

Record of Delegated decision

Decision made by	Adrian Duffield
Key decision?	No
Date of decision (same as date form signed)	23 rd January 2018
Name and job title of officer requesting the decision	Clare Roberts, Principal Planning Policy Officer
Officer contact details	Tel: 07717 226263 Email: clare.roberts@southandvale.gov.uk
Decision	To approve the SEA screening statement for Uffington and Baulking Neighbourhood Plan (NDP) and therefore determine Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment are not required.
Reasons for decision	<p>An environmental report, or environmental statement explaining why an environmental report is not required, must be submitted to the local planning authority alongside a plan proposal.</p> <p>We have put in place procedures to write and publish a SEA Screening Statement stating the decision, the reasons behind it, and the comments from statutory consultees.</p> <p>Following consultation with the statutory consultees (Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency), we have determined that SEA is not required.</p>
Alternative options rejected	We have screened the plan and found that SEA is not required and therefore there are no alternative options.
Legal implications	We are the responsible authority and are therefore required to ensure the correct screening processes have been completed under the SEA Regulations.
Financial implications	None

Other implications	None
Background papers considered	SEA Screening Statement for Uffington and Baulking Neighbourhood Plan
Head of planning's signature To confirm the decision as set out in this notice.	Signature: *by email  <hr/> Date: 23 rd January 2018

Uffington and Baulking Neighbourhood Development Plan: SEA Screening Statement

DATE: SAME AS FORM SIGNED

INTRODUCTION

1. Uffington and Baulking Parish Councils have requested that Vale of White Horse (VoWH) District Council 'screen' the Uffington and Baulking Neighbourhood Plan, to determine whether there is a requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
2. This report is the SEA Screening Statement and has been used to determine whether or not the contents of the emerging Uffington and Baulking NDP) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2011/42/EC (the Directive) and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations). It also determines whether or not the contents of the emerging NDP requires an Appropriate Assessment under the EU Habitats Directive.
3. We determine that SEA is **not** required for the Uffington and Baulking neighbourhood plan. We also determine that the Uffington and Baulking neighbourhood plan does **not** require an Appropriate Assessment in relation to the Habitats Regulations Assessment. The Screening Opinion was shared with the statutory bodies and their responses are at Appendix 3 of this report.

BACKGROUND

4. One of the basic conditions that a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) must be tested against is whether the making of the NP is compatible with European Union obligations, including requirements under the SEA Directive. The aim of the SEA Directive is:

*“to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that an environmental assessment is carried out **of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.**”*

5. In order to decide whether a proposed NP is likely to have significant environmental effects, and hence requires SEA, it should be ‘screened’ at an early stage, i.e. once the plan remit and objectives have been formulated.

Who is responsible for screening?

Screening is ‘Stage A’ in Government’s six stage approach to SEA for NPs. If it is determined, through screening, that SEA is not required, then plan-makers need not concern themselves with subsequent stages of the SEA process.¹

The Council has previously undertaken a Screening Opinion on the then emerging Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking Neighbourhood Development Plan. This was consulted on in July 2016. The Screening Statement concluded that environmental impacts were likely and thus an SEA would be required, however an HRA was not required. Since the previous Screening Statement, Woolstone Parish Council has decided to withdraw from the NDP and the scope of this Plan has now changed. The Group have undertaken a Housing Needs Assessment, which has led to a change in direction for allocating land uses. Therefore the NDP is no longer allocating land uses. This Screening Statement reflects these changes. The previous Screening Statement from 2016 is at Appendix 4.

SCREENING PROCESS

Any land use plan or programme ‘which sets the framework for future development consent of projects’ must be screened according to a set of criteria from Annex II of the Directive and Schedule 1 of the Regulations. These criteria include exceptions for plans which ‘determine the use of a small area at local level’ or which only propose ‘minor modifications to a plan’, if it is determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects. This initial screening opinion must be subject to consultation with Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England. The results of the

¹ <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal/sustainability-appraisal-requirements-for-neighbourhood-plans/>

screening process must be detailed in a Screening Statement, made available to the public.

Using the criteria set out in Annex II of the Directive and Schedule 1 of the Regulations, a Screening Opinion determines whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects.

The assessment of likely significance effects on the environment can be found in Appendix 1. Part of the screening process also contains the Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening, which can be found in Appendix 2.

