



neighbourhood planning

Strategic Environmental Assessment of Neighbourhood Plans

A guide for Wiltshire's parish
and town councils

Updated December 2015

Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. An introduction to environmental and sustainability assessment	2
3. Undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment of your neighbourhood plan	5
4. Stage A – Scoping the issues	7
5. Stage B – Assessing the effects of your neighbourhood plan and alternative options	13
6. Stage C – Preparing an Environmental Report	20
7. Stage D – Consulting on your draft neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report and submitting to Wiltshire Council.....	22
8. Stage E – Monitoring the significant effects of your neighbourhood plan	25
9. Further sources of advice and guidance on the assessment of neighbourhood plans.....	27
Appendix A – Requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive	29
Appendix B – Wiltshire Council’s Sustainability Appraisal Framework.....	32

1. Introduction

This step-by-step guide has been produced by Wiltshire Council to help you carry out an assessment of the environmental (and sustainability) effects of your neighbourhood plan.

Establishing whether a neighbourhood plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in order to meet European legislation, is an important consideration and should form a part of the neighbourhood planning preparation process from the outset.

Wiltshire Council will determine whether you should undertake an SEA of your neighbourhood plan. If an assessment is required this should be undertaken from the outset when the first initial work is carried out on a neighbourhood plan i.e. when developing your objectives, priorities and vision.

In addition to considering the need for SEA, you will need to consider the wider sustainability effects (social and economic) of your neighbourhood plan. One method which can be used to show this is by undertaking a sustainability appraisal. This will help demonstrate how your neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development, which is one of the basic conditions for a neighbourhood plan that must be met.

How to use this guide

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), if required, is carried out in a series of straightforward stages and tasks. This guide has been divided into sections which explain the steps that would need to be undertaken to ensure all legal requirements are fulfilled. The main stages of the assessment process are:

- Stage A** Scoping the issues - setting the context and objectives for the ongoing assessment, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope.
- Stage B** Assessing the effects of your neighbourhood plan and alternative options.
- Stage C** Preparing an Environmental Report.
- Stage D** Consulting on your draft neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report.
- Stage E** Monitoring the significant effects of your neighbourhood plan.

The information within this guide is based on guidance published by the government. That guidance provides further, more detailed information on how to undertake the assessments described in this guide and should also be consulted. Government guidance and other useful documents are detailed in Section 9 of this guide.

Wiltshire Council has also developed an online neighbourhood planning portal which contains useful information on neighbourhood planning, including where to go for advice and support and FAQs. This can be found at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning.htm>



It is recommended that you discuss the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), and the form it should take, with your neighbourhood plan link officer at the start of the neighbourhood plan preparation process.



2. An introduction to environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal

The achievement of sustainable development is the core principle underpinning the planning system and is the main objective of the assessments covered in this guide. This guide focuses specifically on the need to consider undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as part of your neighbourhood plan. However, it also introduces the concept of Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which is a tool for demonstrating how your plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development and the need to consider Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

Type of assessment	What does this assessment involve?	Is this assessment required for our neighbourhood plan?
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	An assessment of the significant environmental effects of the plan	To be determined by Wiltshire Council on a case-by-case basis. SEA will only be required for plans considered to have significant environmental effects.
Sustainability Appraisal (SA)	An assessment of the social, economic and environmental effects of the plan	Not legally required for neighbourhood plans. Can be undertaken to demonstrate how your plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development to meet the basic condition.
Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)	An assessment of the significant effects on European Sites protected under the Habitats Regulations	To be determined by Wiltshire Council on a case-by-case basis after screening for potential effects on European designated sites.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is legally required for land use plans considered likely to have significant environmental effects. The need for SEA of plans and programmes is set out in the EU Directive 2001/42/EC – known as the SEA Directive.

Wiltshire Council is legally required to determine whether your neighbourhood plan will require SEA. The SEA Directive makes SEA a mandatory requirement for:

- a) plans which are prepared for town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive

or

- b) plans which have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive.

However, the main determining factor as to whether SEA will be required for your neighbourhood plan is if your plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

Wiltshire Council will determine whether your neighbourhood plan requires SEA when you are developing your plan objectives, priorities and vision (see process map in Section 3 of this guide), or when there is a clearer picture of the proposals you are intending to include in your plan. The earlier this decision can be made the better so that, if required, the SEA can influence your plan as it develops. SEA is only likely to be required in some limited circumstances, depending on what is being proposed. An SEA may be required, for example, if:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals
- the neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through the sustainability appraisal of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Ask your link officer for advice about the need to undertake SEA.

If Wiltshire Council determines that SEA is required for your neighbourhood plan you will need to follow Stages A – E as set out in this guide. Each of the stages discussed has a corresponding legal requirement (highlighted at the beginning of each section), and not fulfilling that requirement will mean that your SEA is unlikely to be legally compliant. Therefore, we recommend that you carry out all of the steps in this guide.

Sustainability Appraisal

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) differs from SEA in that it considers not only the environmental effects of a plan, but the wider social and economic effects also. There is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood plan to have an SA. However, a qualifying body must demonstrate how its plan will contribute to achieving sustainable development. This is one of the basic conditions. SA is a useful approach for demonstrating this and it can be undertaken as part of an SEA Report.

Considering the wider sustainability effects (including social and economic) of your neighbourhood plan is also likely to lead to a more balanced and sustainable plan and one which is more likely to meet the needs of a wider cross-section of the local community.

The Wiltshire Core Strategy is accompanied by a SA report which has helped shape the policies within it. Consulting this document can help you with your own assessment work. Details of where the Core Strategy SA can be viewed and downloaded are given in Section 9 of this guide. The topic areas and objectives contained within the SA report are outlined in Appendix B of this guide.

It is important to remember that SEAs are sometimes used as a way of legally challenging a plan – so it is important to make sure that your SEA, if required, is legally adequate to reduce the possibility of challenge.



“Considering social and economic effects alongside environmental ones is likely to lead to a more balanced and sustainable plan and one which is more likely to meet the needs of a wider cross-section of the local community.”

You can find out whether Habitats Regulations Assessment will apply to your neighbourhood plan by speaking to your neighbourhood plan link officer at the start of the neighbourhood plan process.



Habitats Regulations Assessment

European sites (also known as Natura 2000 sites) recognised under the EU Habitats Directive, consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Offshore Marine Sites (OMS). There are several SACs and SPAs in Wiltshire and the purpose of Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is to ensure that a plan will not result in significant damage to these protected wildlife sites. An HRA screening exercise will need to be undertaken by Wiltshire Council for every neighbourhood plan and you should consult your link officer about this. If it is decided by Wiltshire Council that further HRA work is required, it is advised that a qualified consultant ecologist carries out this work, since this requires technical skills and knowledge. The HRA findings should then be taken into account and referred to in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of your plan.

If your neighbourhood plan area includes, is close to or may lead to adverse effects on a wildlife site that has been designated under the EU Habitats Directive, your neighbourhood plan may need to be subject to an HRA. It should be noted that development can affect designated sites a considerable distance away (up to 15km).

The Wiltshire Core Strategy is accompanied by an HRA Report (details in Section 9 of this guide). This contains a thorough assessment of all the Core Strategy policies, including the community area policies, and outlines the potential effects on European sites.

If what you are proposing in your neighbourhood plan falls outside the scope of the Wiltshire Core Strategy i.e. you are proposing additional policies or additional development/development sites that are not included in the Core Strategy that may affect the integrity of a European site, further HRA work may be required.

3. Undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment of your neighbourhood plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), if required, should inform the preparation of your neighbourhood plan from the outset. However, it does not need to be a complex process and does not need to be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is useful for its purpose.

