

**Screening Statement on the
determination of the need for a
Strategic Environmental Assessment /
Habitat Regulations Assessment
for the emerging Awbridge
Neighbourhood Plan**

January 2026

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

This screening report is designed to determine whether or not the content of the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Whether a Neighbourhood Plan requires a SEA, and if so the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed in the draft Neighbourhood Plan. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that a SEA may be required, for example, where:

- the Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites for development;
- the Neighbourhood Plan 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 the SEA of the Local Plan in the area.

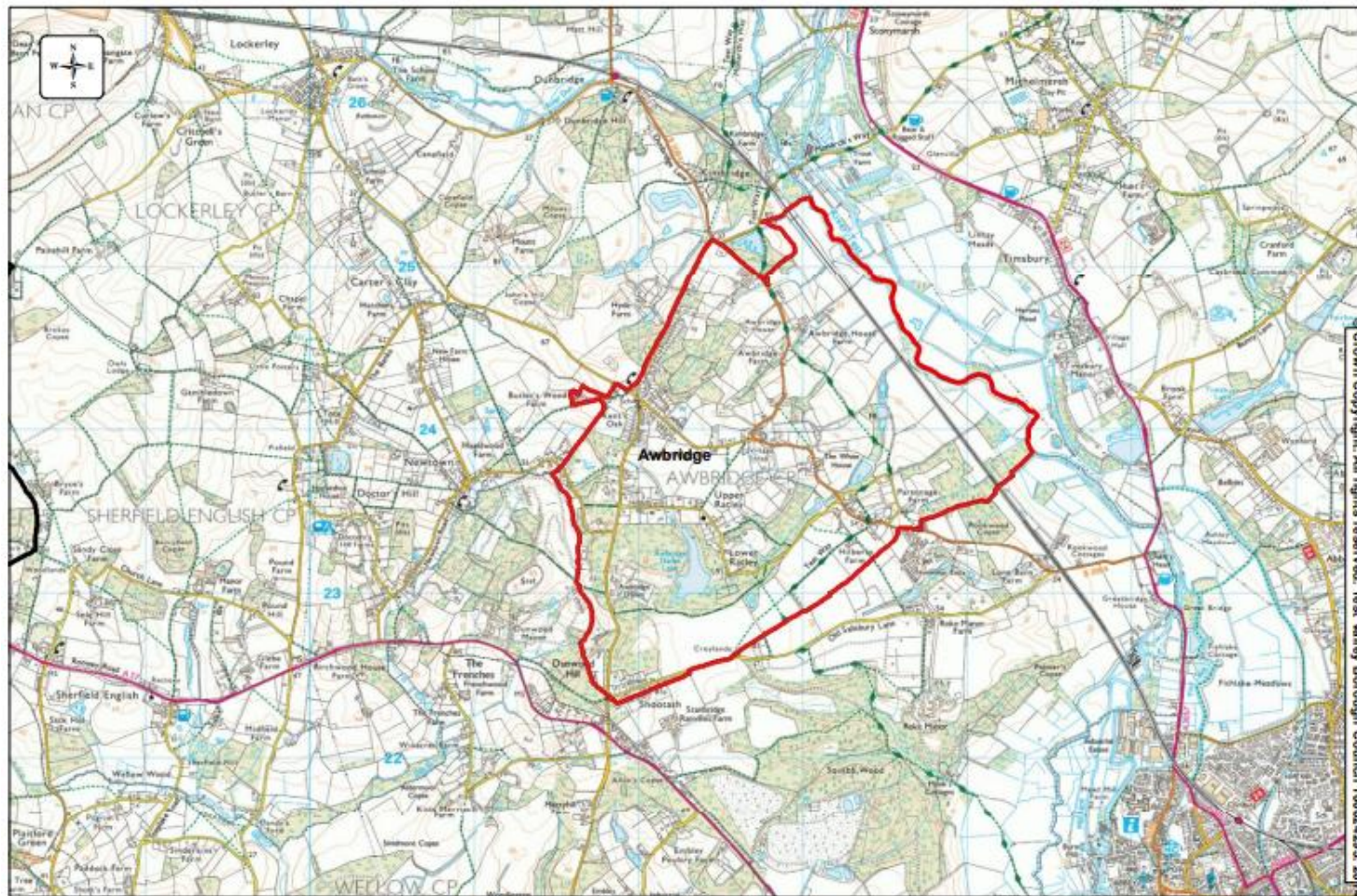
The screening report also examines the potential impact of the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan on internationally designated wildlife sites and determines if the plan requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

When deciding on whether the proposals are likely to have significant effects, the local authority is required to consult Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. Where the local planning authority determines that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment) it should prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.

