

**Strategic environmental assessment &
Habitat regulations assessment
screening report**

Little Aston neighbourhood plan

Policy and Strategy Team

March 2026



Lichfield
District Council

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1. Introduction and purpose of this report

- 1.1 This screening report is an assessment of whether (or not) the contents of the Little Aston neighbourhood plan (LANP) require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/ EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. A SEA is required if the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.
- 1.2 This report will also screen to determine whether the neighbourhood plan requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Article 6(3) and (4) of the EU Habitats Directive and with Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. A HRA is required when it is deemed that likely adverse significant effects may occur on protected European Sites (Natura 2000 sites) because of the implementation of a plan/project. As a general 'rule of thumb' it is identified that sites with pathways of 10-15km of the plan/project boundary should be included with an HRA. [Appendix 1](#) shows the plan boundary in relation to the 15km radius of Natura 2000 sites.
- 1.3 This screening assessment has taken place on the draft '[Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan Review 2024-2040 \(July 2024\)](#)' provided by Shenstone Parish Council for the purposes of this screening assessment September 2024. The purpose of the LANP is to provide a set of statutory planning policies to guide development within the neighbourhood area over the life of the plan. The Plan provides a series of policies under several themes/areas which it hopes will guide development.
- 1.4 The legislative background set out in the following section outlines the regulations that require the need for this screening exercise. [Section 3](#) provides a screening assessment of both the likely significant environmental effects of the LANP and the need for SEA. [Section 4](#) provides a screening assessment of both the likely significant effects of the implementation of the LANP and the need for a Habitats Regulation Assessment.
- 1.5 This report will be split into two sections, the first covering the screening for the SEA and the second will cover the screening process for the HRA. A summary of findings and conclusions for both screening processes can be found at [Section 5](#).

2. Context and baseline

Strategic environmental assessment

- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, or SEA Regulations for short. Detailed Guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM 2005).
- 2.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 required Local Authorities to produce Sustainability Appraisals (SA) for all local development documents to meet the requirement of the EU Directive on SEA. Planning Practice Guidance makes clear that there is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood plan to have a Sustainability Appraisal. However, the guidance notes that in 'limited circumstances' where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects then it may require Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken to assess whether the plan is likely to have such effects (Paragraph: 027 Reference ID: 11-027-20190722). To determine whether a plan might have such effects it should be screened at an early stage of its preparation (Paragraph: 028 Reference ID: 11-028-20150209). The purpose of this report is to determine if SEA is required for the review of the Little Aston neighbourhood plan.
- 2.3 The district council is required to consult three statutory consultation bodies designated within the regulations, these are Historic England, Natural England, and Environment Agency on whether a SEA is required. Details of the consultation bodies responses can be found at [Appendix 3](#).

Habitat regulation assessment

- 2.4 It is required by article 6 (3) of the EU Habitats Directive and by regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) that an appropriate assessment is carried out with regard to the Conservation Objectives of the European Sites and with reference to other plans and projects to identify if any significant effect is likely for any European Site.
- 2.5 To fulfil the legal requirements to identify if likely significant effects will occur with the implementation of the LANP upon European Sites (Natura 2000 sites) a screening assessment has been undertaken and is set out in [Section 4](#) of this report.
- 2.6 The legislation requires where there is a "risk" of a significant effect on a European Site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects then there will be requirement for the plan to progress from HRA screening to an Appropriate Assessment. This is known as the precautionary principle.

Brexit and SEA requirements

- 2.7 The UK left the European Union on 31 January 2020. Under the UK-EU withdrawal agreement, a transition period ended on 31 December 2020, during which time all EU law continued to apply in the UK. During the transition period the UK needed to continue

following domestic law that implements EU law, or directly applicable EU law that is given effect through the EUWA 2018. Beyond the transition period, the SEA Regulations, which previously implemented the requirements of the SEA Directive in England, will continue to apply as before unless and until new legislation is introduced.

Strategic planning context – Lichfield district local plan

- 2.8 The basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is examined require it to be in ‘general conformity’ with the strategic policies contained within the development plan for the area. Through its strategic policies, the local plan effectively defines the parameters within which the neighbourhood plan may operate.
- 2.9 Local plans are subject to SEA (generally incorporated through a sustainability appraisal) and HRA. In screening the Little Aston neighbourhood plan it is therefore relevant to consider the strategic policy context, to enable the identification of environmental effects not already considered and addressed through the plan-making process.
- 2.10 The adopted local plan in the district consists of:
- [Local Plan Strategy](#) (adopted 2015) – sets the overarching spatial strategy for Lichfield district between 2008 and 2029 including the levels of development required and a suite of development management policies to guide development in the district.
 - [Local Plan Allocations](#) (adopted 2019) – is a delivery vehicle for the local plan and identifies non-strategic allocations to meet the requirements established within the Local Plan Strategy.
- 2.11 The council had been progressing a review of its adopted local plan. Following the decision of full council, it was decided to cease work on the Local Plan 2040 and withdraw the plan from examination in order to prepare a new local plan for the district. At the time of preparing this screening report the new local plan (to be known as the Local Plan 2043) is at an early stage of preparation with consultation on an [issues and options document](#) having taken place between October and December 2024.