The SEA should only focus on the significant environmental effects of your neighbourhood plan and only consider alternatives that take into account the objectives and geographical scope of your document.

You may be able to undertake the assessment without the need for external consultants, as long as the requirement for one is recognised early in the process and built into your work programme. **We suggest appointing someone in your steering group who can co-ordinate and oversee the assessment work and who can ensure it is integrated with your neighbourhood plan.**

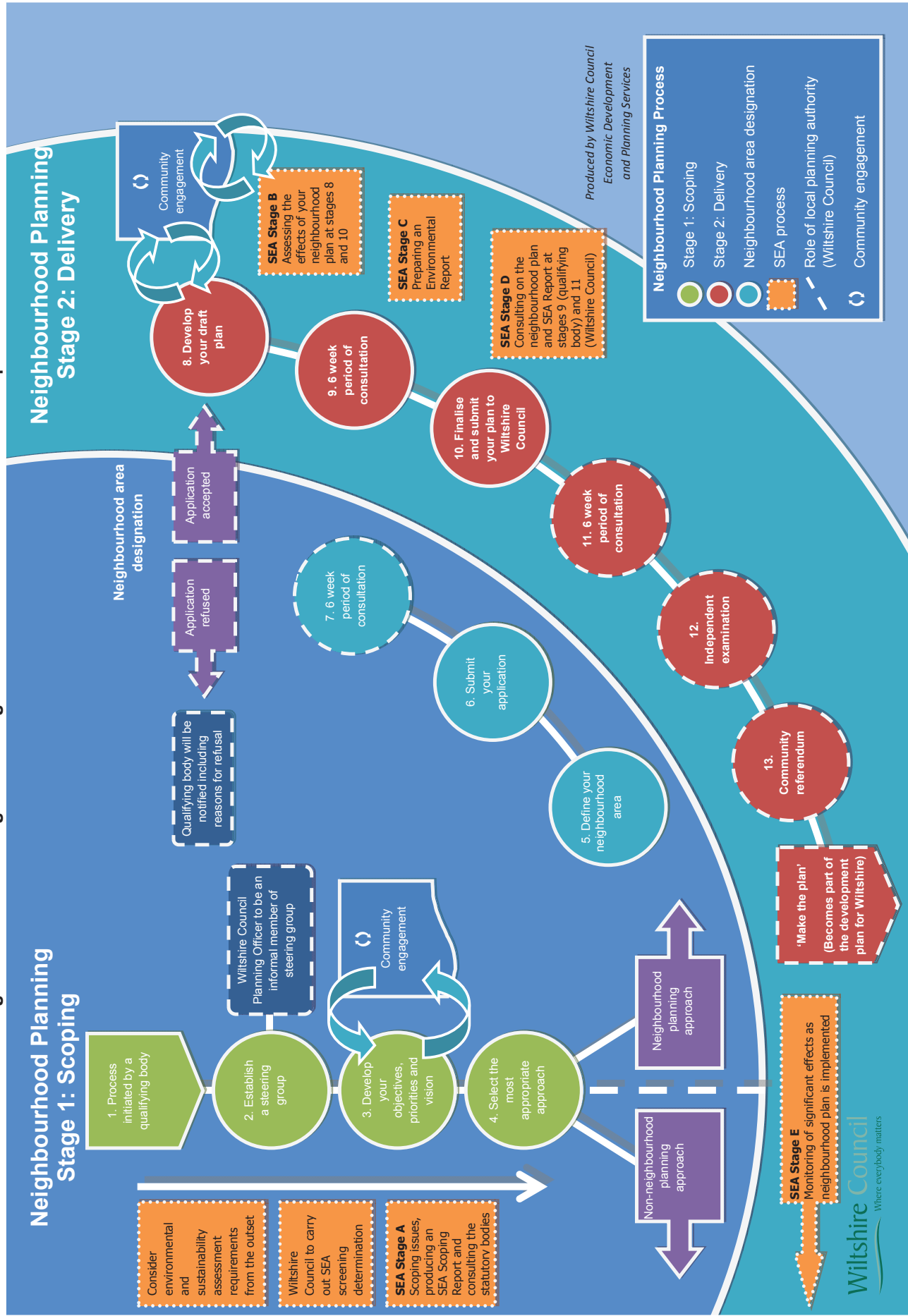
Wiltshire Council recommends that the assessment process is carried out in a series of straightforward stages and tasks which follows the government's guidance. Each stage corresponds with a particular stage¹ in the development of your neighbourhood plan, shown on the following process diagram. Each stage and task is explained in more detail in subsequent sections of this guide. If you are viewing this electronically, click on the relevant orange box in the diagram and it will take you to that section.

By following the steps in this guide you should produce an assessment which fulfils the legal requirements and which benefits the preparation of your neighbourhood plan. Your neighbourhood plan link officer can advise on this during the assessment process.



¹ For further information on the neighbourhood planning stages shown on the diagram, look at the council's neighbourhood planning portal www.wiltshire.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning.htm.

Neighbourhood Planning and Strategic Environmental Assessment linked processes



4. Stage A – Scoping the issues

Setting the context and objectives for the ongoing assessment, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope

What is the purpose of this stage?

Often referred to as ‘scoping’, this initial stage requires you to gather evidence about what is happening in your neighbourhood plan area. This evidence informs the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and is different from your neighbourhood plan. However, it uses similar information to that being compiled as evidence for your neighbourhood plan.

This is your opportunity to look at existing policies and plans that influence your neighbourhood plan, establish what the trends are in your area e.g. what things are improving and what things are getting worse, and identifying, with the help of the local community, what the key issues are for your area. For instance, there might be a shortage of affordable housing but the local schools are performing particularly well.

When should this be undertaken?

It is advisable to begin the scoping work as you begin to think about your vision and objectives for the neighbourhood plan. If your objectives indicate that a neighbourhood plan approach should be pursued, a Scoping Report should be compiled before you start work drafting your neighbourhood plan.

What are the outcomes of this stage?

- A ‘Scoping Report’ which includes a set of SEA objectives.

There is a legal requirement to consult Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England on this information and this is explained later in this section. Other stakeholders and those likely to be affected by your plan should also be consulted.

✓ Key stages

Identify policies, plans/ programmes and environmental protection objectives which are relevant to your neighbourhood plan

Collect baseline information relevant to your neighbourhood plan

Identify environmental problems and other key sustainability issues

Develop your assessment objectives

Consult on your ‘Scoping Report’

A1

Documents to consider in task A1 include:

- Parish/Town plans
- Joint Strategic Assessment (JSA) for your area
- Village design statements
- Community area plans
- Local feasibility studies
- Conservation Area Appraisals/ Management Plans
- Other local assessments

Task A1: Identifying relevant policies, plans and programmes and environmental protection objectives

During this stage you are required to identify and consider policies, plans and programmes which are relevant to your neighbourhood plan area. You must also take into account any environmental protection objectives which are relevant to your plan. These may be laid down in government or local authority policies (e.g. to protect a particular habitat for biodiversity reasons).

Plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives that you should consider will mainly be local (parish/town/area) documents which may include:

- Parish/Town plans
- Joint Strategic Assessment (JSA) for your area
- Village design statements
- Community area plans
- Local feasibility studies
- Other local assessments e.g. transport, education, housing, landscape etc

Policies from the Wiltshire Core Strategy that are particularly relevant to your neighbourhood plan should also be summarised.

Wiltshire Council has already reviewed a significant number of other plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives that are relevant to the Wiltshire Core Strategy and this is presented in the Wiltshire Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. This work does not need to be carried out again. However, if some of these documents are also relevant to your neighbourhood plan you can include this information in your Scoping Report if you feel it adds value.