THE EMERGING UFFINGTON AND BAULKING NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

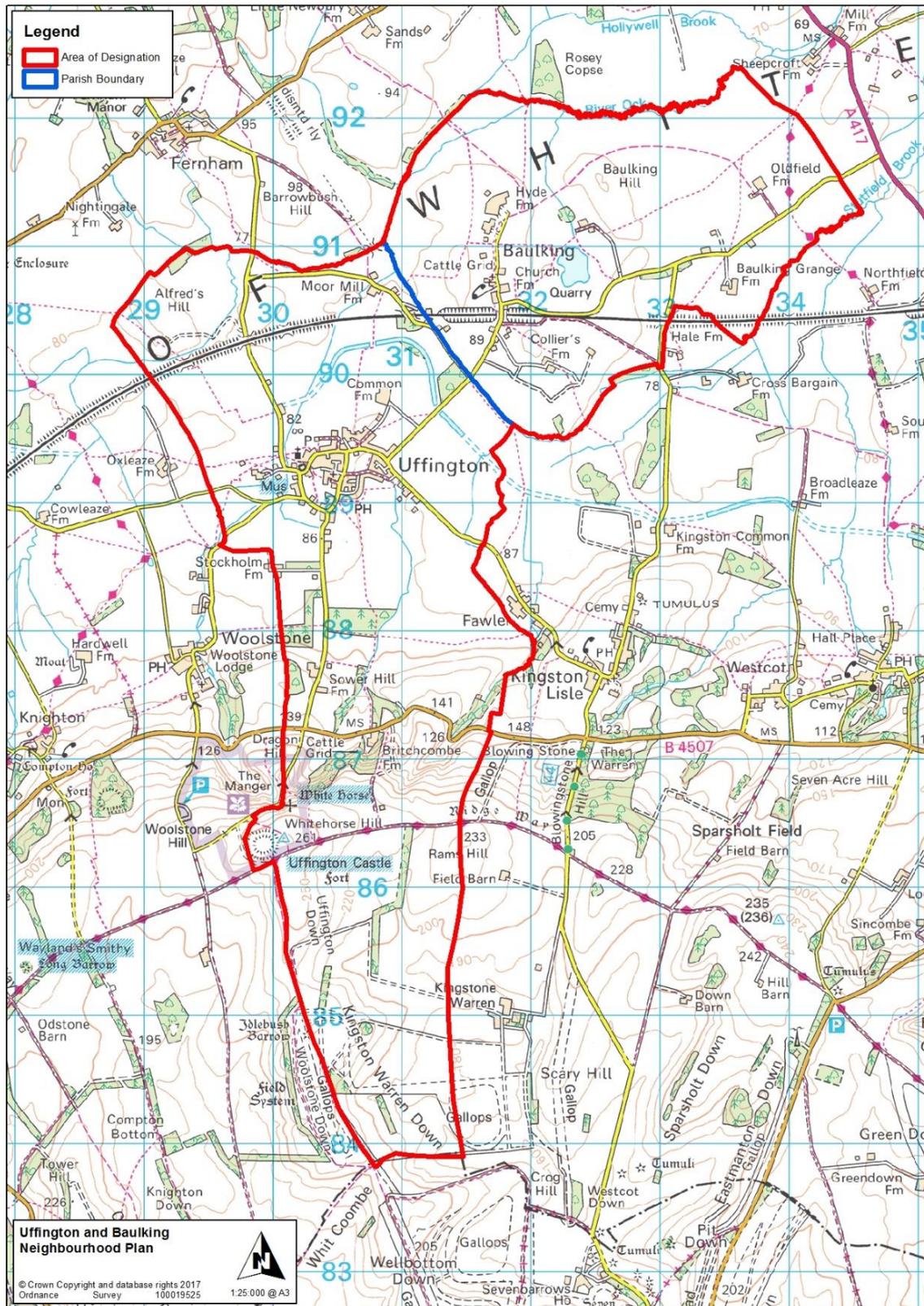
The neighbourhood plan area

The NP area covers all of the Uffington and Baulking parishes. The Parishes and the Plan boundaries are the same and that is shown on **Figure 1**.

The VoWH Local Plan and Uffington and Baulking – overview

The Uffington and Baulking NDP will sit alongside, and complement, the VoWH Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (LPP1), which was adopted in December 2016. The District Council have produced a Publication Version of the Part 2 plan which is currently out to consultation. Neither Part 1 nor Part 2 allocate sites within these parishes. The Part 1 plan identifies Uffington as a larger village and Baulking as in the open countryside.

Figure 1: The plan area



The Uffington and Baulking NDP

At this point it is important to state that a draft plan **has not been prepared in its entirety**. Draft preferred policies and alternative options have been produced by the Group and consulted upon in the Summer 2017. These are available to see on the Group's website: <https://www.ubwnp.net/creating-the-plan/draft-policies/>

VoWH District Council Officers have met with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, in order to discuss the plan. From these meetings, and from the response to the SEA questionnaire, there is no intention to allocate sites for development. The NDP will add detail to existing LPP1 policies which themselves have been subject to an SA.

