

Wiltshire Council

**Strategic Environmental Assessment - Screening determination for the
Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan**

May 2015

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document provides a screening determination of the need to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2. Wiltshire Council, as the 'Responsible Authority'¹ under the SEA Regulations², is responsible for undertaking this screening process of the Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan. It will determine if the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, and hence whether SEA is required.
- 1.3. This process has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC³, often known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive, which has been transposed into English law by the SEA Regulations.

2. Legislative requirements

- 2.1. The Localism Act 2011 requires neighbourhood plans to comply with EU legislation. The screening procedure outlined in this report meets the requirements of the SEA Directive and Regulations, as introduced in Section 1 of this document.
- 2.2. Regulation 5 of the SEA Regulations requires an environmental assessment of plans which:
 1. *Are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use (Regulation 5, para. (2)(a), and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annex I or II to Council Directive 85/337/EEC (EIA Directive) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (Regulation 5, para. (2)(b);*
 2. *In view of the likely effect on sites, have been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) (Regulation 5, para. (3);*
 3. *Set the framework for future development consent of projects*⁴ (Regulation 5, para. (4)(b);
 4. *Are determined to be likely to have significant environmental effects as determined under regulation 9(1) (Regulation 5, para. (4)(c).*

An environmental assessment need not be carried out for:

- a) *Plans which determine the use of a small area*⁵ *at local level* (Regulation 5, para. (6)(a); or
- b) *Plans which are a minor modification*⁶ *to a plan or programme* (Regulation 5, para. (6)(b) unless it has been determined under regulation 9(1) that the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects.

¹ The organisation which adopts the neighbourhood plan (this is described in Wiltshire Council's guide *Neighbourhood planning – a guide for Wiltshire's parish and town councils* (June 2012) as 'makes the plan').

² The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

³ European Directive 2001/42/EC "on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment"

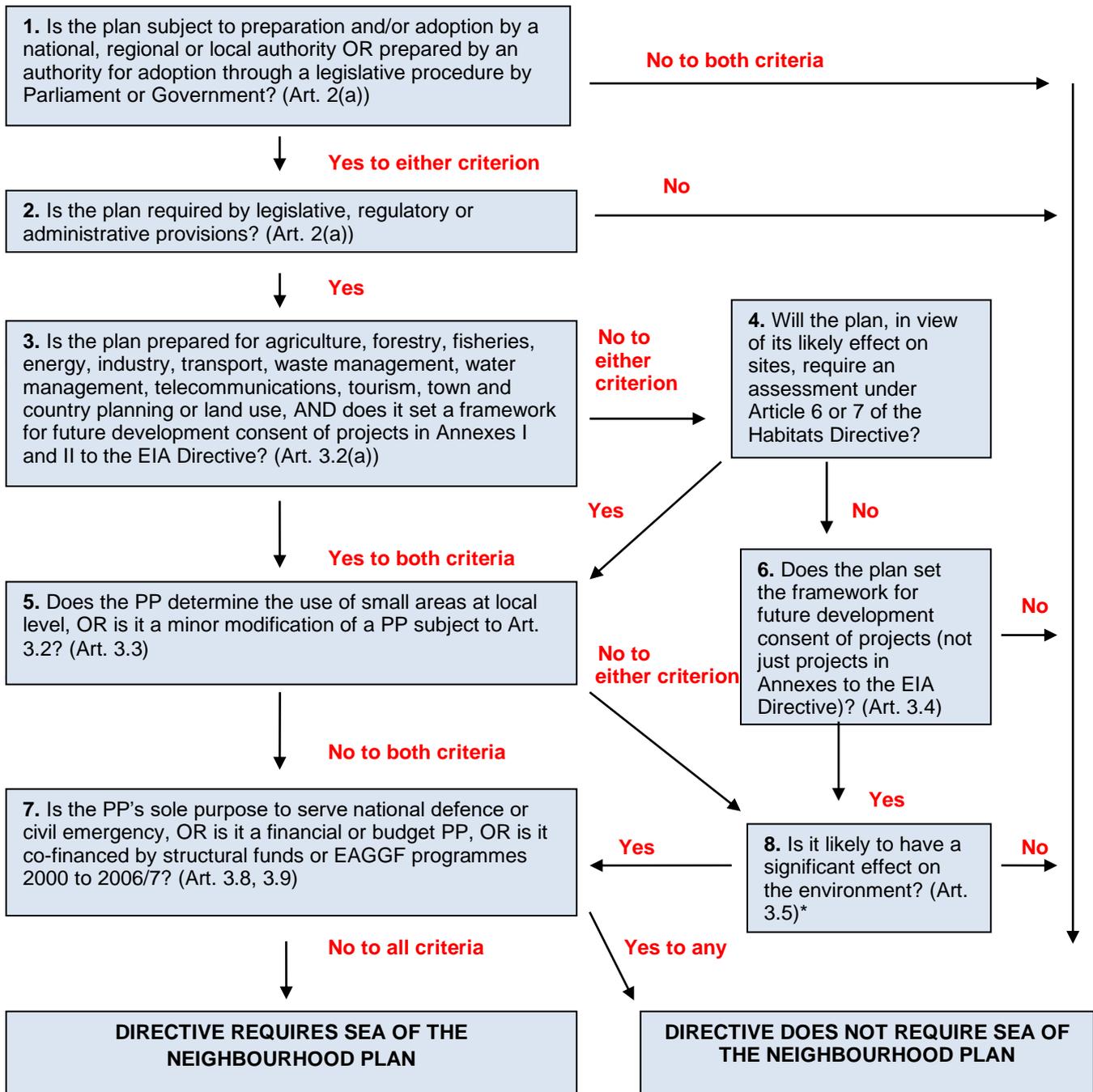
⁴ European Commission guidance states that plans and programmes which **set the framework for future development consent of projects** would normally contain 'criteria or conditions which guide the way a consenting authority decides an application for development consent'. **Development consent** is defined in the EIA Directive as "the decision of the competent authority or authorities which entitled the developer to proceed with the project" (Article 1(2) of the EIA Directive).