For each document reviewed you should provide the following:

- Name of policy/plan/programme/legislation
- Author
- Date of publication
- Brief summary of document
- Key objective/requirements/conclusions to be taken into consideration in your neighbourhood plan
- How the objectives might be considered in your neighbourhood plan

An example of how to present this information is shown in Figure 4.1.

EXAMPLE	
Plan/Programme/legislation	Air Quality Strategy for Wiltshire 2011-2015
Author	Wiltshire Council
Document date	January 2010
Summary of document	
Local authorities have a duty under the Environment Act 1995 to review and assess local air quality within their areas, against a set of health-based objectives for a number of specific air pollutants. The document provides an overview of air quality across Wiltshire and focuses on key areas where air quality could and should be improved. The purpose of the Strategy is to support the achievement of air quality objectives and to raise air quality as an issue for consideration within a wide range of local government and regional planning frameworks. Consideration of air quality objectives will hopefully help reduce the risk of the most serious health effects related to pollution.	
Key objectives/requirements/conclusions to be taken into consideration in neighbourhood plan	
The main aim of the strategy is that: 'Wiltshire Council working collaboratively will seek to maintain the good air quality in the county and strive to deliver improvements in areas where air quality fails national objectives in order to protect public health and the environment'.	
The strategy will seek to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote greater consistency across a range of policy areas for the achievement of improved local air quality, including local spatial planning, transport planning, health, industry, housing and environmental protection, and to ensure air quality is addressed in a multi-disciplinary way within the different departments of Wiltshire Council; • Provide the framework for a consistent approach to addressing local air quality considerations in spatial planning and development control processes; • Provide a baseline framework for developing a coherent air quality policy across Wiltshire with particular reference to spatial and transport planning, and the proposed Local Development Framework, Core Strategy and third Local Transport Plan; • Provide a link to wider initiatives across the authority (for example climate change programmes, community initiatives and energy efficiency programmes). • Build on existing practice. 	
How objectives and/or requirements might be considered in your neighbourhood plan	
Planning documents should aim to help achieve the objectives of the air quality strategy through the development of policies that will improve air quality. Spatial planning has an important role in helping to improve air quality in Wiltshire through providing development in sustainable locations that will help reduce the need to travel and encourage use of sustainable transport modes.	

Figure 4.1: Review of documents of relevance to your neighbourhood plan

The final part of task A1 is to summarise the document review. In particular, has the document review highlighted any key issues that your neighbourhood plan should focus on?

Task A2: Collecting baseline information

During this task you need to identify and record the current state and characteristics of your neighbourhood plan area and think about how this will evolve without your neighbourhood plan in place. In particular, you should think about the environmental characteristics of your neighbourhood plan area that relate to issues which can be tackled in your neighbourhood plan.

You should also identify any areas of environmental importance within your neighbourhood plan area and whether there are any existing environmental problems affecting these. Remember that much information regarding county-wide issues has already been documented in the Wiltshire Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report so you only need to focus on those areas of local concern in your area.

A2

Baseline information should include the key characteristics and important trends in your area and a consideration of how the area would evolve without the neighbourhood plan.

SEA topics to consider:

- Biodiversity
- Population
- Human health
- Fauna
- Flora
- Soil
- Water
- Air
- Climatic factors
- Material assets
- Cultural heritage
- Architectural and Archaeological Heritage
- Landscape

Baseline information can be both qualitative (open to interpretation) and quantitative (data that has numerical significance) and can be presented in the form of text, indicators, maps, graphs etc. Much information will already be known or held by parish/town councils or can be supplied by the council.

The Wiltshire Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report presents baseline information under a number of sustainability themes. These themes cover the SEA topics listed to the left, but additionally include themes of an economic and social nature, as follows:

- Population and housing
- Healthy communities
- Inclusive communities
- Education and skills
- Transport
- Economy and enterprise

You can use similar themes for your own baseline analysis, focusing on the issues that are important in your neighbourhood plan area. It is important to make sure the topic areas required by the SEA Directive (see Section 2 and Appendix A) are covered in this baseline assessment. The themes listed above include wider social and economic considerations required in a sustainability appraisal.

A3

Task A3 allows you to identify key issues and environmental problems that can be resolved through your neighbourhood plan.

Task A3: Identifying key issues and environmental problems in your area

Completing Tasks A1 and A2 will allow you to identify key issues and environmental problems that can be reduced or resolved through your neighbourhood plan. These issues do not need to be precisely defined but they must be based on evidence related to the baseline information.

You are probably already aware of many issues or problems within your neighbourhood area; however others may be identified using the baseline information collected in Task A2 and by consulting the local community, local groups and other key stakeholders.

An example of how to record the key issues facing your area is provided in figure 4.2.

EXAMPLE		
Sustainability topic	Issue/problem	Source
Biodiversity	There has been a significant decline in the condition of SSSIs over the last 10 years.	Natural England SEA baseline evidence
Water resources/flood risk	There is an increased risk of flooding if development occurs in the floodplain of the River Avon and tributaries.	Environment Agency
Population and housing	The plan area contains some of the most deprived areas in the UK.	Index of Local Deprivation SEA baseline evidence
Transport	There has been a 7% increase in HGV traffic on local rural roads since 2001.	Core Strategy Local traffic surveys

Figure 4.2: Recording key issues and environmental problems

Task A4: Developing SEA objectives

A4

Task A4 is central to the assessment process. During this task you will use the information gathered in Tasks A1-A3 to develop a set of assessment objectives, sometimes referred to as the 'sustainability framework'. The assessment objectives will help you assess the environmental effects of your neighbourhood plan and compare the effects of alternative options.

The SEA objectives should be realistic but may be aspirational in nature. These objectives are generally different to your neighbourhood plan objectives which will be developed as part of your neighbourhood plan preparation, however in some cases they may overlap. It is important to understand the difference between the SEA objectives, neighbourhood plan objectives and other external objectives. These are defined as:

Neighbourhood plan objectives: What the plan itself is intended or required to achieve.

External objectives: Targets or obligations laid down in law or policy which your neighbourhood plan must take into account e.g. Wiltshire Core Strategy policies.

SEA objectives: Developed during this task (Task A4). These are used as tests of sustainability or prompts for questions about sustainability. They can be used to compare the effects of alternative options.

The sustainability appraisal objectives (which include environmental objectives) developed as part of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, are outlined in Appendix B. Bear in mind, these objectives cover the wider social and economic elements required in a sustainability appraisal, and are relevant to the whole of Wiltshire. You can use these objectives for your neighbourhood plan SEA, or adapt them (recommended) to reflect your own local issues and concerns.

Example SEA objectives could be:

- To meet the housing need of the local population.
- To protect open space and wildlife.
- To protect people and property from the risk of flooding

SEA objectives are a recognised way of considering the environmental effects of a plan and comparing the effects of alternatives. They serve a different purpose from the objectives of the neighbourhood plan but may in some cases overlap with them.

A5

Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England must be consulted on your Scoping Report and it is recommended that other parties who are involved with or likely to be affected by your neighbourhood plan are also consulted.