1.2 DRAFT AWBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SUMMARY

The Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan is essentially a community-led framework for guiding future development and growth of the parish. 13 draft policies have been proposed, focusing on topics including, Natural Environment, Housing, Heritage and Design and Community Services and Accessibility

AWBRIDGE DESIGNATED NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA



Scale: 1:25,000
Date: 05.09.2017
Drawn: TR
Dept: PPT

Awbridge Parish Boundary



1.3 DRAFT AWBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICY SUMMARIES

Policy	Summary of policy wording
Policy A1 – Landscape Character	Seeks development proposals to demonstrate how they have regard for the distinct rural character of the settlements and wider landscape.
Policy A2 – Important Views and Vistas	Seeks to preserve or enhance the local character of the landscape of the 14 important views identified in this policy.
Policy A3 – Local Green Spaces	Designates the 9 areas listed within the policy as Local Green Spaces.
Policy A4.1 – Biodiversity and Habitats	States development proposals that seek to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the area and comply with all other relevant Development Plan policies will be supported.
Policy A4.2 – The Solent Region International Sites	States that applications for development that will result in a net increase in nitrogen reaching the Solent Region International Sites, e.g. through additional units of overnight accommodation, will be required to confirm the nitrogen budget and set out specific and appropriately located mitigation measures that will be implemented in order to ensure development is nutrient neutral from the start of its operational phase.
Policy A4.3 – Mottisfont Bats	Where direct or indirect impacts on suitable roosting, foraging and commuting habitats for Barbastelle bats are considered likely to occur, such impacts must be fully assessed, avoided and where required, appropriately mitigated to prevent any adverse impacts on this internationally protected site at the planning application stage. This should be in full accordance with relevant best practice guidelines and must fully adhere to any updates to the guidance issued following the making [adoption] of this Plan.
Policy A4.4 – New Forest Special Protection Area	New residential development and overnight accommodation (including seasonal workers accommodation and temporary campsites) within the identified New Forest SPA 13.8km ‘zone of influence’ – which covers the whole of the Neighbourhood Area – will need to mitigate against the recreation pressure on the New Forest Special Protection Area.
Policy A5 – Dark Night Skies	Requires development proposals to conserve and enhance relative tranquillity in relation to light pollution and dark night skies.
Policy A6 – Setting of the Dispersed Settlements	Development proposals that align with local and national countryside policies will be supported, provided they maintain the open rural spaces between dispersed settlements
Policy A7 – Housing	Supports proposals for an affordable housing site or community led site, subject to a range of criteria, including community support States the requirements for replacement dwellings, infill development and extensions to existing dwellings to be considered appropriate by follow the guidance set out in the Awbridge character appraisal and Design Code.
Policy A8 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets	The policy Identifies 14 Non-Designated Heritage Assets and that development proposals should demonstrate how they will preserve and enhance non-designated heritage assets within their setting and historical value.

Policy	Summary of policy wording
Policy A9 – Design	Requires new development to demonstrate how it preserves and enhances defining character features as set out in the Awbridge Character Appraisal and Design Code.
Policy A10 – Flooding and Drainage	States development proposals should incorporate a sustainable and integrated approach to the management of flood risk, surface water (including run off) and foul drainage and should be robust to the expected impacts of climate change. Seeks site-specific flood risk assessments for planning applications and the use of SuDS to mitigate any anticipated increase in flood risk where appropriate.
Policy A11 – Accessibility, Public Rights of Way and Highway Safety	Supports proposals for improving local walking and cycling routes between the settlements to the various community facilities, particularly the proposed permissive footpath and sets out criteria for new proposals.
Policy A12 – Community Facilities	Policy supports proposals that improve the condition of the listed 5 facilities and resists proposals for the change of use of the identified facilities.
Policy A13 – Small Scale Employment Uses	Proposals for new or expanded small scale start up business units or similar uses, which are appropriate in terms of noise and air pollution, traffic generation, visual impact and design to a countryside setting will be supported.

1.4 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) PROCESS

The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC which was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Detailed guidance on these regulations can be found in the Government publication “A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive” (OPDM 2005).

The SEA process aims to ensure that likely significant environmental effects arising from a Plan are identified, assessed, mitigated, communicated and monitored, and that opportunities for public involvement are provided. It enables environmental considerations to be accounted for in decision-making throughout the production of a Plan in an integrated manner.

