

Aylesbury Vale Design Supplementary Planning Document

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment

SEA and HRA Screening Statement

December 2021

FINAL Screening Outcome



Executive Summary

1. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) places a requirement for competent authorities – here the Council – to ascertain whether a plan or project will have any adverse effects on the integrity of European sites.
2. To assess whether or not a full Appropriate Assessment is required under the Conservation of Habitats and Species regulations 2017 (as amended), the Council has undertaken a screening assessment of the Aylesbury Vale Design SPD.
3. Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) are a way of ensuring the environmental implications of decisions are taken into account before any decisions are made. The need for environmental assessment of plans and programmes is set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Under these regulations, Supplementary Planning Documents may require SEA if they could have significant environmental effects. A plan or project that has been identified as triggering an Appropriate Assessment is also required to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
4. To assess whether a SEA / HRA are required, the local planning authority must undertake a screening process. This must be subject to consultation with the three consultation bodies: Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England. Following consultation, the results of the screening process must be detailed in a screening statement, which is required to be made available to the public.
5. If a SPD is considered unlikely to have significant environmental effects through the screening process, then the conclusion will be that the preparation of a SEA and/ or Appropriate Assessment is not necessary.
6. Buckinghamshire Council considers that, following this Screening statement, the Aylesbury Vale Design SPD is unlikely to introduce significant environmental effects and, accordingly, does not require an Appropriate Assessment nor an SEA.
7. The Statutory Bodies were consulted on this HRA and SEA Screening Statement, and their conclusions have been reflected in the final report.
8. The full screening statement follows.

Introduction

Purpose

9. This Statement sets out the approach that has been taken to determine whether the Aylesbury Vale Design SPD should be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive) and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations).
10. This document also determines whether the Aylesbury Vale Design SPD should be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). HRA is the process by which potential effects of a plan or project on the conservation objectives of European sites designated under the Habitats and Birds Directives are assessed.

Aylesbury Vale Design SPD

11. The aim of the Design SPD is to ensure that new development across Aylesbury Vale is of the highest quality and that it responds appropriately to its context and is inclusive and sustainable. The Design SPD sets out clear principles and objectives that aim to inspire developers and designers and assist landowners, developers, applicants and planners in the process of delivering high quality and well-designed development.
12. Over the Plan period the north and central planning areas will see significant growth and new development should be of a quality that contributes to the success of settlements, to a strong local economy and benefits existing residents, visitors and future generations. The Design SPD highlights the importance of a robust design process and careful consideration of context to create sustainable, successful, well-used places.
13. A key aim of this Design SPD is to help deliver a low carbon and climate resilient future for the district through well-designed sustainable buildings and high-quality local environments suitable for low-carbon living. This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is intended to inform and guide the quality of design for all development across the former district. Whilst an important focus is large urban extensions, it is equally important in guiding the design of proposals for a single house, for a household extension or building conversion.
14. The Design SPD puts forward principles and standards for new development that aim to create safe and attractive places that are sensitive to, and maintain or enhance, Aylesbury Vale's special character, while also allowing creative and innovative design solutions. High quality design is essential to optimise the development potential of sites and also to deliver the kind of places that will provide economic and environmental well-being and quality of life for the district's residents, both now and into the future.
15. This Design SPD provides a design-led approach to development. This follows the direction set out in the NPPF, the National Design Guide and VALP Policy BE2 – Design of new development.
16. The Design SPD is to be structured in the following chapters:
 - Chapter one: Purpose of the Design SPD;
 - Chapter two: The design process;
 - Chapter three: Understanding the context;
 - Chapter four: Establishing the structure;
 - Chapter five: Site layout, streets and spaces;
 - Chapter six: High quality and sustainable building design;
 - Chapter seven: Development in the countryside;
 - Chapter eight: Household extensions; and
 - Chapter nine: Building conversions.
17. Each chapter is structured around a number of design principles that must be followed when designing and promoting new development within the north and central planning areas. The principles are drawn from best practice (see additional resources below), respond to the unique environment within the former Aylesbury district and are intended to guide and assist applicants on the design aspects that must be considered and addressed when drawing up their proposals.
18. The Design SPD provides general guidance on the form that new development should take. This addresses a range of development types including:
 - New urban extensions and large residential developments;
 - Brownfield and urban infill sites;