Description of the plan or programme

- 2.12 The review of the LANP has been prepared by a steering group on behalf of Shenstone Parish Council (the Qualifying Body) and part of the parish council’s area (the designated neighbourhood area). The remainder of the parish is covered by separate neighbourhood areas for Shenstone and Stonnall. The LANP was first adopted in April 2016 following independent examination and referendum. The review of the neighbourhood plan presents a broadly similar plan which has been updated to cover the period to 2040.
- 2.13 The Plan includes eleven policies across four policy themes which are: housing, movement, additional community facilities and environment and climate change and a specific section which relates specifically to the Little Aston Park area. The policies relate to the neighbourhood area as a whole, except for those which relate to the Little Aston Park area

which is defined within the plan. Policies seek to protect the character and environment of the neighbourhood area, provide and protect community facilities and infrastructure.

- 2.14 Most of the policies are consistent with or provide an update to their respective policies within the Little Aston neighbourhood plan adopted in 2016.

3. Strategic environmental assessment screening

- 3.1 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental effects of a plan before it is made. The SEA screening determines whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. If likely significant environmental effects are identified, an environmental report must be produced.
- 3.2 In general terms, a neighbourhood plan may require full SEA where its policies and proposals are likely to result in significant environmental effects, particularly where such effects have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

Criteria for assessing the effects of the Little Aston neighbourhood plan

- 3.3 Criteria for determining the likely significant effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below:

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to

- the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
- the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
- environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
- the cumulative nature of the effects,
- the transboundary nature of the effects,
- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
 - intensive land-use,

- the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

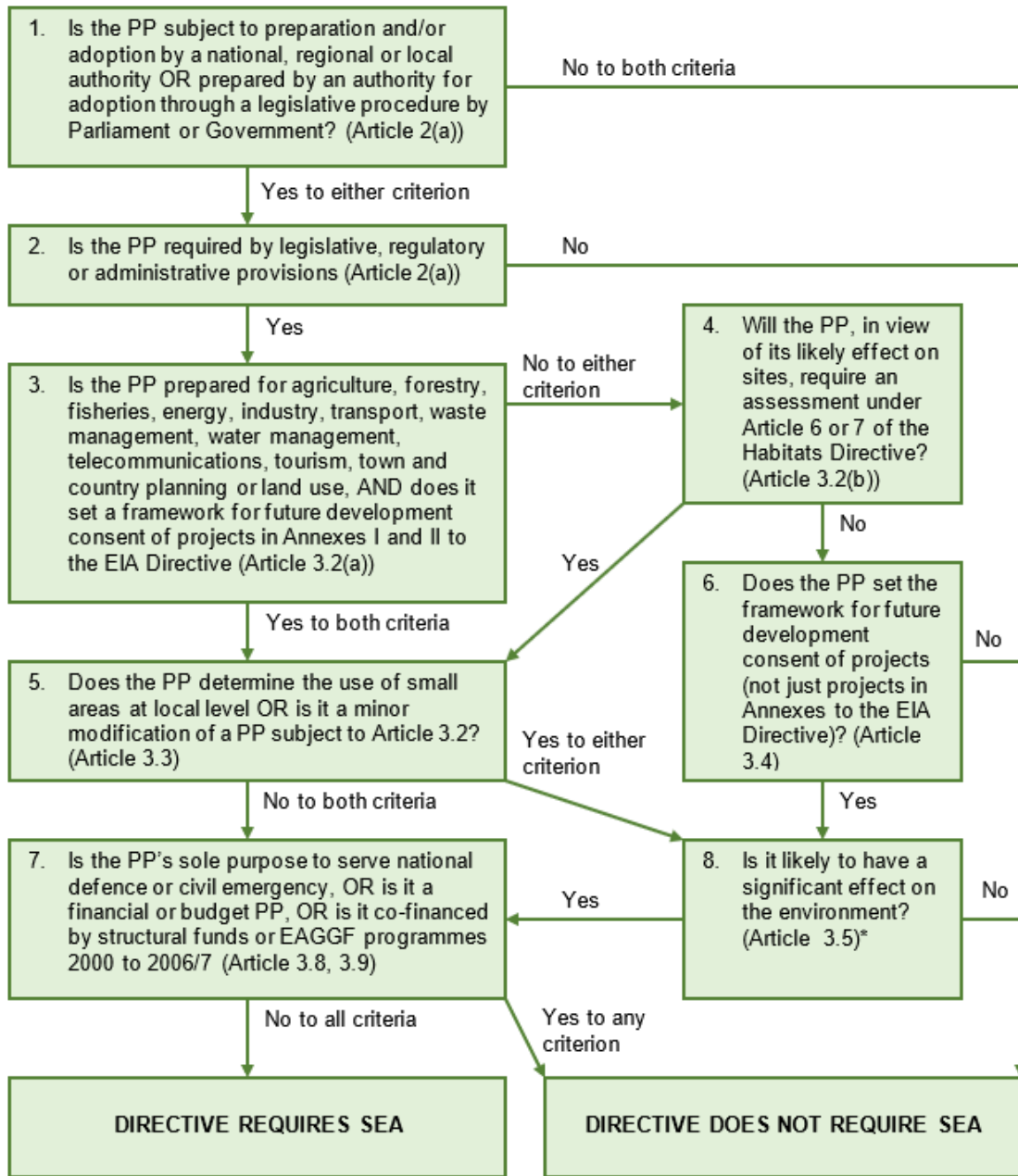
Source: Annex II of SEA Directive

2001/42/EC

Assessment

- 3.4 It is required by the localism act that neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the local plan. The development plan for Lichfield District currently comprises of the adopted [Local Plan Strategy](#) and [Local Plan Allocations](#) documents. Therefore, the Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with both. Both the Local Plan Strategy and Local Plan Allocation documents were subject to full Sustainability Appraisal which included a SEA assessment. This ensured that there were no likely significant effects which would be produced from the implementation of the Local Plan and if so, ensured mitigation measures were in place.
- 3.5 Guidance upon SEA's written by the Department of the Environment produces a diagram to the process for screening a planning document to ascertain whether a full SEA is required, see figure 1.