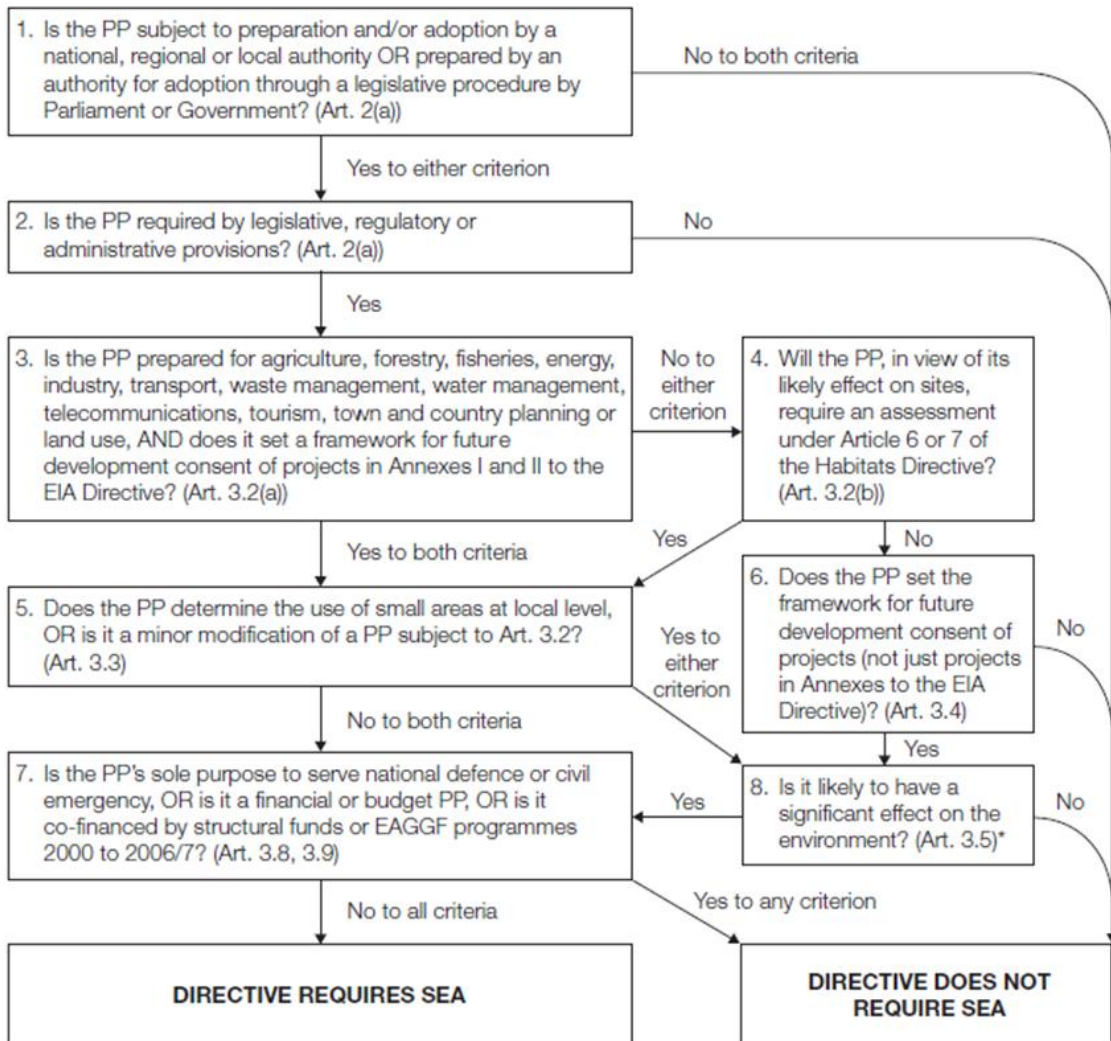
Figure 2 sets out the screening procedure and how a plan should be assessed against the SEA Directive criteria. This outline procedure has then been applied to the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan in Table 1.

The implications of the policies and proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan have been assessed against any European sites within 10km of the neighbourhood area boundary in order to establish the likelihood of a significant effect on the reason for designation of the European site in question.

This assessment has been undertaken having regard to the results and information in the HRA screening assessment prepared for the Test Valley Local Plan, and in the light of the relevant European Commission guidance (as referred to above), which forms the basis for the assessment criteria set out below.