The LPPA SA concluded that *'the SA process has identified a range of likely significant positive effects e.g. though housing delivery; provision of infrastructure; improved living conditions and job creation. These positive effects need to be balanced against the likely significant negative effects identified. In the case of the Local Plan Part 1, these are related to potential increases in traffic induced through unallocated sites and the support of larger settlements in terms of facilities provision.'*

The Neighbourhood Plan Vision, Objectives and initial policy directions

Vision

Neighbourhood Plans influence development over a long period of time in the same way Local Plans do. They consider the past, present and, in the form of a vision, consider the future. The draft NP vision, as directly quoted from the current draft, is:

Our vision is that in 2031 the community, comprising the villages of Uffington and Baulking, will still sit in a peaceful rural setting, dominated by two of the most famous landmarks in the country: the White Horse Hill and the Ridgeway. There will continue to be strategic gaps between the villages consisting of farmland and wooded areas, as we will have protected the surrounding countryside from inappropriate development. There will, however, have been some building, consistent with the Vale of White Horse Local Plan, and having regard to our Housing Needs Assessment, to address the current and future needs of all sections of our community. Our heritage assets will have been protected. We will have done our best to stimulate the local economy and to optimise opportunities for employment in the neighbourhood. The facilities, services and infrastructure will have been properly maintained, and upgraded where possible, to a standard fit for a time approaching the middle of the 21st century

Objectives

The **objectives** of the NP are as follows:

1. To ensure that any development in the future is sited where the community wants it.
2. To provide for the changing housing needs of the community.
3. To enhance the built environment of our villages.
4. To retain Uffington and Baulking's identities as individual villages, each with a strong heritage.
5. To preserve the high quality and accessible countryside setting of Uffington and Baulking within the open landscape of the Vale and White Horse Hill and to protect the valued green spaces within and around our villages.
6. To stimulate the local economy and to optimise opportunities for local employment.
7. To protect and enhance our community facilities and recreation space to address the needs of a growing population.
8. To ensure the infrastructure within the parishes of Uffington and Baulking is developed to support sustainable growth.

Initial policy directions

As the NP is currently in preparation, draft policies have been prepared. These policies will provide a strategy that directs the form, nature and appearance of development, whilst protecting key assets such as conservation area, the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, local green spaces and community assets. They do not allocate land. These are as follows:

Housing

- Policy 1 – Number and Type of Houses
- Policy 2 – Building within the Conservation Areas
- Policy 3 – Building within the Village Envelope (outside Conservation Areas)
- Policy 4 – Building outside the Village Envelope
- Policy 5 – Building in Open Countryside
- Policy 6 – Building in farmyards

Design

- Policy D1 – Use of the Design Guide
- Policy D2 – Local building design
- Policy D3 – Public space

Landscape and Heritage

- Policy LH 1 - Setting of the Plan Area
- Policy LH 2 – Identification of Local Green Spaces
- Policy LH 3 – Valued Views

Economy and Employment

- Policy EE1 - Commercial Development
- Policy EE2 - Agricultural Development
- Policy EE3 - Supporting Local Businesses
- Policy EE4 - Supporting the Growth of Tourism

Sustainability and infrastructure

- Policy 1– Mobility and Safe Movement
- Policy 2 – Flooding and Drainage
- Policy 3 – Amenities
- Policy 4 – Biodiversity

The Group have also commissioned three studies to inform the Plan:

- Characterisation Study. This has been finalised.
- Housing Needs Assessment. This has been finalised and is available on the NP Group website. Following the Assessment, the Groups concluded:

‘Following the HNA which identified an Housing Need of only 19 homes, the NPSG decided at its May meeting that no specific sites would be allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan. A Landscape Study has been initiated to identify the impact of building in different areas, rather than on specific sites, of the Plan area.’

- A Landscape Study which is currently underway.

RELEVANT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The designated area of Uffington and Baulking contains the following environmental designations:

- North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Fernham Meadows SSSI, White Horse Hill SSSI (partly) and Hackpen, Warren & Gramp's Hill Downs SSSI
- Two conservation areas
- Wildlife Sites including Kingstone Warren Down North
- A number of listed buildings
- Five Schedule Monuments
- National Trail – Ridgeway runs through the NDP area
- Conservation Target Area: Berkshire Downs Escarpment

SCREENING ANALYSIS

The Draft plan is not intending on allocating any sites for development, reflecting the outcome of the Housing Needs Assessment, therefore a focus of the Plan is to direct the form and nature of development that is consistent

with the Vale Local Plan and has regard to the HNA to ensure the needs of the community are met.