- Employment and commercial sites;
 - New dwelling design;
 - Household extensions; and
 - Building conversions.
19. Not all principles will be relevant for smaller scale development proposals (including single dwellings, household extensions or building conversions). Chapters four and five, in particular, are most relevant for larger sites which must establish their own structure, either as part of an existing settlement or as an extension to an existing settlement.
 20. The design principles are supported by illustrations and photographs of best practice examples including case studies from both within the north and central planning areas and elsewhere. Poor practice is also illustrated.
 21. Where appropriate reference to VALP policy is made - this will be indicated within the grey box at the top right of each page of the document.
 22. Checklists are provided at the end of each chapter in the SPD. The checklists are intended to act as prompts to applicants to ensure that the issues raised are considered at the right stage of the design process and to optimise the potential of the site to accommodate appropriate development. Not all checklists or all the issues raised in individual checklists will apply to every site and each case will be decided on its merits. Applicants are expected to demonstrate compliance where checklists do apply or robustly justify their proposals

Policy context

23. SPDs are prepared under Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (“the Regulations”). Regulation 5 sets out those documents that fall within the definition of Local Development Documents; SPDs fall within sub section 1 (a) (iii) – a document prepared by a local planning authority which contains statements regarding ‘any environmental, social, design and economic objectives which are relevant to the attainment of the development and use of land mentioned in paragraph (i)’. As such, the SPD’s key relationship is with the Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VALP) and, in order to comply with the Regulations, the SPD can guide the policies in the VALP, providing detail on the way in which they will be implemented in practice. The SPD must not, however, seek to impose new or additional policy requirements to those in the VALP.
24. The VALP covers the period 2013-2033 and policy BE2 is the plan’s policy on design of new development. All new development is to respect and compliment the physical characteristics of the site. It will take account of local distinctiveness and vernacular character of the locality. New development will also be required to take account of the natural qualities and features of the area and public views and skylines. The SPD has been prepared to provide additional information and guidance to support VALP policy BE2. The finally adopted version of VALP (September 2021) version of Policy BE2 is as follows:

BE2 Design of new development

All new development proposals shall respect and complement the following criteria:

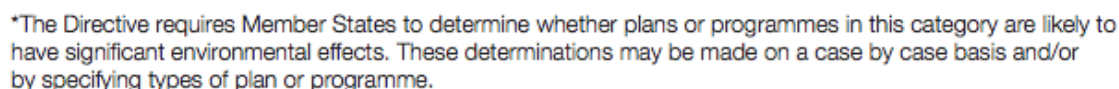
- a. The physical characteristics of the site and its surroundings including the scale and context of the site and its setting
- b. The local distinctiveness and vernacular character of the locality, in terms of ordering, form, proportions, architectural detailing and materials
- c. The natural qualities and features of the area, and
- d. The effect on important public views and skylines.

More guidance on the detail for the application and implementation of this policy will be provided in the Aylesbury Vale Design SPD.

SEA Screening Process

25. The requirement for a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) is set out in the “Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004”. There is also practical guidance on applying European Directive 2001/42/EC produced by the ODPM (now DLUHC). These documents have been used as the basis for this screening report.
26. Paragraph 008 of the ODPM’s ‘Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal guidance’ states that *“Supplementary planning documents do not require a sustainability appraisal but may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already have been assessed during the preparation of the relevant strategic policies.”*
27. The former ODPM practical guidance provides a checklist approach based on the SEA regulations to help determine whether SEA is required. This guide has been used as the basis on which to assess the need for SEA as set out below. Figure 1 sets out a flow diagram showing the process for assessing plans and programmes.

