

Your ref: |
Our ref: 6.3a BNP
Please ask Frank Rallings
for:
Direct dial no: 01424 787634
Date: 11 March 2019

Donna Moles Consultancy
moles.consultancy@gmail.com
by email

Dr Anthony Leonard
Executive Director

Town Hall
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex TN39 3JX

Dear Donna

SEA Screening for the Battle Neighbourhood Plan

Further to your request for an SEA screening opinion I have now received the comments of the Statutory Environmental Bodies (SEB's) which are as stated below :

Natural England

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.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening opinion

Where Neighbourhood Plans could have significant environmental effects, they may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended). Further guidance on deciding whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects and the requirements for consulting Natural England on SEA are set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance at:

<http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal/sustainability-appraisal-requirements-for-neighbourhood-plans>

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.

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Historic England

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the requested screening opinion for SEA of the Battle Neighbourhood Plan. We are pleased to see positive elements of plan making already emerging, including the character assessment document among the supporting information that you have supplied.



We note that the steering group have already undertaken some review of potential housing sites and have established a short list. Given the plan area's importance for its historic environment and the density of heritage assets (including larger designated assets such as the Conservation Area and Registered Battlefield, which are likely to have extensive settings, we suggest that allocating sites for development that have not otherwise been assessed for a higher level or equivalent plan document, such as the Local Plan, has potential for likely significant environmental effects, depending on the locations of those sites and their relationship with heritage assets (including non-designated assets and previously unidentified assets). As such, unless it is demonstrable that none of the sites assessed as potential allocation sites would have impacts that merit assessment (including where their allocation might be suitable subject to mitigation), we feel that SEA of the plan should be required.

To determine the likely effects of the plan and any mitigation measures that may be required, it may be necessary for any assessment of potential allocation options to include consideration of sites that have already been rejected where there is any reasonable potential of their being considered for allocation.

We would be pleased to advise on any potential sustainability objectives that should be considered, but given Battle's particular historic significance we would suggest that whilst it may be suitable to include one or more general objectives to consider the plan area's designated and non-designated heritage assets according to their significance, it would also be appropriate to include separate objectives to focus attention on the need to conserve and enhance the heritage significance of the registered battlefield and listed and scheduled abbey complex. It would also be helpful to consider whether an objective should be identified to manage potential conflict between the promotion and enjoyment of the town's heritage as an asset attracting visitors and its continuing conservation and the character and amenity of the town as a whole - sorry this is a bit of a mouthful - It might be helpful to discuss with you and the steering group whether there are any perceived conflicts in the town in this area.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any queries

Yours sincerely

Rob Lloyd-Sweet

Rob Lloyd-Sweet | Historic Places Adviser | South East England | Historic England
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Environment Agency

We have no comments to make at this stage from a planning point of view but are happy to respond at the scoping stage under our discretionary planning advice service.



Neighbourhood Planning –National Planning Practice Guidance

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans in light of the SEA Directive is contained within the National Planning Practice Guidance. 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.

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, an SEA should be undertaken for the Battle Neighbourhood Plan (BNP). I have set out the reasoning below in relation to the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects, as contained in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

1. The BNP will allocate sites and form part of the 'development plan' and thereby exert a direct and substantial influence over development proposals coming forward in the period.
- 2 As regards the characteristics of the area covered by the BNP (as set out in Schedule 1(2) of the regulations), I note particularly that:
 - a) the area is wholly within the High Weald AONB, which enjoys the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty;
 - b) Battle is an historic town containing the Abbey and the 1066 Battlefield, a Conservation Area, and many listed buildings along with Ancient Monuments, Parks & Gardens of Special Historic Interest, Archaeological Notification Areas and Archaeologically Sensitive Areas located within the town and its environs;
 - c) Within the rural part of Battle parish there are different components of the AONB including Ancient Woodlands, SSSI's, Local Wildlife Sites (SNCI's) and certain BAP habitats, along with areas liable to flooding.

Also, to clarify the process in relation to the 'scoping' stage, RDC has already produced a 'Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report' that is considered applicable to the SEA process of Neighbourhood Plans produced within the District. It can be found on our web-site here: <http://www.rother.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5006>

Particular reference should be made to the 'Sustainability Appraisal Framework' (Task A4) which contains decision-aiding questions to help inform the SEA process. As the Scoping Report states, this framework *'is also considered relevant and applicable to Neighbourhood Plans produced within the District'*. The scope of information to be included in the environmental report should address the SEA objectives set out below. The level of detail should reflect the geographical extent of the NP as far as practicable, drawing on the Council's own Scoping Report referred to above and baseline information already provided and any available from other sources to meet regulatory requirements.



In relation to the SEA process for the Battle Neighbourhood Plan, it is considered that the following objectives from the Sustainability Appraisal Framework should be screened in for SEA purposes:

- 7: Improve accessibility to services and facilities for all ages across the District
- 9: Improve efficiency in land use and encourage the prudent use of natural resources
- 10: Reduce road congestion and pollution levels and ensure air quality continues to improve by increasing travel choice and reducing car usage
- 11: Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases
- 12: Minimise the risk of flooding and resulting detriment to people and property
- 13: Maintain, improve and manage water resources in a sustainable way
- 14: Conserve and enhance bio-diversity and geo-diversity
- 15: Protect and enhance the high quality natural and built environment

In addition, whilst these objectives are likely to be most relevant to this particular Neighbourhood Plan in terms of potential significant environmental effects, you may wish to also consider the other SA/SEA objectives in the Framework for the purposes of assessing the overall sustainability of proposed policies.

If there are any queries we would be happy to advise further and please accept our apologies in the delay in getting this response to you.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Rallings DipTP(Nottm) FRTPI
Neighbourhood Planning Liaison Consultant
Strategy & Planning Service
Rother District Council