Task A5: Consultation on the scope of the SEA

The work undertaken to complete Tasks A1-A4 should be recorded in a SEA 'Scoping Report' which is subject to consultation. Wiltshire Council can provide a template for this report but an example of how it could be structured is shown in Figure 4.3 below:

EXAMPLE
Chapter 1: Introduction Explain what this Scoping Report is and why it is required. Describe your neighbourhood plan, why you are developing it and what it aims to achieve.
Chapter 2: Methodology Explain the tasks involved in compiling the Scoping Report and why/how these were carried out. Set out the structure of your report.
Chapter 3: Policy context and review of other relevant plans (Task A1) Give an introduction to this task and follow the guidance as outlined previously.
Chapter 4: Presenting the baseline information (Task A2) Give an introduction to this task and follow the guidance as outlined previously.
Chapter 5: Presenting and describing the key sustainability issues (Task A3) Give an introduction to this task and follow the guidance as outlined previously.
Chapter 6: SEA framework of objectives (Task A4) List your SEA objectives and explain how they were derived.
Chapter 7: Consultation requirements (Task A5) Include a description of consultation requirements and what consultation may have already been undertaken. Include information about how you consulted Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England, and any other stakeholders, and how their comments have been taken into account.
Chapter 8: Next steps in your neighbourhood plan and SEA process Explain the next steps in the development of your neighbourhood plan and how the SEA will be integrated to help shape the document.

Figure 4.3: Example structure for a Scoping Report

You are legally required to consult Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England (the statutory consultation bodies) on your scoping report. There is no requirement to consult other bodies or the public at this stage, but it is desirable and recommended to consult other parties who are involved with or likely to be affected by your neighbourhood plan. Consultation will help highlight any gaps in the report and may bring forward additional information which will help ensure you have covered all the issues for your area.

You should programme at least five weeks for this consultation.

We recommend that you set out your SEA Scoping Report following the format of this guide i.e. using Tasks A1 – A5 as the title headers, and presenting the information as suggested in the previous sections. You can also look at the Wiltshire Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (details in Section 9) for an example of how to set out your Scoping Report.

5. Stage B - Assessing the effects of your neighbourhood plan and alternative options

What is the purpose of this stage?

Once you have consulted on the 'scope' of your SEA you should use the SEA objectives to assess the effects of your neighbourhood plan and the different options which could be included within it (also known as alternatives). The purpose of this stage is to highlight the effects of different options in order to influence the options taken forward in the plan. If adverse effects are seen to be likely, possibilities for reducing or eliminating these must be considered.

When should this be undertaken?

The prediction and evaluation of effects should be carried out as your draft neighbourhood plan develops, helping to shape what elements are included in the draft plan. This should be an iterative process with the SEA influencing options in the plan.

What are the outcomes of this stage?

- An assessment of the predicted environmental effects of implementing your neighbourhood plan and any reasonable alternatives.

Consideration of how any adverse effects can be mitigated or benefits maximised and a proposed set of measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing your neighbourhood plan. The work undertaken during this stage will be presented in an Environmental Report outlined in Stage C.

Task B1: Testing your neighbourhood plan objectives against the SEA objectives

Once you have established your neighbourhood plan vision and objectives (as part of the neighbourhood plan preparation process) you can test these against the SEA objectives (that you developed in Stage A) to identify both potential synergies and inconsistencies. This exercise may help you refine your neighbourhood plan objectives and help you to develop more sustainable options for your neighbourhood plan.

✓ Key stages

Assess the compatibility between your neighbourhood plan objectives and SEA objectives

Develop different alternatives, or options, for achieving the aims of your plan

Predict and evaluate the different effects of your plan, and alternatives to it

Consider ways to mitigate (reduce) any adverse effects predicted

Propose measures to monitor any significant effects during the implementation of your neighbourhood plan

B1

Comparing objectives can help you develop more sustainable options.

One way of presenting this comparison exercise is shown in figure 5.1. Where objectives are considered to be incompatible, you can make a record of why this is the case. For example, an SEA objective that promotes development on brownfield land may be incompatible with a neighbourhood plan objective that is promoting development of a greenfield site.

EXAMPLE		✓ compatible	X incompatible	0 no links	
Neighbourhood plan objectives	Plan Objective 1	0	✓	X	✓
	Plan Objective 2	✓	X	✓	X
	Plan Objective 3	✓	X	0	0
	Plan Objective 4	X	0	0	✓
	Plan Objective 5 etc	✓	✓	✓	X
		SEA Objective 1	SEA Objective 2	SEA Objective 3	SEA Objective 4
		SEA Objectives			

Figure 5.1: Comparison of neighbourhood plan vision and objectives with SEA objectives

B2

Task B2: Developing and refining your neighbourhood plan alternative options

We appreciate that it can be tempting to launch straight into preparing your neighbourhood plan, especially if you already have a good idea what needs to happen to improve things in your area. However, there are often choices to be made and the SEA process set out in this guide can help you make them.

SEA requires you to consider different options, also known as ‘reasonable alternatives’ and this is already standard practice when developing planning policy. Options may be generated from ideas developed by the parish/town council, or from other consultation exercises that you may have held with the local community. If you have developed a vision and/or objectives, you should look at which options are most likely to achieve them. Only options that are reasonable and achievable need be considered.

The sort of options you want to consider will vary depending on the type of neighbourhood plan that you are preparing, for example whether it is general and broad-brush, or narrow and detailed. Options considered often also include scenarios termed ‘no plan’ or ‘business as usual’ which would compare the effects of the proposed neighbourhood plan with doing nothing or continuing with an existing plan. Examples of some other types of options include:

- The scale, type, mix and location of development (e.g. if a need for affordable housing has been identified – where might it be located, how many houses or flats are needed, and should the scheme also include market housing, the provision of community facilities, space for businesses, and open space for recreation, play areas and wildlife).
- Alternative ways of using land that the local community has identified as being appropriate for development or other uses such as open space, tree planting or environmental improvement.

Different options should be considered for fulfilling the neighbourhood plan objectives. The assessment of these options should be documented in the SEA Report.

- Different ‘conditions’ that might be applied to development, such as how development should look (its design), how transport issues should be incorporated, or what standards to include with respect to issues such as renewable energy, landscaping and the inclusion of waste and recycling facilities.

The sustainability framework (SEA objectives produced in Task A4) can be used to appraise each of the options developed during this task. It is important to note that the development and appraisal of options should be an iterative process with options being revised to take account of the appraisal findings and also the views of stakeholders and local people.

Tasks B3 and B4: Predicting and evaluating the significant effects of your neighbourhood plan

Once the options for your neighbourhood plan are established you will need to appraise them by deciding how each option is likely to perform against each of the SEA Objectives. During this task you will predict the effects of your neighbourhood plan options and evaluate how significant those effects might be. Remember, you are only legally required to assess the likely significant effects of the plan, not all possible effects.

Annex II² of the SEA Directive sets out general criteria of significance, however statutory consultees and other stakeholders that were involved in your scoping work will have informed views on the significance of many of the potential effects, as will local people, and they can help provide information for this task.

Prediction of effects involves identifying what changes might occur to the sustainability baseline over time, so it is based on the baseline evidence collected in Stage A. These changes are then evaluated for their likely significance, in terms of their probability, duration, frequency, geographical area and size of population likely to be affected. The value and vulnerability of certain areas and populations also affects the evaluation and the SEA Directive requires consideration of secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects.

When assessing the significance of various options, it is common practice to use the symbols shown in figure 5.2 to show whether the option would have a positive or negative effect on each SEA Objective.

B3 & B4

The development and appraisal of options should be an iterative process with options being revised to take account of the appraisal findings and the views of stakeholders and local people.



² This is presented in the SEA Practical Guide document – details in Section 9 of this report

“The point of the assessment is not just to fill in the template but to ensure that the option which is being assessed is as sustainable as possible. The development and appraisal of options should be an iterative process with options being revised to take account of the appraisal findings and the views of stakeholders and local people.”