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



Stage		Yes/No	Reason
1	Is the SPD subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR	Yes	The SPD is prepared by and will be adopted by Buckinghamshire Council.

	prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament of Government? (Article 2(a))		
2	Is the SPD required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Article 2(a))	Yes	The SPD is required by Policy BE2 in the VALP. Once adopted, it will provide guidance supporting the implementation of the VALP policy BE2 on design.
3	Is the SPD prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, and does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art. 3.2(a))	No	The SPD is for town and country planning/land use purposes. Once adopted, it will provide guidance supporting the implementation of the VALP policy BE2. The SPD does not provide a policy framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I or II of the EIA Directive.
4	Will the SPD in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive?	No	The SPD expands on the principles for the design in Policy BE2 as set out in the VALP. It does not, in itself, provide any policies and only clarifies existing policies in the VALP.
5	Does the plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a plan subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	No	The SPD expands on the principles for the design in Policy BE2 as set out in the VALP. It does not, in itself, provide any policies and only clarifies existing policies in the VALP. The SPD is thematic as in Design,

			it is not site specific so there is no determining the use of any land.
6	Does the SPD set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)?	No	The SPD, does not provide a policy framework for future development projects. It does, however, provide additional guidance to support the delivery of the VALP policy BE2 on design

SEA Directive Annex II: Criteria for determining likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5)		
Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of Regulations)	Likely to have significant environmental effects?	Comments
<i>The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</i>		
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	No	The Design SPD does not set the policy framework for the delivery of design, but rather, serves to provide greater clarity in relation to the principles and policies (chiefly BE2) set out in the VALP and provides additional guidance as to how development can achieve them.
b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes, including those in a hierarchy	No	The SPD will have less material weight than the VALP policies, which have been subject to SA. It sits below 'higher tier' documents and does not set new policies.
c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	No	The guidance in the SPD is intended to have a positive impact on the integration of environmental considerations. The infrastructure schedules included in the SPD seek to ensure that the strategic site allocations made in the VALP provide the necessary infrastructure to support the

		delivery of sustainable new communities.
d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	No	As the role of the SPD is to expand and elaborate on the policy BE2 in VALP as set out in the VALP, it is considered that the document is not likely to exacerbate environmental problems. The SPD supports the achievement of environmental improvements via good quality, sustainable design and delivery of infrastructure to benefit both new and existing residents.
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)	No	The SPD is not directly relevant to the implementation of Community legislation. However, it could be used as a guide in helping to achieve the some of the objectives set out in such legislation at site level scale e.g. waste management. It offers guidance on the implementation of VALP policies, which have been subject to SA, to provide further positive effects.
Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of Regulations)	Likely to have significant environmental effects?	Comments
<i>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard to:</i>		
a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	No	The SPD provides guidance aimed at ameliorating the negative impact of new developments. It is anticipated to have positive and beneficial effects. It offers guidance on the implementation of VALP policies, which have been subject to SA, to provide further positive effects.

b) The cumulative nature of the effects	No	The effects of this SPD will be largely beneficial. It elaborates on the principles set out in the VALP and sets out how development can achieve them. It does not present any policies and serves only to provide greater clarity in relation to policies. The effects are limited to the design of development.
2c) The trans-boundary nature of the effects	No	The SPD is for the former Aylesbury Vale District area only, it would not affect any wider area.
2d) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	No	The SPD does not present any risk to human health or the environment; conversely it aims to encourage improvements in design quality in land and buildings.
2e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	Yes	The SPD is for the area of the former Aylesbury Vale District, approximately 350 square miles.
2f) 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 III. intensive land-use	No	The VALP SA does not identify any significant environmental effects associated with the spatial strategy to focus development at Aylesbury although it does identify some negative environmental impacts. The Design SPD will have a positive impact on mitigating these negative impacts. The SPD provides guidance on the implementation of VALP policy BE2, which has been subject to SA, to provide further positive effects. It does not propose any new development over and above that assessed within the VALP SA.