Figure 1: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes (PPs)



* The Directive requires Member States to determine whether plans or programmes in this category are likely to have significant environmental effects. These determinations may be made on a case by case basis and/or by specifying types of plan or programme.

3.6 The process in figure 1 has been followed and the findings can be viewed in Table 1. Table 1 shows the assessment of whether the LANP will require a full SEA. The questions in table 1 are drawn from the diagram above which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

Table 1: Establishing the need for SEA

Stage	Yes/No	Reason
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	This neighbourhood plan is prepared by Shenstone Parish Council (as the Qualifying Body) under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. Once the plan is 'made' it will be adopted by Lichfield District Council and become part of the statutory development plan for the area.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	Communities have a right to produce a neighbourhood plan; however, communities are not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative purposes to produce a neighbourhood plan. However, once 'made' the LANP would form part of the statutory development plan and will be used when making decisions on planning applications within the neighbourhood area. Therefore, it is considered necessary to answer the following questions to determine further if an SEA is required.
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	Yes	The LANP is prepared for town and country planning and land use. The plan sets out a framework for future development in the Little Aston neighbourhood area. Once 'made' the LANP would form part of the statutory development plan and will be used when making decisions on planning applications which may include development which may fall under Annex I and II of the EIA directive.
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	Yes	The neighbourhood plan could potentially have an impact on internationally designated wildlife sites covered by the habitats regulations. See screening assessment for HRA in following section of this report.
5. Does the PP Determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art.3.3)	Yes	The LANP does not identify land for allocation at the local level. Once 'made' the LANP would form part of the statutory development plan and be used when making decisions on planning applications of small areas at the local level.
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Yes	The LANP, once the 'made', forms part of the statutory development plan and will be used to determine planning applications within the designated neighbourhood area. Therefore, the neighbourhood plan will set the framework for future developments.

Stage	Yes/No	Reason
7. Is the PP's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	N/A	The LANP does not deal with any of these categories of plan.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	Yes	The LANP could potentially have a significant effect on the environment not just within the neighbourhood area but also within the district. The LANP could also impact upon Cannock Chase SAC a Natura 2000 sites, (see HRA section). The adopted Local Plan includes Policy NR7 which ensures that before development is permitted it must demonstrate that it (alone or in combination) will not have an adverse effect, whether direct or indirect, upon the integrity of the SAC having regard to avoidance or mitigation measures. A case-by-case assessment of the LANP is required.

3.7 Several the criteria above suggest that SEA of the Little Aston neighbourhood plan (review) may be required. Criteria 4 and 8 of the assessment in Figure 1 and Table 1 considered that the plan may have a significant effect on the environment depending on the proposals within the plan and a case-by-case assessment may be made. The criteria for undertaking such an assessment are drawn from Article 3(5) of the SEA Directive as set out at paragraph 3.3 of this report.

3.8 The following assessment will consider the likelihood of the Little Aston neighbourhood plan (provided for the purposes of this report) to have significant effects on the environment.

Table 2: Assessment of likelihood of significant effects on the environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of Significant effects
The characteristics of the plans, having regard to;	
The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	Once 'made'; the LANP will set out the framework which will be used to determine proposals for development within the neighbourhood area regarding housing and community facilities and protection of specific open spaces. The plan provides protection to the character of the area which will influence development across the plan period. There therefore is the potential for an effect on the environment resulting from the proposals within the plan. However, the plan does not propose development in excess of that identified within the adopted local plan nor does it allocate any site(s) for development.
The degree to which the plan or	The LANP must be in general conformity with the Lichfield District