Figure 2 – Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

This diagram is intended as a guide to the criteria for application of the Directive to plans and programmes (PPs). It has no legal status.



*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.

Figure 2 – Application of the SEA Directive to Plans and Programmes

1.6 Table 1: Assessment of the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan using SEA Directive Criteria

Stage	Yes / No	Reason
1. <i>Is the Neighbourhood Plan 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))</i>	Yes	This is a Neighbourhood Plan that is being prepared by a qualifying body the Localism Act 2011. If the Plan is passed by means of an Examination and Referendum, it will be formally made and adopted by the Local Planning Authority. It will then form part of the local development framework and be afforded significant weight in planning decisions.
2. <i>Is the Neighbourhood Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))</i>	No	Neighbourhood Plans are not mandatory requirements, and the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared voluntarily by the local qualifying body in line with the provisions of the Localism Act. If the Plan is adopted it will form part of the statutory development plan, and it is therefore considered necessary to answer the following questions to determine if an SEA is required.
3. <i>Is the Neighbourhood Plan 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 (see Appendix 2) to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))</i>	No	The Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared for the purposes of town & country / land use planning and will set out a framework for planning policies as part of the statutory development plan covering Awbridge.
4. <i>Will the Neighbourhood Plan, 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))</i>	No	Given the range of protected habitats within and adjacent to the Neighbourhood Plan Area at this stage it is concluded that the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan will not have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. The Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Opinion that

Stage	Yes / No	Reason
		follows in Section 3 provides more detail on this and concludes that an HRA will not be required.
5. Does the Neighbourhood Plan 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)	No	A Neighbourhood Plan can only determine the use of small areas at the local level and the Neighbourhood Plan is not proposing to allocate sites for development.
6. Does the Neighbourhood Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Yes	When adopted, the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan will be a statutory planning document. It will form part of the Local Development Framework and so will have significant weight in planning decisions. The responsibility for issuing development consent will remain with the Local Authority.
7. Is the Neighbourhood Plan'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)	No	A Neighbourhood Plan 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)	No	Given the statutory nature of the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan; the range of environmental designations within and adjacent to the Awbridge Neighbourhood Area; and the fact that the Plan does not allocate sites for development, it is concluded that the Neighbourhood Plan does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Conclusion

The Government's National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) resource recognises that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) may be required where a Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites for development and/or the Neighbourhood Area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan.

The Test Valley Borough Council has concluded that this is not the case with the emerging Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan as the plan does not make any allocations.

Table 2 assesses the likely significance of effects on the environment in accordance with the criteria established in Regulation 9 and [Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations](#).

Based upon the initial screening carried out against the criteria in Table 1 above, the emerging draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan is **not likely to have a significant effect on the environment**.

2 SEA SCREENING

2.1 SEA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

European Directive 2001/42/EC requires a full Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken for certain types of plans and programmes that would have a significant environmental effect.

Table 2 below provides the screening determination of the need to carry out a full Strategic Environmental Assessment for the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan.

