas. Sites HD10 and HD11 are located in Source Protection Zone 3 and sites HD12 and HD13 are located in Source Protection Zone 2. This should be considered during the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Statement of Reasons

As stated above, where the local planning authority determines that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment) it should prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.

SEA

In terms of SEA, there are a number of sensitive areas within and adjacent to the Findon Designated Neighbourhood Area. The Parish has two areas within the parish that include part of designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's). These are part of the Chanctonbury Hill SSSI and part of Cissbury Ring SSSI. The Parish has 26 listed buildings of which the Church of St John the Baptist has a Grade I listing it has six scheduled ancient monuments which include part of Chanctonbury Hill and



Cissbury Ring hillforts, flint mines, saucer and platform barrows and one conservation and another potentially proposed at Nepcote. Findon Village has suffered several major floods in recent history, notably in 2010, 2012 and 2014.

However, the proposed allocation sites themselves are not directly adjacent to any of the sensitive environmental areas mentioned above. While the Modified Neighbourhood Plan is proposing to allocate different sites to that of the emerging SDLP, the overall amount of development proposed in the Findon NDP is in line with the overall housing provision set out for Findon in the Pre-submission South Downs Local Plan which has itself been subject to SEA, Sustainability Appraisal and HRA.

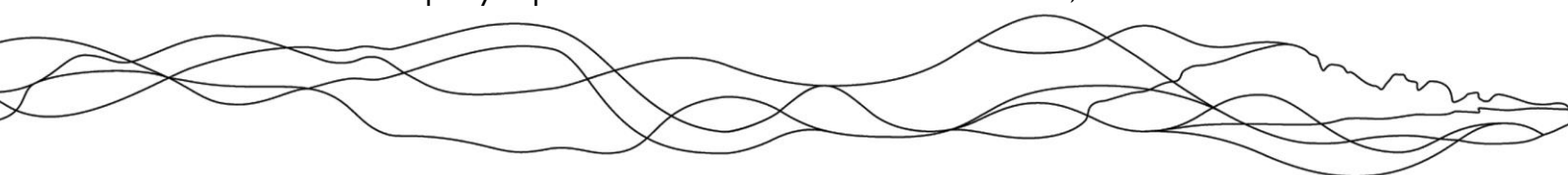
In addition, alongside the proposed modifications, the existing Made NDP contains a number of policies covering a range of topics that seek to ensure that development proposals do not cause harm to, and where possible, enhance the landscape character and the local environment of Findon Parish. The Environment and Heritage sections seek to ensure that flood risk and water pollution is minimised throughout the Parish, local hedgerows, watercourses and wildlife corridors are conserved and enhanced for their landscape and wildlife value in partnership with local landowners, designated and non-designated heritage assets (including listed buildings, scheduled monuments, the Conservation Area and buildings of special character) which contribute to the heritage value and setting of the Parish are conserved and enhanced, local landscape and wildlife corridors are linked to wider networks including Green Infrastructure Corridors and public rights of way and the countryside within the Parish is protected.

HRA

A HRA Screening Assessment of the Modified Findon NDP has also been undertaken. This assesses whether there are likely to be any potential significant effects on internationally important wildlife sites Natura 2000 (also known as European sites) and therefore whether further HRA work is required. The Arun Valley Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site is designated for its wintering population of Bewick's swan. It is widely accepted that Bewick's swans feed on suitable farmland up to 5km from the designated site. As such, suitable fields within 5km of the SPA could constitute important supporting habitat if they support a large enough percentage of the SPA population on a regular basis. The settlement of Findon is located approximately 9 kms from the designated site, therefore this impact can be screened out.

Other potential impact pathways in relation to the Arun Valley SPA and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) are: - Hydrology (water quantity (abstraction) and water quality (siltation and wastewater treatment) recreational pressure from increased visitors and air quality impacts from increased traffic movements. In terms of water quantity (abstraction): the Appropriate Assessment for the Southern Water Water Resource Management Plan considered future public water supply abstraction impacts on the Arun Valley SAC/SPA/Ramsar site. It concluded that no adverse effects on integrity of the SAC/SPA/Ramsar site would arise. With regards to wastewater treatment, provided new development can be accommodated within the existing consent headroom for the relevant wastewater treatment works, it is considered that the existing initiatives being implemented to ensure compliance of relevant Wastewater Treatment Works discharges and improve diffuse pollution will ensure that there will not be a likely significant effect on the Arun Valley SAC/SPA/Ramsar site.

Recreational pressure is not identified as a specific issue in the Site Improvement Plan for the Arun Valley SAC/SPA/Ramsar. In terms of air quality, the scale of development proposed at Findon is such that there are not likely to be significant effects alone. However, air quality is a potential issue when considered in combination with other plans and projects. Given the strategic nature of in-combination traffic and air quality effects, this issue is by definition, one that cannot be fully explored and resolved by an individual neighbourhood plan. The National Park Authority has undertaken assessment work on air quality as part of HRA of the Pre-Submission Local Plan, which has



considered these in-combination effects. This impact has therefore been screened out as it has been assessed and addressed through the HRA of Local Plan, which was formally published in September 2017.

Conclusion

None of the environmental bodies consulted have stated that they consider that the modified Findon NDP would have significant environmental effects that would trigger the need for SEA or HRA.

Based on the Statement of Reasons above, the overall conclusion of the SDNPA is that the Findon NDP is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and therefore does not require SEA/SA.

In respect of HRA, the nearest International designation is Arun Valley SPA, which is approximately 9kms away from the designated Neighbourhood Area. The level of additional development proposed in the Modified Findon NDP is unlikely to have significant environmental effects on this area either alone or in combination with other plans and projects and therefore HRA is also not required.

Yours sincerely,

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