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of Significant effects
programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	<p>Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. The LANP only provides policies for the area it covers, and the Local Plan Strategy and Local Plan Allocations will provide the necessary strategic context when determining planning applications. The adopted Local Plan does not Little Aston as settlements to take a significant proportion of growth. The LANP will help to deliver the overall aims of the Local Plan. Little Aston is not identified as a key settlement within the adopted Local Plan and the neighbourhood plan does not propose to restrict development which is considered to be in broad conformity with the LPS.</p> <p>The new local plan for the district is at an early stage of preparation and has not yet progressed to the stage where it determines where development will be located or make allocations. As such the LANP is would not influence other plans and programmes to a significant degree.</p>
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	<p>Any Neighbourhood Plan is required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore the likelihood of significant effects on the environment is minimised. This plan does not seek to allocated sites. As such the impact of the plan on the environment is minimal.</p>
Environmental problems relevant to the plan.	<p>Any environmental impacts of the proposals within the LANP are likely to be minimal if they arise at all. The Plan does not propose more development than is identified within the LPS and only proposes a preferred location for a community hub as such the SA/SEA carried out by the District Council is considered sufficient. Detail within the plan identifies that development proposals have been assessed to avoid and/or mitigate for any environmental problems which may impact.</p>
The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	<p>The LANP has to be in general conformity with the local plan. The adopted Local Plan Strategy and Local Plan Allocations has had regard to European Community legislation on the environment and therefore this legislation will not be relevant for the neighbourhood plan.</p>
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular to;	
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	<p>Development supported within the LANP and therefore an element of environmental change will occur, the impacts of which will depend upon the proposals and will be subject to the policies within the adopted Local Plan and the LANP. The Local Plan seeks to guide development to ensure it is delivered to high levels of sustainability. Further the neighbourhood plan seeks to result in positive environmental effects through polices to protect the environment and landscape.</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of Significant effects
The cumulative nature of the effects.	The cumulative effects of proposals within the LANP are unlikely to be significant on the local environment given the relatively that the level of development proposed does not exceed that identified within the adopted local plan.
The trans boundary nature of the effects.	Effects will be local with limited effects on neighbouring areas as the policies within the LANP only apply to the designated area.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	The LANP is not expected to pose any risks to human health or the environment. The effects of the policies may even enhance these elements.
The magnitude spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The scale of development proposed through the LANP is small and therefore effects are likely to be localised. It is unlikely that the effects of proposals within the neighbourhood plan will be large scale and extensive.
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage - exceeded environmental quality standards - intensive land use 	<p>The LANP is likely to affect the value and vulnerability of the area in relation to the special natural characteristics or cultural heritage due to the impacts upon the Cannock Chase SAC through increasing recreational pressure on the site. The plan does not allocate sites and as such many of these issues would be considered at a later stage, through the decision-making process.</p> <p>The adopted Local Plan includes policies to mitigate for the impacts of recreational pressure on the SAC. The LANP and LPS policies would be used to ensure mitigation is secured as such any affects are to be mitigated.</p> <p>The level of development proposed through the LANP is unlikely to lead to intensive land use and as such do not affect the value and vulnerability of the area.</p> <p>Policies within the LANP seeks to protect and enhance local assets, improving the sustainability and quality of the local environment and providing protection to historic assets.</p>
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	<p>The Cannock Chase SAC and AONB lies within 15km of the LANP boundary. Developments within the Cannock Chase SAC 15km zone of influence will in combination have an effect on the integrity of the SAC. The LANP would need to be in accordance with the adopted Policy NR7 which ensures that before development is permitted it must demonstrate that it (alone or in combination) will not have an adverse effect, whether direct or indirect, upon the integrity of the SAC having regard to avoidance or mitigation measures. The plan includes policy LAS1 which reflects adopted local plan policy.</p> <p>The LANP boundary is within 15km of the Cannock Chase SAC, Cannock Extension Canal SAC, Humber Estuary and outside the River Mease SAC water catchment. There will be no significant</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of Significant effects
	effects from the proposals within the LANP on these SAC.

Screening outcome

- 3.9 The LANP does not propose more development than is set out within the adopted local plan, nor does it allocate sites for development.
- 3.10 The conclusions of the above screening assessment on Little Aston neighbourhood plan review indicate that Strategic Environmental Assessment will not be required.
- 3.11 Following consultation with the statutory consultees, all confirmed that they agreed with the conclusions of this screening assessment.

4. Habitat regulation assessment screening

- 4.1 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) refers to the assessment required for any plan or project to assess the potential impacts against the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 wildlife sites. The assessment must determine whether the plans would adversely affect, or are likely to affect, the integrity of a site(s) in terms of its nature conservation objectives. Where negative effects are identified other options should be examined to avoid any potential damaging effects.
- 4.2 Under Criteria 4 of Figure 1 and Table 1 it was concluded that the Neighbourhood Plan may have an impact upon internationally designated sites and as such a 'case by case' assessment is required.
- 4.3 The HRA process is generally divided into three stages. The initial stage of the HRA process is called the screening stage and determines if there are any likely significant effects or risk of significant effects possible as a result of the implementation of the plan. If there are significant effects the plan will need to undertake an Appropriate Assessment. The screening process should provide a description of the plan and an identification of the Natura 2000 sites which may be affected by the plan and assess the significance of any possible effects on the identified sites.
- 4.4 The adopted local plan was subject to HRA during its production. This assessment looked at all internationally designated sites which could be impacted by development within Lichfield District. [The Habitat Regulations Assessment: Lichfield District & Tamworth Borough](#) (May 2012) was updated by the [Addendum to Habitat Regulations Assessment](#) (January 2014) which concluded that the Local Plan Strategy (as modified by the proposed Main Modifications) would have no likely significant effects upon European sites. The Local Plan Allocations document has also been supported by HRA during its production and follows from the Local Plan Strategy. The Habitat Regulations Assessment [Habitat Regulations Assessment \(January 2018\)](#) was published alongside the allocations document.
- 4.5 This section of the report provides a "screening" assessment for the Little Aston neighbourhood plan. It looks at the potential impacts of the plan's proposals on European Sites within 15km of the neighbourhood plan area; these sites are illustrated at [Appendix 1](#). The following screening assessment will determine if the LANP will have any likely significant effects to determine whether the subsequent stages will be required.

Relevant Natura 2000 sites

- 4.6 As a general 'rule of thumb' it is identified that sites with pathways of 10-15km of the plan/project boundary should be included with an HRA. The relevant Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the Little Aston neighbourhood area are:
- Cannock Chase SAC – approximately 15km to the north-west.
 - Cannock Extension Canal – approximately 7km to the north-west.
 - River Mease SAC – approximately 15km to the north-east.

- Humber Estuary SAC River Trent whose catchment is part of the Humber Estuary SAC is within the LANP boundary.