A number of the Plan's objectives focus on retaining the identities of the villages including its heritage and preserve the countryside setting and landscape. A key part of the vision is the following:

'Our vision is that in 2031 the community, comprising the villages of Uffington and Baulking, will still sit in a peaceful rural setting, dominated by two of the most famous landmarks in the country: the White Horse Hill and the Ridgeway.'

Draft policies LH 1 - Setting of the Plan Area and LH 3 – Valued Views have the potential to ensure the vision and objectives in relation to landscape and heritage are delivered and have the potential to have positive environmental impacts.

National guidance states that where policies have been assessed through a higher level plan, policy assessment does not need to be replicated (paragraph 167 NPPF). The nature of the policies proposed in the NDP are likely to have already been assessed through the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) and additionally, the NDP does not propose to allocate land uses. It is therefore considered that policies in the Uffington and Baulking NDP are not likely to result in significant impacts on the environment however there is the potential for likely positive effects

Policies in the Uffington and Baulking NDP are potentially not likely to result in significant negative effects on Natura 2000 sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and policies. Therefore an HRA is not required. See Appendix 2 for screening assessment.

CONSULTATION WITH STATUTORY CONSULTEES

The three statutory consultees for SEA were consulted and their full responses are in Appendix 3 of this report. The views of the statutory consultees published in this Screening Statement should be considered throughout the SEA process.

Firstly, Historic England stated that the plan area is a sensitive historic environment which may be affected by any development promoted or allowed for by the Neighbourhood Plan. As it is not intended that the Plan will allocate any sites for housing or other development Historic England agreed with the Council that the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to lead to any significant negative effects on the historic environment.

The potential for likely positive effects may still be considered as significant impacts, as per "A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Directive". Historic England recommended that the council and neighbourhood plan group consider this as a reason to undertake an SEA.

Natural England stated that this Neighbourhood Plan does not pose any likely risk or opportunity in relation to their statutory purpose, and so did not wish to comment on this consultation.

The Environment Agency did not respond to the consultation.

CONCLUSION

No allocations for development are proposed by the plan. Any development is anticipated to come forward in accordance with the strategy and policies of the adopted LPP1 which has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal, details of which are published on our website.

Having reviewed the vision, objectives, policy directions and SEA screening questionnaire, and having discussed the plan with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, in our opinion there are no aspects of the plan with the potential for likely significant negative effects however there is some potential for likely positive effects.

There is one Natura 2000 site (SAC's, SPA's) within a 5km radius of the designated area and the draft plan documents and the SEA questionnaire give no intention to allocate sites. Therefore it is our opinion that an HRA 'Appropriate Assessment' **is not required**.

In **conclusion**, our opinion is that the plan should **not** be subject to SEA or HRA appropriate assessment.

See **Appendix 1** for a 'regulatory checklist' in support of the Screening Opinion.

See **Appendix 2** for the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Uffington and Baulking Neighbourhood Development Plan.

See **Appendix 3** for the statutory bodies' responses.

See **Appendix 4** for the previous Screening Statement regarding the then emerging Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking Neighbourhood Development Plan, November 2016.

APPENDIX 1: REGULATORY CHECKLIST

As discussed above, under 'Screening methodology', Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations lists a series of criteria that should be taken into account when establishing the potential for the plan to result in significant effects. The aim of this appendix is to discuss matters under each criterion in turn.

1. Characteristics of the Plan, having regard to:	
(a) 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;	An objective of the NP is to establish policies to guide development. However, it does not seek to allocate sites for development.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	The NP seeks to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan 2031 Part 1
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	A number of the NP objectives do relate to the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development. It will contain policies that will protect, preserve and enhance the village's built environment, individual village identities, countryside setting, and heritage. However, it is not clear that there is the potential for <i>significant</i> positive effects.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and	There are environmental issues which are of particular note, which are highlighted in the "Relevant Environmental Issues" section of this report. The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to propose any policies that may cause harm to these designations as the plan seeks to conserve the village, its character and setting.
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The proposed development in the Uffington and Baulking NDP will consider and/or investigate impacts of development on water and waste infrastructure although unlikely if not allocating.

