



East Cambridgeshire
District Council

06 December 2021

Strategic Environmental Assessment Determination Statement
Isleham Neighbourhood Plan

Purpose of Determination Statement

This Determination Statement has been produced by East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) as “responsible authority”, to meet the requirements of Regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. It sets out ECDC’s main conclusions in respect of significant environmental effects likely to arise from implementation of the draft Isleham Neighbourhood Plan (INP)

This Determination Statement forms a Submission Document for the purposes of neighbourhood planning, as required by The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) (reg. 15(e)(ii)).

It is intended that this Determination Statement be read alongside the *Environmental Report*.

Scoping Report

In June 2021, ECDC consulted the statutory bodies on the *SEA Scoping Report: Isleham Neighbourhood Plan (June 2021)* for the purpose of agreeing the scope of the assessment. Responses were received from *Environment Agency, Historic England* and *Natural England*.

The *Scoping Report* included a screening assessment of the draft INP. From the initial screening assessment ECDC concluded that the Isleham Neighbourhood Development Plan (INP):

- requires a full *Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)* (i.e. *screened in*); and
- does not require a full *Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)* (i.e. *screened out*).

Following consultation on the Scoping Report, ECDC prepared the *Environmental Report*. The Environmental Report documents the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the draft INP.

Environmental Report & Non-Technical Summary

The Environmental Report meets the necessary regulatory requirements, with section 2 describing the SEA methodology, section 3 providing a ‘baseline’ of key information about the Neighbourhood Plan and Neighbourhood Area, including an outline of the content and objectives of the draft INP, its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes including the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015, and relevant environmental characteristics and issues relating to the Isleham Neighbourhood Area.

Section 4 provides assessment of the draft INP against various SEA themes to identify the likelihood of significant effects on the environment, drawing on a broad range of environmental constraints and characteristics.

At section 5, the Environmental Report appraises the draft INP and a number of *alternative policy options* against an SEA Framework for the purpose of identifying measures to reduce, prevent or avoid adverse effects on the environment. Section 5 also provides indicators and targets for monitoring the performance of the draft INP.

The Environmental Report's section 6 sets out the assessment's conclusions and serves as a *non-technical summary*.

Summary of significant environmental effects and mitigation measures

The draft INP proposes a range of policies to manage the development and use of land within the Isleham Neighbourhood Area. From the initial screening assessment, the potential for likely significant environmental effects were identified relating to the development of proposed site allocation for major residential development, these were:

- Potential effects on County Wildlife Sites within, or in proximity of, the Neighbourhood Area;
- The proposed site allocation intersects a Source Protection Zone, and therefore has the potential to impact upon groundwater resources; and
- The proposed site allocation adjoins Isleham's Conservation Area and is in proximity of non-designated heritage assets of archaeological importance. The effects of development on and the setting of the Conservation Area and non-designated heritage assets which were not known at the screening stage.

Other policies generally accord with the adopted Local Plan, the potential environmental effects of which were duly assessed through the plan-making process.

The *Strategic Environmental Assessment* of the INP involved assessment of the proposed site allocation, alternative site options, and a policy option in which the site allocation is omitted, against ECDC's Sustainability Appraisal's framework. During the assessment, ECDC carried out informal consultation with the statutory consultation bodies, and sought bespoke archaeological advice from Cambridgeshire County Council's *Historic Environment Team*.

The Environmental Report identifies a number of mitigation measures to be incorporated into the draft INP's policies. These measures relate to matters of nature conservation, protection of groundwater resources, conservation of the historic environment, and provision of community infrastructure. During preparation of the Environmental Report, the statutory consultation bodies were provided opportunity to comment on the recommended mitigation measures.

The assessment was an iterative process, involving ongoing engagement with the statutory consultation bodies, Isleham Parish Council and other stakeholders. ECDC is therefore of the view that the Environmental Report has responded appropriately to the views of relevant stakeholders.

Determination

The initial screening assessment concluded that the draft INP could lead to significant effects on the environment. ECDC is satisfied that, *subject to incorporating the measures recommended by the Environmental Report into the INP's proposed policies*, such effects can be adequately mitigated or avoided.

Consequently, the INP *where modified* is not expected to give rise to significant effects on the environment.