This has been made in accordance with the Regulations and will be subject to consultation with the strategic environmental bodies before the Council makes its determination on the necessity for a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Table 2 – The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004: Schedule 1 - Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)	Summary of significant events
1(a) the degree to which the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	The Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan would, if adopted, form part of the statutory 'development plan' for the parish and provide the planning framework for consenting development proposals within the Borough Council area of the parish. Under Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act it would therefore form part of the legal planning framework for the consideration and consenting of future development projects within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the strategic policies of the Test Valley Park Local Plan (2016).
1(b) the degree to which the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	The policies contained within the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan have been produced by the local community to influence the Parish areas. The policies will need to be in general conformity with the TVBC Local Plan and the relevant sections of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework and will be used alongside the documents in the determination of planning applications when formally 'made' (adopted).
1(c) the relevance of the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	Awbridge Parish Council has confirmed that the Neighbourhood Plan will include policies which seek to protect the Natural Environment, Heritage and Design and Community Services and Accessibility.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)	Summary of significant events
	<p>The Awbridge Neighbourhood Area is located close to a range of environmental designations that will be key considerations in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan. The NPPF places the presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of national planning system (paragraph 11) and also includes a range of environmental policies that the Neighbourhood Plan is required to be in general conformity with. The SEA aims to ensure environmental factors are fully considered when planning for sustainable development.</p>
<p>1(d) environmental problems relevant to the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan;</p>	<p>The Awbridge Neighbourhood Area is situated close to a range of environmental designations. In terms of habitat designations, these include the following either within the Neighbourhood Area, or in close proximity to it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mottisfont Bats SAC • New Forest SPA • Solent and Maritime SAC • Solent and Southampton Water SPA • The River Test SSSI <p>On this basis it is concluded that the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan does not have the potential to have significant effects on the environment.</p>
<p>1(e) the relevance of the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management and water protection);</p>	<p>The emerging Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan includes several policies linked to the environment. For example, the current draft Plan includes policies on:</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)	Summary of significant events
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recycling and rainwater harvesting, and application of SuDS, the use of green roofs, porous paving, rainwater harvesting methods and greywater recycling. - Protection of New Forest Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation, which will address other local environmental concerns in addition to those highlighted above. - Measures to promote biodiversity, wildlife corridors and protected environmental sites, within the Plan area. - The designation of 'local green spaces' through the Neighbourhood Plan making process.
<p>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</p> <p>(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;</p>	<p><u>Changes in water quality:</u> The European sites vulnerable to a deterioration in water quality as the following that are relevant to the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan - the New Forest SAC & Ramsar site; Solent & Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC; Solent Maritime SAC; Solent & Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site.</p> <p>The most relevant of these for the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan work is the Solent designations and the impacts arising from increased levels of nitrates. Although new development only makes a small contribution to the issue, Natural England's updated methodology and budget calculator (March 2024) re-affirms that new development in the Solent catchment</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)	Summary of significant events
	<p>must be 'nitrate-neutral' to ensure compliance with the Habitats Regulations and recent legal case law.</p> <p><u>Recreational pressure:</u> The New Forest NPA Local Plan HRA work concluded in relation to recreational impacts that, prior to mitigation, likely significant effects in-combination could not be ruled out for any residential development or visitor accommodation within New Forest National Park on the New Forest SAC and SPA. The Awbridge Neighbourhood Area includes areas of land within these area and therefore affected by this issue.</p> <p>The National Park Authority adopted an updated Habitat Mitigation Scheme SPD in 2020 which provides details on how the recreational impacts of new development within the National Park can be mitigated. In addition, development within the defined 13.8km 'zone of influence' of the New Forest's designated sites may also increase recreational pressures and therefore mitigation is required for new housing and other forms of overnight accommodation within the zone.</p> <p><u>Loss of habitat:</u> The plan area has the Mottisfont Bats SAC within close proximity. Barbastelles feed mainly on small moths, some flies and beetles. They may forage up to 5-7 km from their maternity roosts, though some individuals in less favourable habitat may forage further to reach suitable feeding grounds.</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)	Summary of significant events
	<p>It is thought that barbastelles prefer pastoral landscapes with deciduous woodland, wet meadows and water bodies, though they will feed in more open areas i.e. orchards, suburban parks. Barbastelles prefer to commute along linear landscape features, such as woodland edges and hedgerows, to cross extensive open areas (i.e. arable fields) to reach foraging grounds and may feed to a certain extent within these more open areas. Typical flightlines used by this species include linear hedgerows, waterways, blocks of scrub, wooded rides and tracks, and sunken lanes. Flightlines will extend beyond the designated site boundary into the wider local landscape. Given that the Plan doesn't allocate sites for development, potential disturbance can therefore be ruled out.</p>
2(b) the cumulative nature of the effects of the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan;	<p>The Plan doesn't allocate sites for development, therefore there will not be additional cumulative, in-combination impacts of development around the International designations. Therefore, potential impacts of increased recreational pressures on the New Forest and Solent designations can be ruled out.</p>
2(c) the transboundary nature of effects of the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan;	<p>No transboundary effects with EU countries are considered likely to be significant.</p>
2(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents) due to the draft Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan;	<p>There are unlikely to be any significant risks to human health arising from the Plan</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)	Summary of significant events
2(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	The Designated Area covers an area of nearly 4.8 square kilometres and a population of approximately 767 people. Given the environmental sensitivities of the area – and in particular the need to address the impacts of development on water quality and increased recreational pressure, effects are likely. There are established mitigation schemes in place to address these matters.
2(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use; and	There are a number of nationally and internationally protected nature conservation sites within and immediately adjacent to the Awbridge Neighbourhood Area. These sites are vulnerable to a variety of impacts, as set out in the assessment against criteria 2(a) above. The Awbridge Neighbourhood Area also contains a range of built environment assets (designated and non-designated), including a number of listed buildings. National (NPPF and NPPG) and the Borough Council Local Plan includes policies seeking to protect these assets.
2(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	National Parks – including the New Forest - have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty (paragraph 182 of the NPPF) and great weight should also be given to the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage within the National Park. Section 62(2) of the Environment Act 1995 requires relevant authorities to have regard to the two statutory Park purposes in making decision that could affect National Parks. This applies to the preparation of plans and projects outside National Parks, but which could impact on them, including Neighbourhood Plans

2.2 SEA SCREENING OPINION AND DECISION.

As it has been concluded that there is **no potential for likely significant environmental effects**, an environmental report does not need to be prepared for the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan.