2g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status	No	The SPD provides guidance on the implementation of VALP policies, which have been subject to SA, to provide further positive effects. It does not propose any new development.
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Table 2: Evaluation of the proposed Aylesbury Vale Design SPD against criteria in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations.

SEA Screening Opinion- Final After Consultation

29. The screening process has considered the likelihood of the Aylesbury Vale Design SPD requiring SEA. It has also assessed the likelihood of any significant effects against the criteria in the SEA Regulations.
30. The Council's opinion is that the emerging SPD will not have significant environmental effects and will not, therefore, require an SEA. The main reasons for this opinion are that:
 - the SPD is not setting a new policy framework; it is supplementing and providing further guidance on the policy BE2 set out in the VALP.
 - The VALP has been subject to SA which does not identify any significant environmental effects associated with the policies. Whilst some negative effects are identified, the delivery of strategic infrastructure in VALP and a focus on high quality design in the SPD will have a positive impact on mitigating these negative impacts.
31. This conclusion is supported by the responses received from Natural England and the Environment Agency

Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report

32. This screening report has been prepared to determine whether the Aylesbury Vale Design SPD should be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The application of HRA to land-use plans is a requirement of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, the UK's transposition of European Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive).
33. Background to the SPD and its policy context is set out in section 1 Introduction above. It is, however, relevant to note that the SPD will provide design guidance to supplement policy BE2 in the VALP and draws together into one document the design guidance to be followed. The SPD does not provide new policies, elaborating only on the VALP policy framework to assist implementation. The VALP has been subject to HRA screening.
34. Legal protection is afforded to habitats and species of European importance through Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna - known as the 'Habitats Directive'. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive require AA of plans to be undertaken. This involves assessing the contents of plans to ensure that their policies and proposals maintain the integrity of Natura 2000 sites. The assessment must determine whether the plan would adversely affect the nature conservation objectives of each site. Where negative effects can be identified, other options should be examined to avoid any potential damaging effects.
35. The application of the precautionary principle through the Habitats Directive means that plans can only be permitted once it is shown that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites. In the rare case of there being no alternatives available or over-riding reasons of public interest why a plan needs to be implemented, plans that do have negative impacts may still be approved.

Stage of HRA Screening

Stage	Task	Outcome
Stage 1: Screening (the 'Significance Test') that is this current stage	<p>Description of the plan.</p> <p>Identification of potential effects on European Sites.</p> <p>Assessing the effects on European Sites.</p>	<p>Where effects are unlikely, prepare a 'finding of no significant effect report'.</p> <p>Where effects judged likely, or lack of information to prove otherwise, proceed to Stage 2.</p>

Potential impacts and activities adversely affecting European sites

Broad categories and examples of potential impacts on European sites	Examples of activities responsible for impacts
<p>Physical loss</p> <p>Removal (including offsite effects, e.g. foraging habitat)</p> <p>Smothering</p> <p>Habitat degradation</p>	<p>Development (e.g. housing, employment, infrastructure, tourism)</p> <p>Infilling (e.g. of mines, water bodies)</p> <p>Alterations or works to disused quarries</p> <p>Structural alterations to buildings (bat roosts)</p> <p>Afforestation</p> <p>Tipping</p> <p>Cessation of or inappropriate management for nature conservation</p> <p>Mine collapse</p>
<p>Physical damage</p> <p>Sedimentation / silting</p> <p>Prevention of natural processes</p> <p>Habitat degradation</p> <p>Erosion</p> <p>Trampling</p> <p>Fragmentation</p>	<p>Flood defences</p> <p>Dredging</p> <p>Mineral extraction</p> <p>Recreation (e.g. motor cycling, cycling, walking, horse riding, water sports, caving)</p> <p>Development (e.g. infrastructure, tourism, adjacent housing etc.)</p> <p>Vandalism</p>