4.7 The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), The Cannock Extension Canal SAC and the River Mease SAC are within a 15km radius of the neighbourhood area boundary. However, the LANP boundary is not within the River Mease water catchment area, the River Trent whose water catchment is part of the Humber Estuary SAC is within the LANP boundary. Therefore, the HRA screening assessment needs to identify if any likely significant effects will be caused by the implementation of the plan. This assessment has been undertaken having regard to the results and information in the HRA prepared for the adopted Local Plan and is set out at Table 3.

Table 3: Sites within 15km of the neighbourhood area¹

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Identified Impacts
<p>Cannock Chase SAC</p>	<p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European dry heaths. <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix. - Wet heathland with cross leaved heath. 	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats. - The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and, - The supporting processes on which the qualifying natural habitats rely. 	<p>Visitor pressures include dog walking, horse riding, mountain biking and off-track activities such as orienteering, all of which cause disturbance and result in erosion, new track creation and vegetation damage. Bracken invasion is significant but is being controlled. Birch and pine scrub, much of the latter from surrounding commercial plantations, is continually invading the site, and must be controlled. High visitor usage and the fact that a significant proportion of the site is Common Land, requiring Secretary of State approval before fencing can take place, means that the reintroduction of sustainable management in the form of livestock grazing has many problems. Cannock Chase overlies coal measures which have been deep-mined. Mining fissures continue to appear across the site even though mining has ceased, and this is thought to detrimentally affect site hydrology.</p> <p>Furthermore, the underlying Sherwood Sandstone is a major aquifer with water abstracted for public and industrial uses and the effects of this on the wetland features of the Chase are not fully understood.</p> <p>Furthermore, Natural England have since raised concern in regard to the potential impact on air quality from both the construction phase of development and any increase in vehicular traffic in proximity of the SAC. Increased traffic can increase the airborne concentration of nitrogen oxides (No_x) and ammonia (NH₃) and subsequent rate of nitrogen deposition from the atmosphere. This can lead to nutrient</p>

¹ Extracts from the Habitat Regulations Assessment: Lichfield District & Tamworth Borough (May 2012)

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Identified Impacts
			enrichment and acidification of soils, encouraging more tolerant ruderal species at the expense of sensitive plan, lower plan and invertebrate communities. ²
Cannock Extension Canal SAC	Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site. - Floating water-plantain Luronium natans.	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring. - The extent and distribution of habitats of qualifying species - The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species - The supporting processes on the habitats of qualifying species rely. - The populations of qualifying species, and, - The distribution of qualifying species within the site	The population of Luronium natans in this cul-de-sac canal is dependent upon a balanced level of boat traffic. If the canal is not used, the abundant growth of other aquatic macrophytes may shade-out the Luronium natans unless routinely controlled by cutting. An increase in recreational activity would be to the detriment of Luronium natans. Existing discharges of surface water run-off, principally from roads, cause some reduction in water quality.
River Mease SAC	Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site. - Water courses of plain to montane levels with the	Maintain the river as a favourable habitat for floating formations of water Crowfoot (ranunculus), populations of bull head, spined loach and white clawed crayfish and the river and	The River Mease is an unusually semi-natural system in a largely rural landscape, dominated by intensive agriculture. Water quality and quantity are vital to the European interests, whilst competition for water resources is high. Diffuse pollution and excessive sedimentation are catchment-

² Extract from Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Lichfield District Local Plan 2040 (publication version).

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Identified Impacts
	<p>Ranunculon fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation</p> <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spined loach <i>Cobitis taenia</i> - Bullhead <i>Cottus gobio</i> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> - Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> 	<p>adjoining land as habitat for populations of otter.</p>	<p>wide issues which have the potential to affect the site. The SSSI assessment report undertaken in 2007 notes the site's adverse condition and identifies the following issues: drainage, invasive freshwater species, water pollution – agriculture/run-off, water pollution – discharge. Significant new development could take place within the catchment as a result of new housing and employment development in North-West Leicestershire, South Derbyshire and East Staffs which may impact upon water quality and quantity. The continuing creation of the National Forest will lead to further catchment wide changes in land use.</p>
<p>Humber Estuary</p>	<p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Estuaries. - Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide. <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time. - Coastal lagoons * Priority feature. - <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand. 	<p>Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time - for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Estuaries, for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, of which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Coastal lagoons, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p>	<p>The Humber Estuary is subject to the impacts of human activities (past and present) as well as ongoing processes such as sea level rise and climate change. Management intervention is therefore necessary to enable the estuary to recover and to secure the ecological resilience required to respond to both natural and anthropogenic change. Key issues include coastal squeeze, impacts on the sediment budget, and geomorphological structure and function of the estuary (due to sea level rise, flood defence works, dredging, and the construction, operation and maintenance of ports, pipelines, and other infrastructure), changes in water quality and flows, pressure from additional built development, and damage and disturbance arising from access, recreation, and other activities. Coastal squeeze is being addressed through the development and implementation of the Humber Flood Risk Management Strategy. All proposals for flood defence, development, dredging, abstractions, and discharges which</p>

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Identified Impacts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>). - Embryonic shifting dunes. - Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ('white dunes'). - Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ('grey dunes') * Priority feature. - Dunes with <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i>. <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>. - River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>. <p>Grey seal <i>Halichoerus grypus</i>.</p>	<p>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco - Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Embryonic shifting dunes, which are considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 1000 hectares, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes"), for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes"), for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Dunes with <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i>, which is considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 1000 hectares, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p>	<p>require consent from any statutory body, and land use plans which may have impacts upon the site are subject to assessment under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (the "Habitats Regulations"). Diffuse pollution will be addressed through a range of measures including implementation of the Wastewater Framework Directive and Catchment Sensitive Farming initiatives.</p> <p>Other issues are addressed via a range of measures including regulation of on-site land management activities and implementation of the Humber Management Scheme, developed by all relevant statutory bodies to assist in the delivery of their duties under the Habitats Regulations.</p>