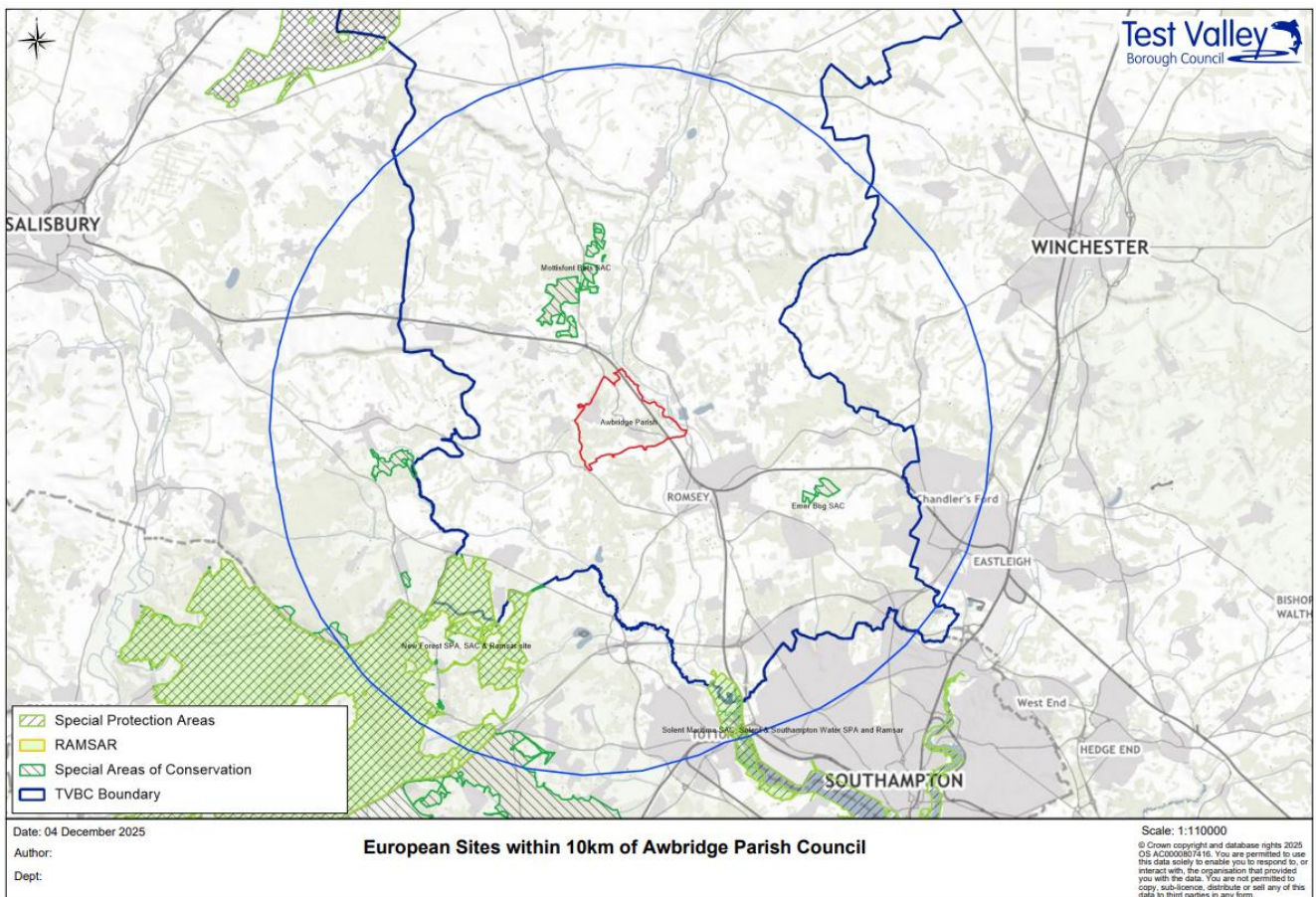
However, if the anticipated vision and scope of policies for the Neighbourhood Plan are subject to significant change, it would be appropriate to review the Screening Opinion and the position regarding the Habitat Regulations Assessment.