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:	
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	The NDP will influence development up until 2031. The NDP is likely to have modest but enduring positive environmental effects. The effects are not likely to be reversible as they relate to development however, they will be of a local scale. The Plan seeks to ensure that these effects are positive in nature.
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	There are no site allocations being proposed in the plan and no other cumulative effects that could have significant effects.
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects;	The effects of the NDP are unlikely to have transboundary ² impacts.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	The policies in the NDP are unlikely to present risks to human health or the environment. However some policies would involve the protection or introduction of green space for play which would improve both the environment and possibly health by providing space for leisure.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	The Uffington and Baulking NDP relates to the parishes of Uffington and Baulking, which includes the respective villages. The magnitude and spatial extent of the any environmental effects is likely to be small and localised.
(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	The Uffington and Baulking NDP offers an opportunity to enhance the natural environment and the cultural heritage of the area through the proposals being considered and will aim to have a net positive effect on biodiversity. The NDP is seeking to direct the form and nature of development to ensure accessibility to the countryside, ensure sufficient infrastructure and enhance community facilities which will have net positive social effects.
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	The NDP has the potential to have likely positive impacts on the setting of the nearby AONB as an objective of the Plan is to preserve the high quality countryside setting.

² Transboundary effects are understood to be in other Member States.

Appendix 2 - Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Uffington and Baulking Neighbourhood Development Plan

INTRODUCTION

1. The Local Authority is the “competent authority” under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, and needs to ensure that Neighbourhood Plans have been assessed through the Habitats Regulations process. This looks at the potential for significant impacts on nature conservation sites that are of European importance³, also referred to as Natura 2000.
2. This Screening Assessment relates to a Neighbourhood Development Plan that will be in general conformity with the strategic policies within the development plan⁴ (the higher level plan for town and country planning and land use). This Screening Assessment uses the Habitats Regulations Assessment of Vale of White Horse District Council’s Local Plan 2031 Part 1 as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Uffington and Baulking Neighbourhood Development 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 BASIS

3. 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.”

³ Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for other species, and for habitats.

⁴ Including the Adopted Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and Local Plan 2011.

ASSESSMENT

4. There is one Special Area of Conservation (SACs) within 5km of the Uffington and Baulking Neighbourhood Development Plan in the Vale of White Horse district. This is as follows:
 - Hackpen Hill SAC
5. The qualifying habitats for this SAC are the unimproved chalk grassland and the dune gentian. The site is popular with visitors and lies within the typical distance that visitors from any development in these three parishes may travel for a day visit (minimum of 3.5km). However, the HRA for the Local Plan 2031 Part 1, which includes the overall level of development across the whole of the district, was able to conclude no likely significant effect on Hackpen Hill SAC through recreational pressure, nor reduced air quality.

CONCLUSION

6. The Uffington and Baulking NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Uffington and Baulking NDP is not required.

APPENDIX 3 – STATUTORY BODY CONSULTATION RESPONSES



Historic England

Mr Sam Townley
Enquiries Officer (Neighbourhood Planning)
South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District
Councils
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Milton, Abingdon
Oxfordshire, OX14 4SB.

Our ref: HD/P5354/01
Your ref:
Telephone 01483 252040
Fax

10th November 2017

Dear Mr Townley,

Uffington and Baulking Neighbourhood Plan - SEA and HRA Screening Opinion

Thank you for your e-mail of 2nd November seeking the views of Historic England on your Authority's SEA Screening Opinion for the Uffington and Baulking Neighbourhood Plan.

According to our records, the parishes contain 46 listed buildings, four scheduled monuments, two conservation areas, and potentially a number of locally important heritage assets. The Plan area is, therefore, a sensitive historic environment which may be affected by any development promoted or allowed for by the Neighbourhood Plan.

We understand that it is not intended that the Plan will allocate any sites for housing or other development. Accordingly, based on the information available to us at this time, Historic England agrees with the Council that the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to lead to any significant negative effects on the historic environment.

We note the Council's conclusion that there is some potential for likely positive effects on the environment as a consequence of the Plan's policies and proposals. As explained in "*A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Directive*", "significant effects" should include both negative and positive effects. "Likely" and "significant" are also actually quite low thresholds. If the Council is correct, there is, therefore, an argument that the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects and should therefore be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment.

However, we are content to leave this point to the Council and Neighbourhood Plan body to consider, and we are content, based on the information currently available, for the Plan to be taken forward without undergoing strategic environmental assessment.

Nevertheless, we reserve the right to review our opinion when we see the Plan's policies and proposals.

- 2 -

We hope these comments are helpful. Please contact me if you have any queries.