Broad categories and examples of potential impacts on European sites	Examples of activities responsible for impacts
Severance / barrier effect Edge effects Fire	Arson Cessation of or inappropriate management for nature conservation
Non-physical (and indirect) disturbance Noise Vibration Visual presence Human presence Light pollution	Development (e.g. housing, industrial) Recreation (e.g. dog walking, water sports) Industrial activity Mineral extraction Navigation Vehicular traffic Artificial lighting (e.g. street lighting)
Water table/availability Drying Flooding / storm water Water level and stability Water flow (e.g. reduction in velocity of surface water) Barrier effect (on migratory species)	Water abstraction Drainage interception (e.g. reservoir, dam, infrastructure and other development) Increased discharge (e.g. drainage, runoff)
Toxic contamination Water pollution Soil contamination Air pollution	Agrochemical application and runoff Navigation Oil / chemical spills Tipping Landfill Vehicular traffic Industrial waste / emissions
Non-toxic contamination	Agricultural runoff Sewage discharge

Broad categories and examples of potential impacts on European sites	Examples of activities responsible for impacts
Nutrient enrichment (e.g. of soils and water) Algal blooms Changes in salinity Changes in thermal regime Changes in turbidity Air pollution (dust)	Water abstraction Industrial activity Flood defences Navigation Construction
Biological disturbance Direct mortality Out-competition by non-native species Selective extraction of species Introduction of disease Rapid population fluctuations Natural succession	Development (e.g. housing areas with domestic and public gardens) Predation by domestic pets Introduction of non-native species (e.g. from gardens) Fishing Hunting Agriculture Changes in management practices (e.g. grazing regimes, access controls, cutting/clearing)

Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan HRA

36. A Habitats Regulation Assessment of the VALP was undertaken when preparing the plan <https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/habitats-regulations-assessment> and identified the following two European sites within 10 km of former Aylesbury Vale District; the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC and Aston Rowant SAC. The 2017 HRA concluded that the Plan would not result in Likely Significant Effects, either alone or in-combination, and was therefore compliant with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended). This conclusion was supported by Natural England.
37. Following the 2018 CJEU ruling (People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (Case C- 323/17) judgement), Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive should be interpreted as meaning that mitigation measures, specifically measures which avoid or reduce adverse effects, should be assessed as part of an Appropriate Assessment, and should not be taken

into account at the screening stage. Prior to this judgment, UK case law had established that avoidance or reduction measures that form part of a proposal could be taken into account at the screening stage, on the basis of objective information. The VALP HRA was therefore updated to take account of the recent ruling and as a result, conclusions did not rely on mitigation measures at the screening stage but rather, where such measures are proposed, and required, to avoid the harmful effects of the plan, they were considered at the Appropriate Assessment stage to ensure compliance with recent case law (VALP HRA report, June 2019).

https://www.aylesburyvaldc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/page_downloads/ED209%20Vale%20of%20Aylesbury%20Local%20Plan%20-%20Final%20HRA%20Report%20June%202019.pdf

38. The updated HRA 2019 found that likely significant effects relating to increased air pollution needed to be considered in relation to Chilterns Beechwoods SAC; and that both Chilterns Beechwoods SAC and Aston Rowant SAC needed to be considered in relation to likely significant effects arising from increased recreational pressure.
39. With regard to air pollution, the HRA found that increases in traffic along the A41 as a result of the VALP in-combination with other plans, has the potential to result in likely significant effects on the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC. Air quality modelling is required to determine whether the effect would result in adverse effects on site integrity as part of the Appropriate Assessment. The Appropriate Assessment considered the Air Quality Assessment prepared for the VALP and concluded that “In light of the above [Air Quality Assessment], the Local Plan is not predicted to adversely affect the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC as a result of air pollution, either alone or in-combination.”
40. With regard to recreational pressures, further assessment was required at the Appropriate Assessment stage to determine whether the VALP would result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC either alone or in-combination.
41. The Appropriate Assessment (AA) noted that proposed changes to VALP Policy I1 and appendices would provide for increased provision of green infrastructure and ensure that new housing development within the north and central planning areas provides for accessible high quality green space for local residents. The policy I1 as proposed to be Modified with revisions and Appendices would specifically outline the amount of and distance to sufficient green spaces and was therefore likely to represent a key role in providing attractive alternative options for accessing natural greenspace in preference to visiting the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, and therefore avoid increased contributions to recreational pressures as a result of the VALP.
42. The RAF Halton site allocation (HAL03) was found to be the only housing allocation specified in the VALP which is located within 7km of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, and therefore likely to contribute towards recreational pressures. A site specific masterplan SPD is required by the VALP for this site, and the AA concluded that “providing that the specific proposals for green infrastructure are re-inserted into Policy I1 in the modified plan and applied to housing allocation HAL03, and there is a commitment by AVDC to ensure that scheme design seeks to provide natural greenspace that contributes to alleviating visitor pressure on the SAC, it is certain that the VALP will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC as a result of recreational pressures, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.”