3 HRA SCREENING

3.1 HRA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

Awbridge Parish Council has also sought a formal screening opinion from the Borough Council on the need for a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. The Authority is the 'competent authority' under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 and therefore needs to ensure the emerging Neighbourhood Plan has been assessed through the Habitats Regulations process where necessary.

This process looks at the potential for significant impacts on nature conservation sites that are of international importance. The Awbridge Neighbourhood Area includes, or is adjacent to or within the catchment of, the New Forest SPA / SAC / RAMSAR, Solent Maritime SAC; Solent & Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar, Emer Bog SAC and Mottisfont Bats SAC. The map below illustrates these designations in relation to the Parish boundary.



3.2 HRA SCREENING OPINION AND APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

This screening assessment has regard to the information that has become available since the Test Valley Local Plan was adopted in 2016. It is also recognised that the Neighbourhood Plan will be in general conformity with the higher-level development plan prepared by the Test Valley Borough Council which has itself been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessments.

From this process the Authority has determined whether the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan is likely to result in significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites either alone or in combination with other plans and policies and, therefore, whether an 'Appropriate Assessment' is required.

Legislative Background

Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive provides that:

“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [European] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.”

Assessment

Table 3

International designations
<p>Changes in water quality:</p> <p>The European sites vulnerable to a deterioration in water quality as the following that are relevant to the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan - the New Forest SAC & Ramsar site; Solent & Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC; Solent Maritime SAC; Solent & Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site.</p> <p>The most relevant of these for the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan work is the Solent designations and the impacts arising from increased levels of nitrates. Although new development only makes a small contribution to the issue, Natural England's updated methodology and budget calculator (March 2024) re-affirms that new development in the Solent catchment must be 'nitrate-neutral' to ensure compliance with the Habitats Regulations and recent legal case law.</p> <p>As the plan does not propose or allocate housing sites, potential disturbance therefore can be screened out.</p>

International designations

Recreational pressure:

The New Forest NPA Local Plan HRA work concluded in relation to recreational impacts that, prior to mitigation, likely significant effects in-combination could not be ruled out for any residential development or visitor accommodation within New Forest National Park on the New Forest SAC and SPA. The Awbridge Neighbourhood Area includes areas of land within these area and therefore affected by this issue.

The National Park Authority adopted an updated Habitat Mitigation Scheme SPD in 2020 which provides details on how the recreational impacts of new development within the National Park can be mitigated. In addition, development within the defined 13.8km 'zone of influence' of the New Forest's designated sites may also increase recreational pressures and therefore mitigation is required for new housing and other forms of overnight accommodation within the zone.

As the plan does not propose or allocate housing sites, potential disturbance therefore can be screened out.

Loss of habitat: The plan area has the Mottisfont Bats SAC within close proximity. Barbastelles feed mainly on small moths, some flies and beetles. They may forage up to 5-7 km from their maternity roosts, though some individuals in less favourable habitat may forage further to reach suitable feeding grounds.

It is thought that barbastelles prefer pastoral landscapes with deciduous woodland, wet meadows and water bodies, though they will feed in more open areas i.e. orchards, suburban parks. Barbastelles prefer to commute along linear landscape features, such as woodland edges and hedgerows, to cross extensive open areas (i.e. arable fields) to reach foraging grounds and may feed to a certain extent within these more open areas. Typical flightlines used by this species include linear hedgerows, waterways, blocks of scrub, wooded rides and tracks, and sunken lanes. Flightlines will extend beyond the designated site boundary into the wider local landscape.

As the plan does not propose or allocate housing sites, potential disturbance therefore can be screened out.

Conclusions

It is concluded that as the plan does not propose or allocate housing sites, the emerging Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan **does not require a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**. This is based on the range of designated habitats within and adjacent to the Awbridge Neighbourhood Area and the recognition in published HRA work of their sensitivities to the impacts of development.

4 REPRESENTATIONS FROM CONSULTATION BODIES

The Borough Councils initial SEA and HRA Screening Opinion was sent to Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England - as statutory consultation bodies under Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations. The statutory consultees responses are summarised below and the complete response can be found in Appendix 1. They confirm that SEA and HRA are / are not required.