⁵ European Commission guidance suggests that **plans which determine the use of small areas at local level** might include "a building plan which, for a particular, limited area, outlines details of how buildings must be constructed, determining, for example, their height, width or design"

⁶ '**Minor modifications**' should be considered in the context of the plan or programme which is being modified and of the likelihood of their having significant environmental effects. A modification may be of such small order that it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

2.3 The diagram⁷ below shows the SEA Directive's field of application:

Application of the SEA Directive to neighbourhood plans



* Plans falling in this category (No.8) will be screened by Wiltshire Council to determine if they are likely to have significant environmental effects. This determination will be made on a case by case basis for neighbourhood plans coming forward in Wiltshire.

NB This diagram is intended as a guide to the criteria for application of the Directive to neighbourhood plans. It has no legal status.

3. The Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan

Background

⁷ Taken from *A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive* (ODPM, 2005)

- 3.1. The parish of Idmiston are currently preparing a neighbourhood plan under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011.
- 3.2. The emerging Neighbourhood Plan seeks to identify non strategic development to support the viability and vitality of community facilities in Idmiston. It will also enable a locally distinctive framework to be developed to complement that provided within the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Steering Group

- 3.3. In January 2014 the Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was set up to prepare the plan. The Group includes a cross section of community representatives that meet regularly to develop the draft plan.
- 3.4. Planning officers from Wiltshire Council have been informal members of the steering group and continue to act as 'Link officers' in providing support and advice.

Neighbourhood Area designation

- 3.5. The designation of the Idmiston Neighbourhood Area was approved on 23rd October 2014.
- 3.6. Wiltshire Council publicised the Idmiston Neighbourhood Area application for consultation which started on Monday 28th April 2014 and closed at 5pm on Wednesday 11th June 2014. No negative representations were received.
- 3.7. Wiltshire Council agrees that the proposed Idmiston Neighbourhood Area (illustrated in Figure 1) is coherent, consistent and appropriate in planning terms.
- 3.8. The Idmiston Neighbourhood Area application and designation documents are available to view online at: http://consult.wiltshire.gov.uk/portal/spatial_planning/np/idmiston_npdesig?tab=files