43. The overall conclusion of the HRA, 2019 was that “providing that the adopted VALP includes the previously omitted open space standards specified in Policy I1 and there is a commitment by AVDC to ensure that the SPD Masterplan [for RAF Halton] provides natural greenspace that contributes to alleviating visitor pressure on the SAC, the VALP will not result in adverse effects on European Sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. “
44. A further HRA of the Further Main Modifications took place in late in 2020 <https://aylesburyvaledc.oc2.uk/docfiles/13/ED247%20Proposed%20Further%20Main%20Modifications%20Habitat%20Regulations%20Assessment.pdf> of the VALP Further Main Modifications which were more detailed matters and development a significant distance from SAC sites. This HRA addendum took account of updated traffic modelling. There was no material change to the conclusions of the 2019 HRA report.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

45. The first stage in carrying out an Appropriate Assessment for the Habitats Directive is screening, by determining whether the plan is likely to have any significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.
46. As set out above, the 2017 Habitats Regulation Assessment of the VALP concluded that the plan would have no likely significant effects on European sites, with the exception of recreational pressures on the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC and air pollution on the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC and Aston Rowant SAC. The updated HRA, 2019 found that the VALP would not have an adverse effect on European sites either alone or in-combination with other plans and strategies.
47. With regard to the impact of increased recreational pressures on the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC, paragraph 6.5 of the updated HRA 2019 notes that by modifying Policy I1 in the VALP to include standards for green infrastructure provision in VALP Appendices “the policy provides for increased provision of green infrastructure and will ensure that new housing development within Aylesbury Vale District will need to provide accessible high quality green space for local residents. It specifically outlines the amount of and distance to sufficient green spaces and thus is likely to represent a key role in providing an attractive alternative options for accessing natural greenspace in preference to visiting the SAC, and therefore avoid increased contributions to recreational pressures as a result of the VALP.” The Aylesbury Vale Design SPD proposes no additional development to that in the VALP and provides additional information and guidance to support the implementation and delivery of the VALP policy BE2. As such it supports the objectives of the VALP policies in avoiding and mitigating recreational pressures on the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC.
48. With regard to air pollution, for the Aston Rowant SAC, the 2019 HRA Update notes that (para 5.32) “A key threat to Aston Rowant SAC that has been identified in Natural England’s Site Improvement Plan (as it relates to proposed development in the district) and at the Screening stage is air pollution. Other threats formally identified include unsustainably low species reproduction, species distribution, deer pressure, and disease, none of which is expected to be affected by proposed developments outlined in the VALP. “The Aston Rowant SAC was, however, screened out of the updated assessment as “the location of the

site is not along a major road expected to bear an increase of traffic due to development proposal within the VALP. Therefore, no likely significant effect on the Aston Rowant SAC is predicted as a result of possible air pollution either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.”