Natural England	Environment Agency	Historic England
<p>It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and, • significant effects on Habitats sites, either alone or in combination, are unlikely. <p>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</p>	<p>The information provided confirms that there will no development coming forward as part of this plan. Having taken this into account, we do not consider there to be any significant environmental impacts associated with this plan, and therefore it is our view that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will not be required. Natural England will comment on the HRA screening opinion.</p>	<p>It is noted that the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for development.</p> <p>Given the unlikely significant effects upon the historic environment. Historic England considers that a Strategic Environmental Assessment will not be required.</p>

<p>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.</p>		
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5 CONCLUSIONS

The screening process undertaken by the Test Valley Borough Council concludes that a **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) are not required for the emerging Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan.**

The Authority's conclusion is based on the fact that the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan will, once adopted, be a statutory planning document that will set the framework for future development in an area with a range of environmental designations. The Neighbourhood Plan **does not propose or allocate housing sites, and includes policies that support sustainable development, therefore potential disturbance therefore can be screened out.**

Table 2 of this report sets out an assessment as to whether the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have significant effects on the environment. This assessment is based on the requirements of Regulation 9 and Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations and recognises the statutory nature of the Neighbourhood Plan; its likely scope; and the value and vulnerability of the area (including national and internationally protected landscapes and habitats).

The SEA and HRA scoping work have identified the following environmental effects as key:

- The potential for direct loss of, or physical damage, to **designated habitats** or habitats on which designated species rely or direct mortality of designated species. In addition, the potential for development to result in loss of habitat which lies outside European site boundaries, but which is used by the qualifying species populations requires consideration.
- **Loss of habitat:** The plan area has the Mottisfont Bats SAC within close proximity. Barbastelles feed mainly on small moths, some flies and beetles. They may forage up to 5-7 km from their maternity roosts, though some individuals in less favourable habitat may forage further to reach suitable feeding grounds
- **Recreational pressure:** The New Forest NPA Local Plan HRA work concluded in relation to recreational impacts that, prior to mitigation, likely significant effects in-combination could not be ruled out for any residential development or visitor accommodation within New Forest National Park on the New Forest SAC and SPA. The Awbridge Neighbourhood Area includes areas of land within these area and therefore affected by this issue.
- **Changes in water quality:** The European sites vulnerable to a deterioration in water quality as the following that are relevant to the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan - the New Forest SAC & Ramsar site; Solent & Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC; Solent Maritime SAC; Solent & Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site.
- Potential impacts on **built heritage assets**, both directly and indirectly (through impacts on their settings).

Appendix 1

Date: 14 January 2026
Our ref: 538039
Your ref: Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan



Sarah Hughes
Test Valley Borough Council

Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

BY EMAIL ONLY

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Sarah Hughes

Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan – SA/SEA/HRA screening request

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 08 January 2026 which was received by Natural England on the same date

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.

¹ Habitats sites are those referred to in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (Annex 2 - glossary) as “any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites”.

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 consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Emma Foster
Sustainable Development Higher Officer
Thames Solent

Response from Environment Agency

From: Anna Rabone

Sent: 05 December 2025 10:54

To: Neighbourhood Planning

Subject: Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan – SA/SEA/HRA screening request

Dear Planning Policy team,

Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on the SA/SEA/HRA screening opinion for your emerging Awbridge Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

The information provided confirms that there will no development coming forward as part of this plan. Having taken this into account, we do not consider there to be any significant environmental impacts associated with this plan, and therefore it is our view that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will not be required. Natural England will comment on the HRA screening opinion.

However, should you determine that this Neighbourhood Plan does require SEA, we must be consulted on the scope to ensure key environmental issues within our remit are addressed.

I hope you find these comments useful.

Kind regards,

Anna

Anna Rabone MRTPI

Sustainable Places Technical Specialist | Solent & South Downs

Environment Agency | Oving Road, Chichester, West Sussex, PO20 2AG

Response from Historic England

Email: NeighbourhoodPlanning@testvalley.gov.uk

Our ref: PL00800706

Your ref: Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan SEA

Main: 020 7973 3700

Date: 29/01/2026

Dear Sir or Madam

Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Opinion

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on this consultation. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied.

It is noted that the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for development.

Given the unlikely significant effects upon the historic environment. Historic England considers that a **Strategic Environmental Assessment will not be required.**

Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the relevant local authorities are closely involved throughout the preparation of the plan and its assessment. They are best placed to advise on; local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the Historic Environment Record (HER), how the allocation, policy or proposal can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets.

We should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by you with your correspondence. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the NP process and, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan) where we consider that these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

Please do contact me, via email if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely
Louise

Louise Dandy
Historic Places Adviser