Symbol	Significance of effect	Description
++	significant positive effect	Option would have a significant positive effect in its current form as it would help resolve an existing issue or maximise opportunities, leading to significant benefits.
+	positive effect	Option would have a positive effect.
?	effects uncertain	Effect of option is uncertain.
0	neutral effect	Option would have a neutral effect.
-	negative effect	Option would have a negative effect.
--	significant negative effect	The option would have a significant negative effect as it would substantially exacerbate existing problems with mitigation problematic. Consider rejecting option.
Note: assessment of some objectives for a given option may be considered to be positive or negative but with some uncertainties, in which case a symbol such as '+ / ?' or '- / ?' may be used.		

Figure 5.2: Assessment of effects criteria

For example, if you think that an option that delivers 30 new affordable homes will meet all the housing need in your community, you may decide this is a significant benefit and give it two positives (+ +) against the SEA objective ‘to meet the housing need of the local population’. If, on the other hand, one of the options for locating the affordable housing would mean losing a substantial amount of green space, you may wish to give it two negatives (- -) against the SEA objective ‘to protect open space and wildlife’.

If there is likely to be no effect of an option against an SEA objective, you should include a zero (0) to show that you have thought about it but decided there would be no effect. If you are not sure whether the effect would be positive or negative, include a question mark (?).

During this task you should also evaluate the significance of the effect in terms of probability, duration, frequency, geographical area and size of population likely to be affected. You should also consider the potential for secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects.

You can record the results of your assessment using the template in figure 5.3 or adapt the table to suit your own needs. Completed assessment tables can be placed in the appendices of your Environmental Report but a discussion of the main significant effects should be presented in the main body of the report.

The point of the assessment is not just to fill in the template but to ensure that the option which is being assessed is as sustainable as possible. The development and appraisal of options should be an iterative process with options being revised to take account of the appraisal findings and also the views of stakeholders and local people.

At this stage you can drop some options from further consideration and document the reasons for eliminating them. You will need to keep a record of any decisions made. Justifications for these decisions will need to be robust as they can affect decisions on development and could be challenged in the future.

EXAMPLE								
Option 1: Deliver 30 affordable homes at...[insert location]								
Key to table:								
T (Timescale) - Over what timescale are effects likely to occur? (Short Term, ST (0-5 years); Medium Term, MT (5-10 years); Long Term, LT (10+ years))								
P (Permanence) - Are effects likely to be permanent or temporary? (Permanent, P; Temporary, T)								
G (Geographical area) - Over what geographical area are the effects likely to occur? (Local area, A; County wide, C; Cross border, B)								
R (Reversibility) - Are effects likely to be reversible or irreversible? (Reversible, R; Irreversible, I)								
SEA objective	Nature of effect	Assessment of effect					Justification and evidence	Suggested mitigation and enhancement measures
		T	P	G	R	Sig.		
1. To meet the housing needs of the local population.	Housing needs will be met in full.	MT	R	A	R	++	There is evidence of local housing need and provision of 30 new affordable homes will meet identified need.	Provision of a higher number of affordable homes would lead to greater benefits against this objective.
2. To protect open space and wildlife.	This option will lead to the loss of a large area of green space valued by local people.	LT	I	A	I	--	This option identifies Site X for 30 new homes. This is a greenfield site used by local people for informal recreation and highly valued.	Consideration should be given to locating new homes on a different site or significantly reducing the numbers of homes at Site X to reduce loss of green space.
Add other objectives from your SEA Framework..... eg landscape, heritage, air quality etc.								

Figure 5.3: An example of how to present the assessment of effects of neighbourhood plan options.

Ultimately, the significance of an effect is a matter of judgment and should require no more than a clear and reasonable justification. Conclusions on the overall sustainability of your neighbourhood plan, including alternative options, should be provided, as well as any assumptions used in making judgements about effects.

Task B5: Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects

As part of the assessment of effects, there is a requirement to consider what are known as ‘mitigation measures’. These are measures that could prevent, reduce or offset any of the significant effects of implementing your neighbourhood plan. Mitigation measures can include measures for the proactive avoidance of adverse effects as well as actions taken after effects are noticed. Mitigation measures may also include recommendations for improving beneficial effects.

Mitigation can take a wide range of forms, including:

- changes to your neighbourhood plan as a whole, including making changes to options or adding/deleting options

B5

Mitigation measures are measures that could prevent, reduce or offset any of the significant effects of implementing your neighbourhood plan. They may also include recommendations for increasing beneficial effects.

- refining policies in order to improve the likelihood of beneficial effects and to minimise adverse effects
- technical measures to be applied during the implementation stage eg buffer zones, application of design principles.

More specific examples include:

- consideration of other development sites that would have fewer impacts
- increasing the proportion of affordable housing on a site
- introducing more stringent requirements to reduce effects on air quality or climate change
- considering higher quality design standards
- introducing measures to increase accessibility by walking/cycling/public transport.

The assessment table example (figure 5.3) includes a column where potential mitigation measures can be suggested.

Task B6: Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing your neighbourhood plan

The SEA Directive requires plan-makers to monitor the significant effects of their plans. Monitoring applies when the plan is being put into effect and in the years following, rather than during its preparation, but how monitoring will be done needs to be thought about early on and outlined in the Environmental Report. Monitoring is good practice to see whether or not your neighbourhood plan is achieving the results it was intended to achieve or if anything unexpected is occurring.

Monitoring allows the actual significant effects of your neighbourhood plan to be tested against those predicted (in tasks B3 and B4). This will identify any unforeseen adverse effects and enable appropriate remedial action to be taken.

At this stage of plan preparation, it is only necessary to outline how monitoring might take place and to include some potential indicators to monitor local effects as your neighbourhood plan is implemented. The council's Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Wiltshire Core Strategy outlines a potential monitoring programme and suggests potential monitoring indicators. However, for your neighbourhood plan, you only need to think about what local effects might require monitoring.

Depending on the proposals in your plan, indicators may include:

- changes in traffic volumes due to new road or new development
- changes in vehicle speeds due to traffic calming measures

B6

Monitoring applies when the plan is being put into effect and in the years following, rather than during its preparation, but how monitoring will be done needs to be thought about early on.

- changes in participation levels at local community facilities
- changes in frequency of local bus services
- footfall in High St.

The following questions can help you to think about what might need to be monitored:

- Is the development proposed in your neighbourhood plan being built?
- Is the location of new development causing any problems e.g. pollution to a stream or traffic congestion?
- Does the development look like it was intended to look?
- Is the development leading to any environmental thresholds being exceeded, for instance air quality standards or changes to designated habitats?
- Where the Environmental Report predicts that significant adverse effects will happen, are they happening? If not, why was the prediction wrong?
- Is the development causing any unintended problems like congestion or noise?
- Are any outside changes happening that are affecting the plan and its impacts, for instance unexpected flooding, unexpected other projects such as a new road, or reorganisation of local schools?

Some of the monitoring of the effects of your neighbourhood plan will already be carried out by Wiltshire Council or at the national level. However, some impacts might warrant local level monitoring, and you may want to do this anyway to make sure that your neighbourhood plan works the way that you want it to. Where possible, existing monitoring information should be used to save money and ensure consistency with other plans' monitoring arrangements e.g. monitoring arrangements for the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

“Some of the monitoring of the effects of your neighbourhood plan will already be carried out by Wiltshire Council or at the national level. However, some impacts might warrant local level monitoring, and you may want to do this anyway to make sure that your neighbourhood plan works the way that you want it to.”

✓ Key stages

Compile information from Stage B into an Environmental Report

Include a summary of the baseline information and key issues from Stage A

Present the assessment of alternative options considered and explain why options were either rejected or taken forward

Show how mitigation measures have been considered for adverse effects

Include information on how effects will be monitored

Write a non-technical summary

Consult on your Environmental Report

“The Environmental Report on your draft neighbourhood plan is a key part of the SEA process. It provides stakeholders and the public with information on the effects of the plan and ‘tells the story’ of why you made the choices that you did and how your plan evolved.”