Name of Site	Reason for Designation	Conservation Objectives	Identified Impacts
		<p>Petromyzon marinus, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Lampetra fluviatilis for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p> <p>Halichoerus grypus for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.</p>	

- 4.8 The likelihood of significant effects has been assessed in relation to the specific features and environmental conditions of the protected sites, as could be affected by the LANP, or in combination with other known plans, taking account of the site's conservation objectives. As part of establishing what effects are significant, the probability of impact, duration of the impact, frequency of any impact and reversibility of impact have been considered.
- 4.9 Tables 4-7 set out the assessment based on the effects of the LANP on the four sites detailed above.

Table 4: Cannock Chase SAC

	Direct habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air quality	Water quality	Recreational pressures	Water quantity	Change in surrounding land use	Invasive species
Is LANP likely to impact upon this site	Potential	Potential	Potential	No	Yes	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	<p>The site is influenced by traffic and visitors from a wide area. Evidence has been produced which demonstrates that any new development within 15km of the SAC will, alone or in combination, have an impact upon the integrity of the SAC due to the potential for increasing visitors to the SAC.</p> <p>Possible impact on air quality of both the construction phase and any increase in vehicular traffic.</p>							
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	<p>The Little Aston neighbourhood area is on the edge of the 15km radius surrounding Cannock Chase SAC. Evidence has highlighted there are vulnerabilities from recreational pressures caused predominantly by increased use from new residential development but also from other forms of development within a 15km radius of the SAC. The LANP includes a policy which seeks to ensure that development will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated that it will not have an adverse effect upon the integrity of the SAC having regard to avoidance or mitigation measures. Additionally, the adopted Local Plan, which the neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with, includes policy NR7 (Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation) which requires development to demonstrate that alone or in combination with other developments it will not have an adverse effect whether direct or indirect upon the integrity of the Cannock Chase SAC. Local Plan Policy NR7 ensures that any development within the neighbourhood area will need to demonstrate that it will not have adverse effects upon the SAC.</p>							
Conclusion: No significant effects								

Table 5: Cannock Extension Canal SAC

	Direct habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air quality	Water quality	Recreational pressures	Water quantity	Change in surrounding land use	Invasive species
Is LANP likely to impact upon this site	No	No	Potential	No	No	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	Possible impact on air quality of both the construction phase and any increase in vehicular traffic.							
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	The Little Aston neighbourhood area on the edge of the 15km radius around the SAC. Development within the neighbourhood area would not have a direct impact upon the habitat, any protected species, air, and water quality of this site nor would any policies within the plan as drafted have a direct impact upon the site. Additionally, the site is a significant distance from the neighbourhood area, and it is considered that the plan would have no significant effects.							
Conclusion: No significant effects								

Table 6: River Mease SAC

	Direct habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air quality	Water quality	Recreational pressures	Water quantity	Change in surrounding land use	Invasive species
Is LANP likely to impact upon this site	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	None. The adopted Local Plan includes policy to ensure that development is only permitted where it can be demonstrated that there will not be an adverse effect upon the integrity of the River Mease SAC.							

	Direct habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air quality	Water quality	Recreational pressures	Water quantity	Change in surrounding land use	Invasive species
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	Whilst the neighbourhood area is within 15km of the River Mease SAC, it is outside of the River Mease SAC catchment area. As such no significant effects are likely.							
Conclusion: No significant effects								

Table 7: Humber Estuary SAC

	Direct habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air quality	Water quality	Recreational pressures	Water quantity	Change in surrounding land use	Invasive species
Is LANP likely to impact upon this site	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	None - The site is currently managed as a National Nature Reserve. It would be vulnerable to on-site physical alterations to the water quality and quantity. There are many plans still being developed along the length of the river system.							
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	Site is over 20km from the LANP boundary. Development proposals within the neighbourhood area will not affect the site physically as any effects would be through discharges into the River Tame and Trent as this eventually flows to the Humber. As the LANP proposes only limited growth than the Local Plan it is unlikely this position would change.							
Conclusion: No significant effects								

Screening Outcome

- 4.10 Tables 4 to 7 do not identify any significant effects upon the identified European sites because of the LANP (as published at the date of this report).
- 4.11 [Appendix 2](#) sets out a detailed assessment of the likely significant effects on European sites as a result of each policy within the neighbourhood plan. The assessment concludes that none of the policies within the LANP are likely to have significant impacts upon the European sites identified within the assessment.
- 4.12 The conclusions of the screening assessment above indicate that it is considered that the further stages HRA assessment for the Little Aston neighbourhood plan is not required.
- 4.13 Following consultation with the statutory consultees, all confirmed that they agreed with the conclusions of this screening assessment.

5. Conclusions and recommendations of the screening assessments

- 5.1 This report contains the detail of the assessment of the need for the Little Aston neighbourhood plan review to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment as required by the SEA Directive and Appropriate Assessment as required by the Habitats Directive.
- 5.2 The assessment of both of these requirements has been undertaken on the draft neighbourhood plan review document produced in January 2026 for the purposes of regulation 14 consultation and this screening assessment. As such if the content of the plan is significantly changed there may be the need for a further screening exercise to be undertaken on any revised version of the plan.