Thank you again for consulting Historic England.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Small
Principal Adviser, Historic Environment Planning
(Bucks, Oxon, Berks, Hampshire, IoW, South Downs and New Forest National Parks and Chichester)
E-mail: martin.small@historicengland.org.uk

Date: 16 December 2017
Our ref: 230430
Your ref: Uffington & Baulking NDP Screening Opinion



Mr Sam Townley
Enquiries Officer (Neighbourhood Planning)
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils
135 Eastern Avenue,
Milton Park,
Milton,
Abingdon,
Oxfordshire,
OX14 4SB

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

T 0300 060 3900

BY EMAIL ONLY

Sam.Townley@southandvale.gov.uk

Dear Mr Townley

Uffington and Baulking NDP Screening Opinion.

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 2nd November 2017.

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.

Natural England does not consider that this Neighbourhood Plan poses any likely risk or opportunity in relation to our statutory purpose, and so does not wish to comment on this consultation.

The lack of comment from Natural England should not be interpreted as a statement that there are no impacts on the natural environment. Other bodies and individuals may wish to make comments that might help the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to fully take account of any environmental risks and opportunities relating to this document.

If you disagree with our assessment of this proposal as low risk, or should the proposal be amended in a way which significantly affects its impact on the natural environment, then in accordance with Section 4 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, please consult Natural England again.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Jenkins
Consultations Team

APPENDIX 4: SCREENING STATEMENT ON UFFINGTON, WOOLSTONE AND BAULKING NDP, NOVEMBER 2016

Screening Statement on the determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and European Directive 2001/42/EC for the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking Neighbourhood Development Plan

8 NOVEMBER 2016

SUMMARY

In this screening statement, Vale of White Horse District Council (the 'Council') determines that Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking Neighbourhood Development Plan (Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP) does require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The Council also determines that Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP does not require an Appropriate Assessment in relation to the Habitats Regulations Assessment.

INTRODUCTION

9. This screening statement has been used to determine whether or not the contents of the emerging Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC (the Directive) and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations). It also determines whether or not the contents of the emerging NDP requires an Appropriate Assessment under the EU Habitats Directive
10. Any land use plan or programme 'which sets the framework for future development consent of projects' must be screened according to a set of criteria from Annex II of the Directive and Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. These criteria include exceptions for plans 'which determine the use of a small area at local level' or which only propose 'minor modifications to a plan', if it is determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.
11. The Local Authority under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 needs to ensure that Neighbourhood Development Plans have been assessed through the Habitats Regulations process. This looks at the potential for significant impacts on nature conservation sites that are of European importance⁵, also referred to as Natura 2000.

⁵ Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for other species, and for habitats.

THE SCREENING PROCESS

1. Using the criteria set out in Annex II of the Directive and Schedule 1 of the Regulations, a Screening Opinion determines whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects.
2. The extract from 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' in Appendix 1 provides a flow diagram to demonstrate the SEA screening process.
3. Table 1 in Appendix 1 sets out the criteria from the Practical Guide, along with an assessment of the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP against each criterion to ascertain whether a SEA is required.
4. Also part of the screening process is the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening, which can be found in Appendix 2, and the assessment of likely significance effects on the environment, which can be found in Appendix 3. These two assessments feed into Table 1.

UFFINGTON, WOOLSTONE AND BAULKING NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

5. The Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP will contain policies to provide a strategy that directs development whilst protecting key assets such as conservation areas and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This will include allocation of around 35-50 dwellings, potential sites for employment and community use and designation of local green spaces.
6. The Neighbourhood Plan proposes to allocate sites for around 35-50 dwellings however it is not clear where these sites will be. National guidance states that where policies have been assessed through a higher level plan, policy assessment does not need to be replicated (paragraph 167 NPPF). However, given that the sites are as yet unknown, they may not have been identified and assessed through the Local Plan 2031 Part 1. Given the existence of natural and heritage assets in the parishes (see Appendix 3), allocations and policies in the plan have the potential to cause significant effects and as such, an SEA is required. There is the potential for a review of this situation as the plan develops and more information is known.
7. This Screening Assessment has used the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of Vale of White Horse District Council's Local Plan 2031 Part 1 as its basis for assessment. This demonstrates there is only one Special Area of Conservation within 5km of the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP, which is Hackpen Hill SAC. The HRA for the Local Plan 2031 Part 1, which includes the overall level of development across the whole of the district, was able to conclude no likely significant effect on Hackpen Hill SAC through recreational pressure, nor reduced air quality. Policies in the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP are

therefore not likely to result in significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites either alone or in combination with other plans and policies. Therefore an HRA is not required.

8. It is therefore concluded that the implementation of the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP could result in likely significant effects on the environment.