6. Stage C - Preparing an Environmental Report

What is the purpose of this stage?

To present information on the effects of the draft neighbourhood plan and the alternative options considered. The Environmental Report explains the process that was undertaken and why the policies in the draft plan were chosen in light of other options.

When should this be undertaken?

A draft Environmental Report will be compiled as your draft neighbourhood plan is written. Consultation requirements are outlined under Stage D.

What are the outcomes of this stage?

- An Environmental Report that presents information compiled during Stage B of the SEA process.

This will accompany the draft plan during formal consultation.

The Environmental Report on your draft neighbourhood plan is a key part of the SEA process. It provides stakeholders and the public with information on the effects of the plan (and the options considered); this means the public is fully informed when they are consulted and are able to comment both on the plan and on what other options were considered.

The Environmental Report tells the story of your neighbourhood plan; it explains why you made the choices that you did and how your plan evolved. It explains to people who have not been involved in the development of the plan, or to people who may not be happy with some aspects of the plan, why the plan looks the way it does. It is a buffer against legal challenge and should explain the options that were considered, how you took people’s views into account, why you chose the options that you did and how you fine-tuned the plan.

Once published, the Environmental Report should be consulted on alongside your draft neighbourhood plan (see Stage D for further information). It should include relevant information that may reasonably be required taking into account the information contained within your neighbourhood plan.

An example of how the report could be structured is shown in figure 6.1:

Chapter 1: Introduction

To include:

- details of your neighbourhood plan - its aims and objectives, the plan area, the policy context and who has been involved in writing the plan
- how the Environmental Report meets SEA Directive requirements
- the structure of the report.

Chapter 2: Methodology

To include:

- the approach you took to carrying out the SEA
- how you developed and refined the plan policies and alternative options
- how you assessed effects and considered mitigation measures
- problems that you faced in carrying out your SEA, including any assumptions made
- details of consultation requirements.

Chapter 3: Summary of SEA context and objectives (SEA Stage A)

To include:

- introduction – details of the Scoping Report and consultation outcomes
- summary of information from the Scoping Report i.e. plan review, baseline evidence, key issues
- the SEA objectives.

Chapter 4: Assessment of neighbourhood plan policies and alternatives

To include:

- assessment of neighbourhood plan objectives
- a summary of options assessed and what the predicted significant effects are (include assessment tables in appendices)
- details of any mitigation measures proposed and any resulting changes made to options
- an explanation of why the preferred option was chosen over others.

Chapter 5: Monitoring arrangements

To include:

- introduction – what is monitoring and why is it required?
- potential monitoring indicators and programme.

Chapter 6: Next steps

To include:

- an explanation that the draft Environmental Report will be published alongside your draft neighbourhood plan for the formal consultation period
- an explanation that the results of the consultation will be reviewed which may require changes to your draft neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report.

Appendices

To include:

- framework of SEA objectives, including proposed monitoring indicators
- assessment tables for assessment of effects of options
- details of any consultation carried out on the Environmental Report.

A non-technical summary

This is a short version of the information from the Environmental Report and should briefly summarise the contents of it, including why and how it was carried out, the policies and options considered, the significant effects and mitigation measures, consultation carried out and next steps.

Figure 6.1: How your environmental report could be structured

✓ Key stages

Formally consult on draft neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report

Consider consultation responses and make amendments to your neighbourhood plan where necessary – document any changes made to the plan and assess any significant changes

Finalise and submit revised neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report to Wiltshire Council for further period of consultation

7. Stage D - Consulting on your draft neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report and submitting to Wiltshire Council

What is the purpose of this stage?

Consulting on the Environmental Report is a legal requirement. It gives stakeholders and the local community an early and effective opportunity to see what your plan is proposing. From the Environmental Report they will be able to see what options were considered and what the effects of these may be.

Informal consultation with different bodies and local people will have already helped shape your plan and SEA. However, at this stage the Environmental Report accompanies the draft neighbourhood plan for formal consultation before it is submitted to Wiltshire Council (see delivery stages 9 and 10 on process map in Section 3 of this guide).

When should this be undertaken?

A draft Environmental Report will be published for consultation alongside your draft neighbourhood plan at Stage 9 of the neighbourhood planning process and a final Environmental Report will be submitted to Wiltshire Council alongside your neighbourhood plan at Stage 10, taking into account consultation comments received on both documents.

What are the outcomes of this stage?

- Formal consultation on the draft neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report.

If consultation results in changes being made to the draft plan, the Environmental Report may need amending with further assessment of any changes. The neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report are then submitted to Wiltshire Council.

At this stage, you must publicise your draft neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report in a manner which is likely to bring the plan to the attention of people who live, work and undertake business in the neighbouring area. **The SEA Directive not only requires you to consult the three statutory consultees (Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England) on the Environmental Report but also the public**

at this stage i.e. those people affected or likely to be affected, or having an interest in the issues raised in the Environmental Report.

We recommend that the following bodies are also formally consulted:

- Neighbouring parish and town councils
- Landowners and community organisations that will be affected by your neighbourhood plan
- Any other organisations that you have been working with or who may have an interest in your neighbourhood plan.

Further information on the consultation requirements for neighbourhood plans is available on Wiltshire Council's neighbourhood planning portal website at:

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning.htm>

You should programme at least six weeks for this consultation.

Assessment of significant changes

Having considered the responses to consultation, it may be necessary to make changes to your neighbourhood plan. If this is the case, you may need to carry out further assessment of these changes and to document this in a revised Environmental Report, if the changes are considered to be significant. If changes are not considered significant enough to warrant further assessment, a short explanation in the Environmental Report explaining the decision will suffice.

The Environmental Report should show how any consultation responses that relate to the SEA have been taken into account. These details could be presented in an Appendix to the report.

Finalising and submitting your neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report to Wiltshire Council

Following any necessary changes, the final versions of the neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report should be submitted to Wiltshire Council. As soon as possible after receiving the final versions, Wiltshire Council will publicise the documents on the council website for a minimum six week period and arrange for independent examination. Any representations made during this period will be passed to the independent examiner.

At this stage you are required to consult Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England on the Environmental Report, as well as the public i.e. those people affected or likely to be affected, or having an interest in the issues raised in the Environmental Report.



“If changes are made to your neighbourhood plan as a result of consultation, you may need to carry out further assessment of these changes and to document this in a revised Environmental Report.”

Decision making and providing information

Once the neighbourhood plan is 'made' or brought into force by Wiltshire Council, a summary statement should be prepared by the qualifying body, outlining:

- a) how consultation responses were taken into account, both on the neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report
- b) how the findings of the SEA were taken into account during the plan's development
- c) what changes were made to the neighbourhood plan as a result of the SEA, including the reasons for choosing the final plan, in light of the other options considered.

8. Stage E - Monitoring the significant effects of your neighbourhood plan

What is the purpose of this stage?

Monitoring allows the actual significant environmental effects of implementing your neighbourhood plan to be tested against those that were predicted. It helps to ensure that any problems (or benefits) that arise from your plan, whether they were foreseen or not, can be identified and dealt with.

Monitoring of effects can help with understanding local issues and how the neighbourhood plan is contributing to making things better or worse.

When should this be undertaken?

Monitoring will take place during the life of your plan as it is implemented.

What are the outcomes of this stage?

- A monitoring programme that sets out how monitoring will take place.

