

Date: 14th April 2016

Our ref: 181438



Mike Burton

East Northamptonshire Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Mike

Screening consultation: Regulation 14 Consultation and SEA/HRA Screening for Stanwick Neighbourhood Plan

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 16th March 2016. We have also been consulted by Stanwick Parish Council on 21st March 2016 on the draft plan and this letter is intended to respond to both consultations.

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.

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests are concerned (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils) are concerned, that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan. Natural England has no comments on the specific policies in the plan but we make the following comments in relation to SEA and HRA Screening.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans in light of the SEA Directive is contained within the National Planning Practice Guidance¹. The guidance highlights three triggers that may require the production of an SEA, for instance where:

- 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.

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that in our view the proposals/allocations contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

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.

Notwithstanding this advice, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all potential environmental assets. As a result the responsible authority should raise environmental issues that we have not identified on local or national biodiversity action plan species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites or local landscape character, with its own ecological and/or landscape advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local landscape and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by this plan, before determining whether an SA/SEA is necessary.

Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA/SA screening stage, should the responsible authority seek our views on the scoping or environmental report stages. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Natural England is in agreement with the conclusion of the screening report in relation to HRA as the location and scale of development included within the plan would not represent a likely significant effect to any European Site.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Ross Holdgate on 0208 026 5934. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Ross Holdgate

Essex, Herts, Beds, Cambs and Northants Area Team

Cc Mrs J Hodgson – Clerk to Stanwick Parish Council
