



East Cambridgeshire
District Council

4 July 2022

Strategic Environmental Assessment Determination Statement
Swaffham Bulbeck Neighbourhood Plan

Purpose of Determination Statement

This Determination Statement has been produced by East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) as the “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 Swaffham Bulbeck Neighbourhood Plan (SBNP).

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)(1)(ii)).

It is intended that this Determination Statement be read alongside the Swaffham Bulbeck Neighbourhood Plan *Environmental Report* (including its addendum).

Scoping Report

In June 2021, ECDC consulted the statutory bodies on the *SEA Scoping Report: Swaffham Bulbeck 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 SBNP. From the initial screening assessment ECDC concluded that the Swaffham Bulbeck Neighbourhood Development Plan (SBNP):

- 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 SBNP.

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 SBNP, its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes including the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015, and relevant environmental characteristics and issues relating to the Swaffham Bulbeck Neighbourhood Area.

Section 4 provides assessment of the draft SBNP 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 SBNP and a number of *alternative policy options* against a 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 SBNP.

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 SBNP proposes a range of policies to manage the development and use of land within the Swaffham Bulbeck Neighbourhood Area. From the initial screening assessment, the potential for likely significant environmental effects were identified, these were:

- Sensitive SSSIs, including Devil's Dyke SSSI, due to the potential for increased recreational pressure from proposed development; and
- The historic environment, notably the significance of the Swaffham Bulbeck Conservation Area and certain Listed Buildings in the vicinity of the proposed site allocation.

The assessment identifies just one draft policy which could give rise to 'likely significant effects' – draft Policy SWB8 – Cemetery / Pony Field Site. The policy allocates a site for major residential development of approximately 45 dwellings.

The *Strategic Environmental Assessment* of the SBNP involved assessment of the proposed site allocation, considered whether there were alternative site options, and considered 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 consultation bodies as deemed necessary.

The Environmental Report identifies a number of mitigation measures to be incorporated into the draft SBNP. These measures relate to matters of nature conservation and conservation of the historic environment.

The assessment was an iterative process, involving ongoing engagement with appropriate consultation bodies, Swaffham Bulbeck 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 SBNP could lead to significant effects on the environment. ECDC is satisfied that, *subject to incorporating the measures recommended by the Environmental Report into the SBNP's proposed policies*, such effects can be adequately mitigated or avoided.

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