Potential monitoring indicators outlined in the Environmental Report can be refined at this stage.

If adverse effects from plan implementation are noticed it may be necessary to undertake action to resolve issues with the help of Wiltshire Council.

This stage is undertaken after your neighbourhood plan has been adopted and is being put into effect. Monitoring is discussed earlier in this guide in Stage B and at this stage, previously proposed indicators can be monitored to gauge the effects of your plan. Wiltshire Council already carries out many monitoring duties within the spatial planning function and where possible, existing monitoring information should be used in the interests of efficiency.

It is not necessary to monitor everything, or to monitor an effect indefinitely. Instead, monitoring needs to be focused on significant effects that are occurring as a result of your neighbourhood plan.

✓ Key stages

Establish a monitoring programme which will assess the effects of your neighbourhood plan

Carry out monitoring in the years after the plan is adopted

Respond to any adverse effects through carrying out remedial action, where necessary

“It is not necessary to monitor everything, or to monitor an effect indefinitely. Instead, monitoring needs to be focused on significant effects that are occurring as a result of your neighbourhood plan.”

When setting up a monitoring framework, the following questions can be asked:

1. What needs to be monitored?
2. What sort of information is required and how easy will it be to obtain this?
3. What are the existing sources of information?
4. What is Wiltshire Council already monitoring? Is additional local information needed?
5. What should be done if adverse effects are found?
6. Who will carry out the monitoring, when and how will it be reported?

An example of a template for presenting monitoring information is shown in figure 8.1:

EXAMPLE				
SEA objective	What specific effect is occurring?	Monitoring indicator	Responsibility for monitoring and frequency	What remedial action could be taken?
To meet the housing needs of the local population.	There is still insufficient affordable housing to enable young people and families to stay in the village.	% affordable housing as part of new development.	Local authority/ annually	Discuss with local authority. Consider review and amendment of neighbourhood plan to require higher % affordable housing in future.
To protect open space and wildlife.	Loss of locally important open space to development.	% net change in local recreational open space within the neighbourhood plan area.	Local authority/ annually	Consider review and amendment of neighbourhood plan to give further protection to other sites in the village.
Reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable transport choices.	Increased congestion on Victoria Road since enlargement of primary school.	% change in car numbers using Victoria Road.	Parish Council/ annually	Carry out traffic counts on Victoria Road. Consider review of neighbourhood plan to include traffic calming measures.

Figure 8.1: Example of a template for monitoring effects of your neighbourhood plan

9. Further sources of advice and guidance on the assessment of neighbourhood plans

There are several other sources of advice and guidance on neighbourhood planning, and more specifically on environmental assessment, which can be consulted before undertaking the work outlined in this guide. However, in the first instance, when thinking about starting your neighbourhood plan and assessment requirements, consult your neighbourhood plan link officer.

Official guidance for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The official guidance on SEA is published online by Communities and Local Government (CLG). It is called 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' and can be viewed or downloaded at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-directive-guidance>

Official guidance for Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

The official guidance on SA is published online by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and can be viewed or downloaded at:

<http://www.pas.gov.uk/chapter-6-the-role-of-sustainability-appraisal>

Planning Practice Guidance

The government's Planning Practice Guidance, which accompanies the National Planning Policy Framework, includes a section providing clarity on the need for sustainability appraisal and SEA in relation to neighbourhood planning.

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/strategicenvironmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal/>

Wiltshire Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report

The council have published a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and non-technical summary. Reviewing this will help you carry out Stage A of the assessment process, as described earlier in this guide. The SA Scoping Report can be viewed or downloaded at:

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/ldfsustainabilityappraisal.htm>

Wiltshire Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report

A Sustainability Appraisal Report has been published by the council to accompany the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/wiltshirecorestrategy.htm>

Wiltshire Core Strategy Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Report

The HRA Report, which meets the requirements of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and accompanies the Wiltshire Core Strategy, can be viewed or downloaded at:

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/wiltshirecorestrategy.htm>

Other useful sources for neighbourhood planning advice

The following organisations also provide useful advice and guidance on preparing a neighbourhood plan and undertaking assessments of environmental and sustainability effects:

My Community - Locality

<http://mycommunity.org.uk/>

Planning Advisory Service - Neighbourhood Planning

<http://www.pas.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning>

Planning Aid/RTPI - Forum for Neighbourhood Planning

<http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/>

Planning Portal - Neighbourhood Planning

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/inyourarea/neighbourhood/>

Appendix A – Requirements of the SEA Directive³

This is a summary of the requirements of European Directive 2001/42EC (known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA Directive). This table indicates the main tasks involved in producing an Environmental Report that will accompany your neighbourhood plan.

The official guidance document that describes this process is available on the Communities and Local Government (CLG) website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-directive-guidance>

SEA Directive requirement	Where is this covered in this guide?	
1. Preparing an environmental report in which the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan, are identified, described and evaluated. The information to be given is as follows:	Section 6 - Preparing an Environmental Report	<input type="checkbox"/>
a) An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	Section 4 - Scoping the issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan.	Section 4 - Scoping the issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	Section 4 - Scoping the issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to the Birds and Habitats Directives.	Section 4 - Scoping the issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	Section 4 - Scoping the issues	<input type="checkbox"/>

³ European Directive 2001/42/EC “on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment” – often known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive

SEA Directive requirement	Where is this covered in this guide?	
f) The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects).	Section 5 - Assessing the effects of your neighbourhood plan and alternative options.	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan.	Section 5 - Assessing the effects of your neighbourhood plan and alternative options.	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.	Section 5 - Assessing the effects of your neighbourhood plan and alternative options. Section 6 - Preparing an Environmental Report.	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) A description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	Section 5 - Assessing the effects of your neighbourhood plan and alternative options. Section 8 - Monitoring the significant effects of your neighbourhood plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings.	Section 6 - Preparing an Environmental Report.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The report shall include the information that may reasonably be required taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment, the contents and level of detail in the plan, its stage in the decision-making process and the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in that process to avoid duplication of the assessment.	Section 6 - Preparing an Environmental Report.	<input type="checkbox"/>

SEA Directive requirement	Where is this covered in this guide?	
<p>2. Consulting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities with environmental responsibilities, when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information which must be included in the environmental report. • Authorities with environmental responsibilities and the public, to give them an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the draft plan and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan. • Other EU Member States, where the implementation of the plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment in these countries. 	<p>Section 4 - Scoping the issues</p> <p>Section 7 - Consulting on your neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report and submitting to Wiltshire Council</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>3. Taking the environmental report and the results of the consultations into account in decision-making</p>	<p>Section 7 - Consulting on your neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report and submitting to Wiltshire Council</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>4. Providing information on the decision:</p> <p>When the plan is adopted, the public and any relevant Member States must be informed and the following made available to those so informed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan as adopted. • A statement summarising how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan and how the environmental report, the opinions of statutory consultees, and the results of any consultations with other Member States have been taken into account, and the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and the measures decided concerning monitoring. 	<p>Section 7 - Consulting on your neighbourhood plan and Environmental Report and submitting to Wiltshire Council</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>5. Monitoring the significant environmental effects of the plan's implementation</p>	<p>Section 8 - Monitoring the significant effects of your neighbourhood plan</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix B – Wiltshire Council's Sustainability Appraisal Framework

Sustainability Topic	Sustainability Appraisal objective	Decision aiding questions. Will the policy...
Biodiversity	1. Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features and avoid irreversible losses.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect and enhance priority habitats and species? 2. Protect and enhance international, national and locally designated biodiversity sites? 3. Avoid habitat fragmentation? 4. Ensure all new developments protect and enhance local biodiversity? 5. Contribute to the achievement of objectives and targets within local BAPs? 6. Result in greater community engagement with biodiversity? 7. Maintain the existing extent of ancient woodland sites? 8. Require protection and provision of green corridors and river corridors, with use of buffer strips, where necessary? 9. Aid in the delivery of a network of multifunctional Green Infrastructure? 10. Result in a net gain for the natural environment with each new development?
Land and Soil Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Ensure efficient and effective use of land and the use of suitably located previously developed land and buildings. 3. Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maximise densities in sustainable locations that have good access to local facilities, public transport links and key infrastructure? 2. Protect the best and most versatile agricultural land? 3. Protect and enhance soil quality? 4. Maximise reuse of Previously Developed Land where possible/appropriate? 5. Encourage remediation of contaminated land? 6. Maximise efficient use of land within town/city centres? 7. Avoid the loss of natural floodplain?