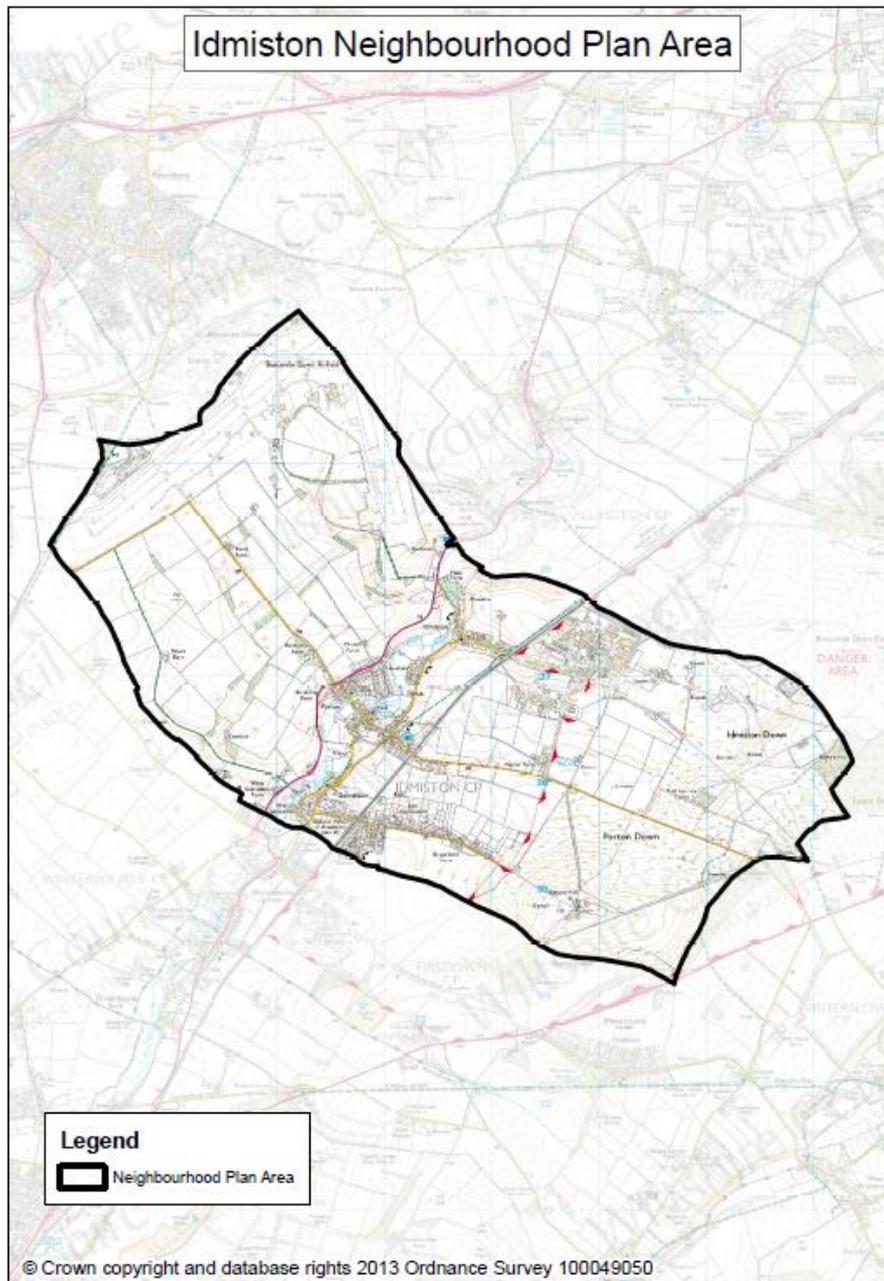


Figure 1 – Map of the Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Source: http://consult.wiltshire.gov.uk/portal/spatial_planning/np/idmiston_npdesig?tab=files

Draft Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan (February 2015)

- 3.9. The latest version of the Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan (and supporting documents) is available to view online at: <http://www.idmistonpc.org/parish-council/parish-planning/neighbourhood-plan/>
- 3.10. The development of the Neighbourhood Plan has been driven by extensive community engagement, as outlined in the draft plan and consultation statement. This work has culminated in a nine-week pre-submission consultation on the plan between 3rd March and 5th May 2015. Following this consultation, the parish council intend to submit their neighbourhood plan and supporting documents to Wiltshire Council in July 2015, for local authority consultation and then examination.

3.11. The draft Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following vision:

“The aim of the Plan is to retain and enhance the traditional values of the small rural parish of Idmiston, which consists of 3 adjacent villages, thus ensuring that future development within the Parish reflects the community’s needs and aspirations. The built environment should be compatible with local and national policies, but above all should enable all sections of the community to enjoy a sustainable way of life. It is to enable Parishioners to help shape the future with regard to development, infrastructure and facilities. Our Objective, Policies and Proposals are based upon the Village Design Statement (VDS) and surveys undertaken in the Parish.”