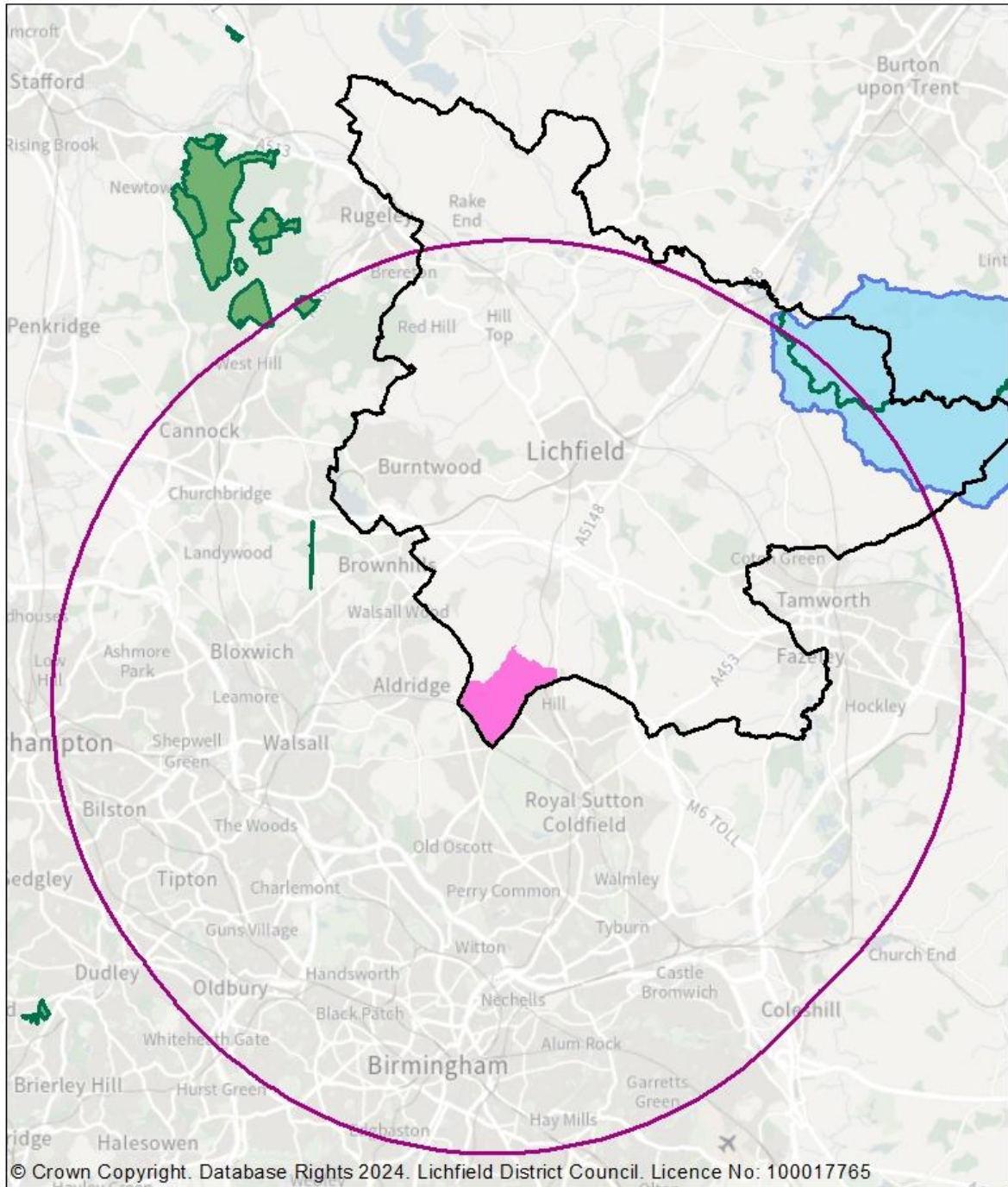
Strategic environmental assessment

- 5.3 In relation to the requirement for the Little Aston neighbourhood plan to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment, the assessment detailed in [Section 3](#) of this report concludes that as the plan in its current form is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore SEA will not be required. The statutory consultees indicated they agreed with the conclusions of this screening report regarding SEA.






Habitat regulations assessment

- 5.4 In relation to the requirement for the Little Aston neighbourhood plan to be subject to Habitat Regulations Assessment, the assessment detailed at [Section 4](#) of this report concluded that there are no potential significant effects upon European Sites and no further work as part of the compliance with the Habitat Regulations will be required. The statutory consultees indicated they agreed with the conclusions of this screening report regarding HRA.

Appendix 1: Map of Natura 2000 sites within 15km of Neighbourhood Area



Key

-  Lichfield district boundary
-  Little Aston neighbourhood area
-  Little Aston neighbourhood area 15km radius
-  Special Areas of Conservation
-  River Mease SAC Water Catchment