STATUTORY CONSULTEES

9. This initial Screening Opinion was sent to Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England on 1 July 2016 giving a 4 week consultation period. The responses in full are at Appendix 4.
10. Natural England commented that *'We note that the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP includes allocations for housing of around 35-50 dwellings (point 6) and that it has not been made clear where these allocations should be. Natural England therefore concurs with the conclusion that a full SEA is required.'*
11. The Environment Agency commented that *'we agree with your conclusion that the plan may result in significant environmental effects.'*
12. Historic England commented that *'There is therefore the potential for the Plan to lead to significant effects on the historic environment. We therefore concur with the Council's conclusion that an SEA is required for the Neighbourhood Plan.'*

CONCLUSION

13. The Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP is not required.
14. Based on the assessment presented in Appendices 1 & 3, the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP has the potential for likely significant effects on the environment.
15. The Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP does require a Strategic Environment Assessment. There is the potential for a review of this situation as the plan develops and more information is known.

Table 1: Application of SEA Directive as shown in Appendix 1

[Note to author – most of these boxes contain standard text –greyed out. Those where specific details need to be included are Qs 3,4,5 & 8]

Stage	Y/N	Explanation
1. 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))		<p>The preparation of and adoption of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is allowed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP Steering Group, a working group who report to Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking Parish Council (as the “relevant body”) and will be “made” by Vale of White Horse District Council as the local authority. The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is subject to the following regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 • The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Y	<p>Whilst the Neighbourhood Development Plan is not a requirement and is optional under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, it will, if “made”, form part of the Development Plan for the District. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive.</p>
3. 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	Y	<p>The Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP is prepared for town and country planning and land use and will set out a framework for future development in Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking, including the development of housing, employment and community uses. However, these projects are not of the scale referred to in Article 4(2) of the EIA Directive – listed at Annex II of the directive.</p>

future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II (see Appendix 2) to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))		
4. 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))	N	The Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP in Appendix 2.
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)	Y	The Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP will determine the use of small sites and areas at a local level.
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)	Y	When made, the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP will include a series of policies to guide development within the village and will allocate sites for specific development. This will inform the determination of planning applications providing a framework for future development consent of projects.
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)	N	N/A
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	Y	The potential for likely significant effects upon the environment has been identified. See assessment of the likely significance of effects on the environment in Appendix 3.

Appendix 2 - Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking Neighbourhood Development Plan

INTRODUCTION

7. The Local Authority is the “competent authority” under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, and needs to ensure that Neighbourhood Plans have been assessed through the Habitats Regulations process. This looks at the potential for significant impacts on nature conservation sites that are of European importance⁶, also referred to as Natura 2000.
8. This Screening Assessment relates to a Neighbourhood Development Plan that will be in general conformity with the strategic policies within the development plan⁷ (the higher level plan for town and country planning and land use). This Screening Assessment uses the Habitats Regulations Assessment of Vale of White Horse District Council’s Local Plan 2031 Part 1 as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking Neighbourhood Development 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 BASIS

9. 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

⁶ Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for other species, and for habitats.

⁷ The South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (December 2012) and the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (January 2006).

10. There is one Special Area of Conservation (SACs) within 5km of the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking Neighbourhood Development Plan in the Vale of White Horse district. This is as follows:

- Hackpen Hill SAC

11. The qualifying habitats for this SAC are the unimproved chalk grassland and the dune gentian. The site is popular with visitors and lies within the typical distance that visitors from any development in these three parishes may travel for a day visit (minimum of 3.5km). However, the HRA for the Local Plan 2031 Part 1, which includes the overall level of development across the whole of the district, was able to conclude no likely significant effect on Hackpen Hill SAC through recreational pressure, nor reduced air quality.

CONCLUSION

12. The Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, therefore, an Appropriate Assessment for the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP is not required.

Appendix 3 - Assessment of the likely significance of effects on the environment

1. Characteristics of the Plan, having regard to:	
(a) 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 Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP would, if adopted, form part of the Statutory Development Plan and as such does contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects. However, the Plan will sit within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework, the strategic policies of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1 and the Saved Policies of the Adopted Local Plan 2011. Potentially not all of the site allocations for residential, employment and community uses proposed by the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP have been considered as part of the SEA and HRA of those higher level plans. Other policies in the plan will help guide impact on heritage and natural environment.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	A Neighbourhood Development Plan must be in conformity with the Local Plan for the district. It does not influence other plans.
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	National policy requires a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread through plan-making, including the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP. A basic condition of the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and have regard to the district's development plan. The NDP will contain allocations for housing, employment and community uses including policies in stimulating economic opportunities and valued green spaces. The NPD is likely to contain policies to protect, preserve and enhance the village's built environment, individual village identities, countryside setting, and heritage. Therefore the Plan will be contributing positively to sustainable development in the area by providing for development needs.