49. The Design SPD proposes no additional development or new major road in the vicinity of the Aston Rowant SAC to that already in the in VALP. Its role is to provide additional information and guidance to support the implementation and delivery of the VALP policy BE2 on design of development.
50. With regard to the impact of air pollution on the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, the potential for the VALP to result in likely significant effects on the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects as a result of air pollution could not be ruled out at the screening stage because the county-wide road traffic modelling predicted AADT increases of 3,301 along a section of the A41 located 93m from the SAC. As a result, air quality modelling was completed to inform the 2019 Appropriate Assessment.
51. Para 6.15 of the Appropriate Assessment states that “The air quality modelling used guidance published by Defra and the Environment Agency to screen out impacts that will have an insignificant effect (Defra & EA, 2016). The guidance explains that regardless of the baseline environmental conditions, a process can be considered as insignificant if the long-term (annual mean) process contribution is less than 1% of the long-term environmental standard.”
52. The conclusions of the Air Quality Assessment were (para 6.19) that: “The effects of the Local Plan have been shown to be not significant with regard to annual mean NO_x concentrations and nutrient and acid nitrogen deposition. This conclusion is based on the following:
 - Contributions to annual mean NO_x and nutrient and acid nitrogen deposition being below the screening criteria, assuming EFT emissions;
 - Contributions to nutrient and acid nitrogen deposition being below the screening criteria, assuming CURED emissions; and
 - Total annual mean NO_x concentrations being well below the assessment criterion, assuming CURED emissions.

The assessment concluded that no mitigation will be required. “

53. As discussed above, the Design SPD proposes no additional development over and that already in the in VALP. Its role is to provide additional information and guidance to support the implementation and delivery of the VALP policy BE2.
54. The Design SPD is not a plan or project which will be implemented in its own right – it expands upon policies within the VALP. The relevant policies within the VALP listed in the SPD have already been subject to HRA and measures to address the identified likely significant effects on the Chilterns Beechwoods and Aston Rowant SACs. The SPD does not introduce new proposals of a type and/or scale outside the parameters of the VALP or amend any of the proposed mitigation measures agreed. It is therefore considered that the Design SPD is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site which means that an “Appropriate Assessment” is not required.

HRA screening outcome

55. As set out above from paragraph 44, an Appropriate Assessment of the Aylesbury Vale Design SPD is not required because the SPD does not introduce new policies. It simply provides guidance on existing policies within the VALP which have themselves have been sufficiently appraised via SAs and HRAs. The Council considers that the SPD will not result in any additional significant effects to those already identified in the higher level SA and HRAs. It will provide more detailed guidance to developers and decision makers to ensure that the positive effects identified in the VALP SA are realised and that the neutral and/or negative effects are mitigated further.

Conclusions

56. Based on the above assessment and, following consultation with statutory bodies, Buckinghamshire Council (the 'Council') determines that the Aylesbury Vale Design SPD requires neither a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) nor an Appropriate Assessment.
57. This conclusion is supported by Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Consultation Responses

Consultation held 16/08/21 to 05/10/21 (extended from 21/09/21 due to holiday period)

Natural England – Received 13/10/21

Dear David,

Consultation: Aylesbury Vale Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) SEA and HRA Screening.

Our ref:

Thank you for your recent consultation relating to the Aylesbury Vale Design SPD SEA and HRA Screening.

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

Based on the information submitted, Natural England agree with the assessment that the Aylesbury Vale Design Supplementary Planning Document does not require an SEA or HRA.

Kind Regards,

Ellen

Ellen Satchwell

Sustainable Development Lead Adviser

Thames Solent Team | Natural England

07899902408

Environment Agency - Received 13/10/21

Hello David,

Thank you for your recent emails about the Aylesbury Vale Design SPD. In relation to screening for SEA, we agree with the council's opinion that the emerging SPD is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

We make no comment in respect of HRA screening.

We apologise for the delay of this reply.

Kind regards,

Judith Johnson

Sustainable Places team

Environment Agency, Thames Area

Goldcrest House, Alice Holt Lodge, Farnham, Surrey. GU10 4LQ

Tel: 020 3025 9495

Historic England

Acknowledgement 28/09/21, no conclusion on screening assessment provided.