Lichfield
District Council



Appendix 2: HRA review of policies in the draft neighbourhood plan

LANP Policy Number	Description of Policy	Any likely significant effects on European Sites anticipated as a result of the policy?
LAS1: Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation	Before development is permitted it must demonstrate it will not have an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Cannock Chase SAC.	No – the policy will ensure that development will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated that the development will not have an adverse effect, whether direct or indirect, upon the SAC having regard to avoidance or mitigation measures.
LAS2: Residential infill and backland development	Infill and garden land development must not have a detrimental impact on the character and amenity of properties in the immediate area.	No – the policy does not itself propose development. Policy allows for residential development in conformity with the adopted local plan and subject to the criteria within the policy. Residential development within the Cannock Chase ZOI has an effect on the SAC due to increased recreational pressures. However, adopted Local Plan includes policy which requires development to demonstrate that alone or in combination with other developments it will not have an adverse effect whether direct or indirect upon the integrity of the Cannock Chase SAC. As the neighbourhood plan is required to be in general conformity with the adopted Local Plan it is considered the adopted policy ensures appropriate mitigation for any such effects.
LAS3: Density of development in Little Aston Park	Protect the character of Little Aston through the retention of a half-acre plot policy.	No – policy allows for residential development subject to it meeting criteria within the policy. Residential development within the Cannock Chase ZOI has an effect on the SAC due to increased recreational pressures. However, adopted Local Plan includes policy which requires development to demonstrate that alone or in combination with other developments it will not have an adverse effect whether direct or indirect upon the integrity of the Cannock Chase SAC. As the neighbourhood plan is required to be in general conformity with the adopted Local Plan it is considered the adopted policy ensures appropriate mitigation for any such effects.
LAS4: Design of development in Little Aston Park	Supports proposals which show innovative design.	No – the policy does not itself propose development.
LAS5: Provision of footpaths and cyclepaths	Support provision of improved cycle and pedestrian facilities	No – the policy does not itself propose development.

LANP Policy Number	Description of Policy	Any likely significant effects on European Sites anticipated as a result of the policy?
	including a circular pedestrian route.	
LAS6: Provision of new bus stops	Support provision of improved bus facilities.	No – the policy does not itself propose development.
LAS7: Provision of pedestrian safety improvements	Support proposals to address issues of pedestrian safety.	No – the policy does not itself propose development.
LAS8: Wildlife-friendly development	Sets requirements for development proposals to protect habitats, trees and species, deliver biodiversity net gain.	No – the policy does not itself propose development.
LAS9: Low energy and energy efficiency design	Supports energy efficient design and the use of technologies to reduce the impacts of development on climate change.	No – the policy does not itself propose development.
LAS10: Renewable energy and energy efficiency measures affecting heritage	Supports the retrofitting of energy efficiency measures in historic buildings.	No – the policy does not itself propose development.
LAS11: Light pollution	Seeks to reduce light pollution from new development.	No – the policy does not itself propose development.

Appendix 3: SEA & HRA Screening opinion and statutory consultee responses

The following appendix includes the screening opinion requests from Lichfield District Council to the Statutory Bodies (Natural England, Historic England, and Environment Agency) who have been consulted through the SEA & HRA process and their responses.

- 3.1 SEA & HRA Screening Opinion Letter
- 3.2 Historic England Response
- 3.3 Natural England Response
- 3.4 Environment Agency Response

Appendix 3.1: SEA & HRA screening opinion letter

Your -
ref
Our ref LANP-SEA&HRA
Ask for Hannah Powell



Lichfield
District Council

District Council House, Frog Lane
Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 6YU

4 March 2026

To whom it may concern

Little Aston neighbourhood plan review – screening option for strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and habitat regulations assessment (HRA)

Shenstone Parish Council has requested the district council to undertake screening for SEA & HRA of their review of the Little Aston neighbourhood plan. The council has undertaken a screening process and produced the attached screening report which concludes that SEA and HRA of the neighbourhood plan will not be required.

Under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI No.1633) Lichfield District Council ('the responsible authority') is required to consult with the consultation bodies in determining whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects and will therefore require an SEA. The Parish Council also requested screening opinion with regards to the need for a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).

I am therefore requesting that you consider the attached screening report and provide any comments on its conclusions to assist in determining whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects and will therefore require an SEA. I would also welcome your comments on the need for an HRA.

If you have any comments, please can they to be sent within the next 21 working days (by 2 April 2026) and if you have any queries, please feel free to contact me. If no reply is received by 5pm on 2 April 2026 will be assumed that you concur with the conclusions of the screening report.

Yours faithfully

Hannah Powell
Graduate Policy Support Officer
Core Services

Appendix 3.2: Historic England response

9 March 2026

Dear Ms Powell

LITTLE ASTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SEA & HRA SCREENING OPINION CONSULTATION

Thank you for your consultation and the invitation to comment on the SEA Screening Document for the above Neighbourhood Plan.

For the purposes of consultations on SEA Screening Opinions, Historic England confines its advice to the question, “Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?” in respect of our area of concern, cultural heritage.

Our comments are based on the information supplied with the screening request. On the basis of the information supplied and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of the ‘SEA’ Directive], Historic England concurs with your view that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

Regarding HRA Historic England does not disagree with your conclusions but would defer to the opinions of the other statutory consultees.

The views of the other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for a SEA is made. If a decision is made to undertake a SEA, please note that Historic England has published guidance on Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Historic Environment that is relevant to both local and neighbourhood planning and available at: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>

I trust the above comments will be of help in taking forward the Neighbourhood Plan.

Yours sincerely,

Rose Thompson

Appendix 3.3: Natural England response

Dear Hannah Powell,

Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan SEA HRA Screening Report

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 04 March 2026 which was received by Natural England on 04 March 2026

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.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:

- **significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,**
- **significant effects on Habitats sites¹, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.**

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the Planning Practice Guidance. This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

- 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.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent

as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's standing advice on protected species.

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission standing advice.

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to ---

Yours sincerely

West Midlands Sustainable Development Team

Appendix 3.4: Environment Agency response

No response received.