3.12. The plan also identifies nine key themes/objectives:

- Protect the Parish’s rural feel whilst modernising its infrastructure and meeting the needs of the future, working closely with key local employers and Wiltshire Council,
- Confirm which areas of the Parish should remain as open space and which areas for development,
- Strengthen community spirit, community health and community safety,
- Improve community life with particular regard for the vulnerable, the disadvantaged, the elderly and the young,
- Ensure sufficient educational places to meet the requirements of the Parish,
- Improve and sustain core facilities,
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- Improve and sustain core facilities,
- Enhance community and leisure facilities, particularly for youth and recreation,
- Provide housing to meet local demand for downsizing, whilst also providing affordable homes,
- New housing developments to be designed as small clusters in accordance with the Village Design Statement in conjunction with consultations undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.13. From these objectives, the plan takes forward draft planning policies which relate to:

- Protecting the Parish’s Character and Heritage,
- Ensuring the viability of community Facilities and services,
- Infrastructure,
- Housing,
- Industry and Employment.

3.14. Alongside this work, the Steering Group prepared and consulted on a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (November 2014) and then took this forward in assessing the potential impacts of alternative policy options (see supporting documents).

3.15. The draft policies proposed can be summarised as:

- **Policy 1- Village Separation:** Development sprawl will not be supported where it jeopardises the critical breaks between each of the villages.
- **Policy 2- Conservation:** To reduce exposure to flooding development unrelated to agriculture should be avoided on the water meadows and woodlands.
- **Policy 3- Future Developments:** Minimisation of visual impact of new development on village edges through hedgerows and trees where necessary etc.
- **Policy 4- Maintaining the Rural feel:** All new developments will be required to incorporate a landscaping scheme as an integral design component in the layout of a site.
- **Policy 5- Protect character and heritage:** Future developments which can be seen over the skyline within the villages will not be supported.

- **Policy 6- New conservation areas:** Conservation area status for historic parts of Idmiston will be explored.
- **Policy 7- Maintaining Historical Legacy:** New developments within the historic parts of Idmiston must reflect the appearance and character of the area.
- **Policy 8- Maintaining and enhancing character:** New buildings/developments must not detract from the existing character of the village.
- **Policy 9- Community Infrastructure:** Identify feasible community infrastructure requirements.
- **Policy 10- To maximise use of CIL contributions:** All new housing developments must be considered for CIL contribution to infrastructure facilities.
- **Policy 11- Partner Porton Down Employers:** Partnering relationship with Porton Down employers to manage infrastructure requirements.
- **Policy 12- Long term Infrastructure Requirements:** Upgrade village centre infrastructure taking a strategic view of future requirements with Porton Down.
- **Policy 13- Short term Infrastructure Requirements:** Current infrastructure shortfalls need to be managed in terms traffic congestion and parking.
- **Policy 14- Housing Needs:** Ensure that sufficient Affordable Housing is available to meet the needs of those who live in the Parish.
- **Policy 15- Developments:** Consideration of partnering with the Community Land Trust and Housing Association as alternative to reliance on commercial developers.
- **Policy 16- New builds on Old Plots:** When developing new builds within gardens and grounds of older properties the most important factor to consider is conservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the villages.
- **Policy 17- Development Criteria:** Any development within the villages need to meet the following criteria; well related to existing village, modest scale and generally not exceed 10 units, reflect character of village, acknowledgment of contours/sloping sites.
- **Policy 18- Preventing Overcrowding:** Sufficient private amenity space to be in keeping with character of area.
- **Policy 19- Minimising impact on surrounding countryside:** New agricultural buildings must be in keeping with surrounding environment and avoid elevated and exposed locations.
- **Policy 20- Porton Down Developments:** Standalone developments related to Porton Down must avoid exposed locations and utilise screen planting.
- **Policy 21- Partnering Porton Down Employers to protect the Parish:** Develop a long term relationship with Porton Down Employers.
- **Policy 22- Support to Local Businesses:** Encouragement of local businesses within the Parish.

3.16. Planning Officers at Wiltshire Council have been engaged with the neighbourhood plan throughout the plan making process. At this stage it is considered that the Idmiston Draft Neighbourhood Plan (and draft planning policies) broadly conforms with higher level policy, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy. The Wiltshire Core Strategy sets out the strategic objectives for Wiltshire, focusing on the key issues and a delivery strategy for achieving these objectives, setting out how much development is intended to happen, where, when and by what means it will be delivered.