<p>(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and</p>	<p>The designated area of Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking contains the following environmental designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (31% of the NDP Area is covered by AONB) • Fernham Meadows SSSI, White Horse Hill SSSI and Hackpen, Warren & Gramp's Hill Downs SSSI • Three Conservation areas • Two Wildlife Sites: Kingstone Warren Down North and South • 60 listed buildings • Five Schedule Monuments • National Trail – Ridgeway runs through the NDP area <p>The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to propose any policies that may cause harm to these designations as the plan seeks to conserve the village, its character and setting. However the plan is at an early stage and any effects (positive or negative) are as yet unknown, in particular in regards to the site allocations.</p>
<p>(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).</p>	<p>The proposed development in the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP will consider and/or investigate impacts of development on water and waste infrastructure.</p>
<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>The NDP is likely to have modest but enduring positive environmental effects. The effects are not likely to be reversible as they relate to development however, they will be of a local scale. The Plan seeks to ensure that these are effects are positive in nature.</p>
<p>(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;</p>	<p>It is intended that the positive social and economic effects of providing residential, employment and community development and designated local green spaces will have positive cumulative benefits for the area.</p>

(c) the transboundary nature of the effects;	The effects of the NDP are unlikely to have transboundary ⁸ impacts.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	The policies in the NDP are unlikely to present risks to human health or the environment.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	The Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP relates to the parishes of Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking, which includes the respective villages. The magnitude and spatial extent of the any environmental effects is likely to be small and localised.
(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	The Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP offers an opportunity to enhance the natural environment and the cultural heritage of the area through the proposals being considered and will aim to have a net positive effect on biodiversity. Given the number of environmental assets in the area (see 1d), an assessment is required to ensure any potential impacts are avoided, minimised or mitigated.
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	There is potential vulnerability on the setting of the nearby AONB depending on the specifics in the plan.

⁸ Transboundary effects are understood to be in other Member States.

APPENDIX 4 – RESPONSES FROM STATUTORY CONSULTEES



Clare Roberts
Senior Planning Policy Officer
Vale of White Horse District Council
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Milton, OX14 4SB.

Our ref: HD/P5354/
Your ref:
Telephone 01483 252040
Fax

Dear Ms Roberts,

Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Opinion

Thank you for your e-mail of 1st July consulting Historic England on your Council's initial Screening Opinion for the SEA of the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking Neighbourhood Plan.

As recognised in the Council's Opinion, the parishes of Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking have a sensitive historic environment. We note that the Plan proposes to allocate a site or sites for 35-50 dwellings but that it is not yet known where these sites will be.

There is therefore the potential for the Plan to lead to significant effects on the historic environment. We therefore concur with the Council's conclusion that an SEA is required for the Neighbourhood Plan.

We hope these comments are helpful, but please contact me if you have any queries.

Thank you again for consulting Historic England.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Small
Principal Adviser, Historic Environment Planning
(Bucks, Oxon, Berks, Hampshire, IoW, South Downs National Park and Chichester)

E-mail: martin.small@historicengland.org.uk

creating a better place



Ms Clare Roberts
Vale Of White Horse Council
Environmental Services Directorate
Vale of White Horse District Council 135
Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Abingdon
OX14 4SB

Our ref: WA/2006/000281/OR-
32/IS1-L01
Your ref:

Dear Ms Roberts

Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking Neighbourhood Development Plan – SEA screening opinion request

Thank you for your consultation of 1 July 2016 enclosing the council's SEA screening opinion for the above neighbourhood development plan.

We note that a number of environmental constraints affect the plan area, and also that the plan proposes to allocate sites for around 35 to 50 dwellings although it is not yet clear where those sites will be.

On that basis, we agree with your conclusion that the plan may result in significant environmental effects.

Yours sincerely

Judith Johnson
Planning Specialist, Sustainable Places team

direct dial 01252 729625
e-mail: planning-famham@environment-agency.gov.uk

End





BY EMAIL ONLY

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

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Roberts,

Planning consultation: SEA Screening Opinion for Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking Neighbourhood Development Plan - Consultation Request.

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 01/07/2016.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Strategic Environmental Assessment – Screening
We welcome the production of this SEA Screening report.

We note that the Uffington, Woolstone and Baulking NDP includes allocations for housing of around 35-50 dwellings (point 6) and that it has not been made clear where these allocations should be (point 7). Natural England therefore concurs with the conclusion that a full SEA is required.

Further guidance on deciding whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects and the requirements for consulting Natural England on SEA are set out in the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#).

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Tom Amos on 0300 060 1396. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours sincerely

Tom Amos
Adviser, South Merca