Sustainability Topic	Sustainability Appraisal objective	Decision aiding questions. Will the policy...
Water Resources and Flood Risk	4. Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take into account predicted future impacts of climate change, including water scarcity issues? 2. Encourage sustainable and efficient management of water resources? 3. Minimise the environmental effects of water abstraction, both inside and outside the authority boundary? 4. Ensure that essential water infrastructure is co-ordinated with all new development? 5. Ensure the installation of water saving measures such as rainwater harvesting and water metering? 6. Consider the need for adequate provision of surface water and foul drainage? 7. Promote provision of pollution prevention measures? 8. Protect, and where possible, improve surface, ground and drinking water quality?
Air Quality and Environmental Pollution	5. Protect people and property from the risk of flooding. 6. Improve air quality throughout Wiltshire and minimise all sources of environmental pollution.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimise the risk of flooding to people and property (new and existing development)? 2. Take into account the predicted future impacts of climate change in the location and design of development, ensuring that development can adapt to any future flood risk scenarios? 3. Protect and enhance the natural function of floodplains? 4. Ensure the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) in appropriate circumstances? 5. Maintain and improve local air quality? 6. Minimise and, where possible, improve on unacceptable levels of noise, light pollution, odour and vibration? 7. Minimise all forms of contamination to soils? 8. Help bring forward the removal of designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)? 9. Mitigate the impacts on air quality from road transport? 10. Mitigate against uses that generate NO2 or other particulates?
Climatic Factors	7. Minimise our impacts on climate change and reduce our vulnerability to future climate change effects.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimise emissions of greenhouse gases and ozone depleting substances? 2. Minimise the likely impacts of future development on climate change through appropriate adaptation? 3. Promote the development of renewable and low carbon sources? 4. Promote energy efficiency in buildings and new development? 5. Minimise contributions to climate change through sustainable building practices? 6. Contribute to reducing Wiltshire's ecological footprint? 7. Contribute to reducing emissions associated with landfilled waste? 8. Contribute to reducing emissions associated with the transport sector?

Sustainability Topic	Sustainability Appraisal objective	Decision aiding questions. Will the policy...
Historic environment	8. Protect, maintain and enhance the historic environment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conserve and enhance features and areas of historical and cultural value, including Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Historic Parks & Gardens? 2. Protect, manage and present the Stonehenge and Avebury WHS in accordance with international obligations? 3. Ensure appropriate archaeological assessment prior to development 4. Promote sensitive re-use of historical buildings and buildings of significant local interest, where appropriate? 5. Improve and broaden access to, and understanding of, local heritage and historic sites? 6. Maintain and enhance the character and distinctiveness of settlements through high quality and appropriate design? 7. Promote heritage based sustainable tourism and regeneration?
Landscapes	9. Conserve and enhance the character and quality of Wiltshire's rural and urban landscapes, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect and enhance the landscape character and scenic quality of the countryside? 2. Conserve and enhance areas with landscape designations and take account of their management objectives? 3. Maintain and enhance the character and distinctiveness of settlements? 4. Deliver good quality design that reflects local character? 5. Protect and enhance natural landscapes within the urban area, including recreational open space and strategic green corridors? 6. Protect rights of way, open space and common land? 7. Aid in the delivery of a network of multifunctional Green Infrastructure? 8. Improve the quality and quantity of access to urban greenspace and the wider countryside for recreation?

Sustainability Topic	Sustainability Appraisal objective	Decision aiding questions.
Population and housing	10. Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.	<p>Will the policy...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide an adequate supply of affordable housing? 2. Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes to meet the needs of all sectors of the community? 3. Ensure adequate provision of land to meet housing needs? 4. Reduce homelessness? 5. Provide quality and flexible homes that meet people's needs? 6. Ensure that best use is made of the existing housing stock? 7. Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction? 8. Provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities? 9. Provide for an adequate range of housing in rural areas?
Healthy communities	11. Provide a safe and healthy environment in which to live.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide for high quality, accessible healthcare facilities? 2. Promote design of buildings and spaces to reduce crime and the fear of crime? 3. Promote design of buildings and spaces to reduce obesity? 4. Address the causes of ill-health? 5. Encourage healthy lifestyles and reduce health inequalities? 6. Increase regular participation in sports /exercise? 7. Protect local rural communities and rural ways of life? 8. Encourage healthy workplaces? 9. Promote recreational and leisure opportunities in the countryside? 10. Incorporate a network of multifunctional Green Infrastructure within new developments, where appropriate?

Sustainability Topic	Sustainability Appraisal objective	Decision aiding questions. Will the policy...
Inclusive Communities	<p>12. Reduce poverty and deprivation and promote more inclusive and self-contained communities.</p> <p>13. Improve equality of access to, and engagement in local, high-quality community services and facilities.</p>	<p>1. Maximise opportunities for all members of society?</p> <p>2. Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing local residents?</p> <p>3. Encourage active involvement of local people in the design of new developments?</p> <p>4. Tackle the causes of poverty and deprivation?</p> <p>5. Encourage and promote social cohesion and respect for other cultures and lifestyles?</p> <p>6. Maximise opportunities within the most deprived areas?</p> <p>7. Increase the ability of 'Hard-to-Reach' groups to influence decisions?</p> <p>8. Minimise fuel poverty?</p>
Education and skills	<p>14. Raise educational attainment levels across the authority and provide opportunities for people to improve their workplace skills.</p>	<p>1. Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including healthcare, education, retail and leisure?</p> <p>2. Promote the development of a range of high quality, accessible community, cultural and leisure facilities?</p> <p>3. Encourage active involvement of local people in community activities?</p> <p>4. Maintain and enhance rural facilities?</p> <p>1. Provide and support high quality educational facilities?</p> <p>2. Improve the skills and qualifications of young people?</p> <p>3. Promote life-long learning that is accessible to all?</p> <p>4. Help to provide a supply of skilled labour to match the needs of local businesses?</p> <p>5. Reduce inequalities in skills across Wiltshire?</p> <p>6. Support community enterprises and the voluntary sector?</p> <p>7. Support the creation of flexible jobs to meet the changing needs of the population?</p>
Transport	<p>15. Reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable transport choices.</p>	<p>1. Promote mixed-use developments that reduce the need to travel and reliance on the private car?</p> <p>2. Increase uptake of sustainable travel choices ie public transport, walking and cycling?</p> <p>3. Promote an integrated transport policy?</p> <p>4. Promote car-share schemes and home or other forms of remote working?</p> <p>5. Promote the development of Park & Ride Schemes?</p> <p>6. Improve the jobs/homes balance?</p> <p>7. Reduce traffic volumes?</p> <p>8. Encourage alternative and sustainable means of transporting freight, waste and minerals, where possible?</p>

This document was published by Economic Development and Planning Services, Wiltshire Council