3.17. The adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy identifies Porton as a Large Village, with Idmiston being removed from the settlement hierarchy. The majority of the identified sites are attached to the village of Porton therefore the draft Neighbourhood Plan is consistent with the Core Strategy.

4. SEA Screening assessment

- 4.1. Wiltshire Council, as the 'Responsible Authority', consider that the Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan falls within the scope of the SEA Regulations on the basis that it is a plan that:
- a) is subject to preparation or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level (Regulation 2);
 - b) is prepared for town and country planning or land use (Regulation 5, para. 2)
 - c) is a plan that sets the framework for future development consent of projects generally (Regulation 5, para. 4); and
 - d) will apply to a wider area other than a small area at local level and is not a minor modification to an existing plan or programme (Regulation 5, para. 6).
- 4.2. A determination under Regulation 9 is therefore required as to whether the Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment.
- 4.3. The screening requirements set out in Regulation 9 and Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations includes two sets of characteristics for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment. These relate to i) the characteristics of the Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan and ii) the characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected by the Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan. In making a determination, Wiltshire Council will take into account the criteria specified in Schedule I of the Regulations as follows:

1. The characteristics of the plans and programmes, having regard in particular 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;
- b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;
- c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;
- d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and
- 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).

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;
- b) the cumulative nature of the effects;
- c) the trans-boundary nature of the effects;
- d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);
- e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- 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
- g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

The screening assessment of the Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan is set out below:

| Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regs.) | Significant environmental effects likely? | Justification and evidence |
|---|---|---|
| 1. The characteristics of plans , having regard, in particular, to: | | |
| (a) the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources | No | The neighbourhood plan promotes modest infill development and the development of Brownfield sites in accordance with the NPPF and Wiltshire Core Strategy. The Plan indicates that any future development on or close to, the periphery of the villages must have regard for the need to minimise the visual impact of new development on the village edges and skyline. Field edge hedgerows and trees and, where necessary, incorporate screen planting to soften the built form. The neighbourhood plan promotes infill development and no major / large scale development. |
| (b) the degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy | No | The neighbourhood plan is produced by the local community to influence development at the local level. It does not have a significant influence on Strategic plans higher up in the hierarchy. |
| (c) the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development | No | The neighbourhood plan is a land-use plan that promotes sustainable development; it is not specifically a plan for integrating environmental considerations but does contain policies for the protection and enhancement of the historic, built and natural environment. Refer, in particular, to policies 2, 4-8 and 19 which relate to environmental protection and enhancement. |
| (d) environmental problems relevant to the plan | No | No significant environmental problems are noted for this parish. The Plan identifies the key action themes on page 5 with the only relevant environmental action theme being the continued protection and enhancement of the parish's character and heritage. This protection and enhancement will be achieved not only through policies of the Plan but also policies within the Core Strategy and NPPF. |
| (e) the relevance of the plan for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection). | No | The neighbourhood plan is not relevant as a plan for implementing community legislation. |
| 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 | No | Any environmental effects are not considered to be significant judging by the proposals in the neighbourhood plan. Any effects of the limited amount of development proposed are likely to be localised and short-term and related to the construction stage. None of the proposed sites have any policy restrictions on them therefore development at these locations would not be detrimental. Proposed Sites and their capacities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PC1 – Southway Porton Camp – 15 units 2. P1A – Land north side of Winterslow Road, Porton – 10 units 3. G5 – Land at St. Judes, Gomeldon – 1 unit 4. P1B – Land on north side of Winterslow Road, adjoin P1A, Porton – 10 units 5. P7A – Land opposite Horefield Eastste, Porton |

| Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regs.) | Significant environmental effects likely? | Justification and evidence |
|---|---|---|
| | | <p>6. P12 – Land between Porton Road and Beach End, Porton – 10 units 7. P4B – Land off Buller Park, Porton – 5 units 8. P7B – Land adjoining P7A, Idmiston Road, Porton – 10 units 9. ID1 – Land off Church Road, Idmiston – 2 units 10. G1 – Land off Gomeldon Road, West Gomeldon – 1 unit</p> <p>Refer to the Neighbourhood Plan Policies 5, 6, 8 and 17, which address the protection of the character and heritage of the villages and is one of the main objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan itemised on page 1 of the Plan. Such a strong focus set on mitigating these effects proves that the location of the proposed developments will not give rise to any significant effects in the area.</p> |
| (b) the cumulative nature of the effects | No | No cumulative effects considered to be significant from the limited development proposals outlined in the neighbourhood plan. In terms of the Housing Policies identified within the Plan, refer to policies 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 which directly address maintaining and enhancing the character of the villages rather than development detracting from the area. For infrastructure, Policies 12 and 13 deal with long term and short term infrastructure requirements such as traffic congestion and parking in the locality. With Policy 10 highlighting the maximisation of CIL contributions for new builds. Collectively these policies should reduce and avoid any cumulative effects arising. |
| (c) the trans-boundary nature of the effects | No | No trans-boundary effects with other EU countries are likely from the limited development proposals outlined in the neighbourhood plan. |
| (d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents) | No | No environmental effects of the Plan's proposals are considered likely to risk human health or the environment. The neighbourhood plan seeks to protect and enhance the natural and built environment and proposes limited new development. |
| (e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected); | No | Significant effects due to the geographic size of the area and population size are not considered likely due to the size of the Parish. Idmiston Parish covers 2,221 hectares with a population size of roughly 2,030 and is made up of three main settlements of; Porton, Idmiston and Gomeldon. |
| (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 | No | A HRA screening report was carried out by Wiltshire Council, which accompanies this report, which concluded that none of the proposals or policies within the Neighbourhood Plan would give rise to significant effects that would affect the integrity of a European Site. Only if the Plan is altered significantly will a further HRA be required and this will be monitored. The location of the proposed residential development sites are not in close proximity to Porton conservation area and no significant effects on individual listed buildings are considered likely given |

| Criteria (Schedule 1 SEA Regs.) | Significant environmental effects likely? | Justification and evidence |
|--|---|---|
| (iii) intensive land-use; | | <p>that any planning application will be decided against relevant protection policies in the Plan, the Core Strategy and NPPF.</p> <p>The Plan is proposing exploring conservation area status for the historic parts of Idmiston but notwithstanding this initiative, within the historic core, any new building or extension or works to an existing building will be required to enhance and positively contribute to the appearance of this area.</p> |
| (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status. | No | <p>The adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy has been subject to SEA and HRA and this plan does not propose anything over and above what is contained in the Core Strategy. The HRA screening report states that, "The quantum of housing being proposed is within the total number allocated for Amesbury Community Area remainder which has been assessed through the HRA for the Wiltshire Core Strategy." The neighbourhood plan acknowledges Porton Conservation Area and the Special Landscape Area which covers the entire Parish. HRA screening has confirmed that all policies have been screened out and no further assessment is required.</p> |

5. SEA Screening decision

5.1 Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations requires that the responsible authority shall determine whether or not a plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. The responsible authority shall —

- (a) take into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 to these Regulations; and
- (b) consult the consultation bodies.

5.2 Where the responsible authority determines that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), it shall prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.

5.3 Wiltshire Council considers that the proposed Idmiston Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and accordingly does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This decision is made for the following key reasons:

1. The neighbourhood plan is produced by the local community to influence development at the local level. It is considered to be in general conformity with the provisions of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and national planning guidance.
2. The 10 proposed development sites are modest in size with the largest site (PC1) being a brownfield site at Porton Down. All other sites are for 10 dwellings or less and not situated in close proximity to the Porton Conservation Area. The HRA report acknowledges that, *“The quantum of housing being proposed is within the total number allocated for Amesbury Community Area remainder which has been assessed through the HRA for the Wiltshire Core Strategy.”*
3. The neighbourhood plan is not proposing additional development over and above what is described in the adopted Core Strategy document. The Core Strategy states that development outside of the defined limits of development will only be supported if they arise through community-led planning, such as neighbourhood plans, and accord with the Core Strategy.
4. The Salisbury Plain SPA and the River Avon SAC are both within proximity to the villages of Idmiston, Gomeldon and Porton. The Wiltshire Core Strategy HRA concluded that adequate safeguards are already in place to ensure no harm is caused to the breeding of stone curlew in the area. The HRA report carried out for this NP has also concluded that, *“The 32 new dwellings proposed under the Idmiston NP is within the total number of dwellings considered by the HRA for the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the HRA for the Army Basing Masterplan and therefore no further in-combination effects are expected to occur.”*
5. The HRA screening has confirmed that all policies have been screened out and no further assessment is required. A decision to screen policies in and to undertake further HRA would mean that an SEA would be required but this is not the case.