

Strategic Environmental Assessment of the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document

Environmental Report

December 2023



LEPUS CONSULTING
LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY, PLANNING & URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

Strategic Environmental Assessment of the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document

Environmental Report

LC-921	Document Control Box
Client	Buckinghamshire Council
Report title	Strategic Environmental Assessment of the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document: Environmental Report
Status	Final
File name	<u>LC-921_RAF Halton SPD_SEA Environmental Report_7_051223LB.docx</u>
Date	December 2023
Author	SS
Reviewed	LB
Approved	ND

About this report & notes for readers

Lepus Consulting Ltd (Lepus) has prepared this report for the use of Buckinghamshire Council. There are a number of limitations that should be borne in mind when considering the results and conclusions of this report. No party should alter or change this report whatsoever without written permission from Lepus.

© Lepus Consulting Ltd

The conclusions below are based on the best available information, including information that is publicly available. No attempt to verify these secondary data sources has been made and they have been assumed to be accurate as published.

This report was prepared between July and December 2023 and is subject to and limited by the information available during this time.

This report has been prepared with reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the contract with the client. Lepus Consulting accepts no responsibility to the client and third parties of any matters outside the scope of this report. Third parties to whom this report or any part thereof is made known rely upon the report at their own risk.

Client comments can be sent to Lepus using the following address.

Eagle Tower,

Cheltenham

Gloucestershire

GL50 1TA

Telephone: 01242 525222

E-mail: enquiries@lepusconsulting.com

www.lepusconsulting.com

Contents

Non-Technical Summary	N1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Preface	1
1.2 The SEA process	1
1.3 The RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document	2
1.4 Best practice guidance	6
1.5 Purpose of this report	8
1.6 Meeting the requirements of the SEA Regulations	9
2 SEA Screening	10
2.1 Screening	10
2.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment	11
2.3 Consultation	11
3 SEA Scoping	12
3.1 Introduction	12
3.2 Policies, plans and programmes review	12
3.3 Baseline data and key sustainability issues	12
3.4 The SEA Framework	14
3.5 Consultation	15
4 Methodology	18
4.1 Approach to assessment	18
4.2 Appraisal process	18
4.3 Significance	19
4.4 Impact sensitivity	20
4.5 Impact magnitude	20
4.6 Predicting effects	21
4.7 Assessment assumptions	21
4.8 Limitations	25
5 Reasonable alternatives	26
5.1 Overview	26
5.2 Identifying and describing reasonable alternatives	26
5.3 Evaluating the reasonable alternatives	30
6 The preferred approach	32
6.1 Selection and rejection of reasonable alternatives	32
6.2 Preferred option	33
6.3 Mitigation considerations	37
6.4 Residual effects and recommendations	40
7 Monitoring	44
7.1 Monitoring proposals	44
8 Conclusion and next steps	46
8.1 Overview	46
8.2 Next steps	48
8.3 Commenting on the Environmental Report	48
Appendix A: SEA Framework	A1

Appendix B: Plans, Policies and Programmes Review	B1
Appendix C: Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives	C1

Tables

Table 1.1: D-HAL003 RAF Halton Site Allocation criteria as presented in the VALP	5
Table 1.2: Requirements of the SEA Regulations.....	9
Table 2.1: Statutory consultee responses to the SEA Screening Report	11
Table 3.1: Key sustainability issues and evolution without the SPD.....	13
Table 3.2: Statutory consultee responses to the SEA Scoping Report.....	15
Table 4.1: Guide to scoring significant effects	19
Table 4.2: Geographic scales of receptors	20
Table 4.3: Impact magnitude.....	20
Table 4.4: Assumptions for the SEA Objectives	22
Table 5.1: Summary of reasonable alternative assessments for SEA Objective 1 biodiversity, flora and fauna ...	31
Table 5.2: Summary of reasonable alternative assessments for SEA Objective 2 climate change.....	31
Table 5.3: Summary of reasonable alternative assessments for SEA Objective 3 cultural heritage	31
Table 5.4: Summary of reasonable alternative assessments for SEA Objective 4 landscape.....	31
Table 6.1: Summary of identified impacts by SEA Objective	35
Table 6.2: Summary of mitigation measures by SEA Objective.....	37
Table 6.3: Summary of identified residual effects by SEA Objective	40
Table 6.4: Recommendations to further improve sustainability of the SPD	41
Table 7.1: Proposals for monitoring adverse sustainability impacts of the SPD	45

Figures

Figure 1.1: Proposed Site D-HAL003 boundary	4
Figure 5.1: Masterplan Layout for Site D-HAL003- Option 1 (Source: Buckinghamshire Council and Hyas)	28
Figure 5.2: Masterplan Layout for Site D-HAL003- Option 2 (Source: Buckinghamshire Council and Hyas)	29
Figure 6.1: Proposed land uses for Site D-HAL003 (source: RAF Halton SPD)	34

Acronyms & abbreviations

AAL	Area of Attractive Landscape
AGT	Aylesbury Garden Town
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DIO	Defence Infrastructure Organisation
EA	Environment Agency
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GI	Green Infrastructure
HIA	Heritage Impact Assessment
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment
LCT	Landscape Character Type
LLA	Local Landscape Area
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
MHCLG	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government
NDHA	Non-designated Heritage Asset
NERC	Natural Environment and Rural Communities (Act)
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
PPP	Plan, Policy and Programme
RAF	Royal Air Force
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SAMM	Strategic Access Management and Monitoring
SANG	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
VALP	Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan

This page is intentionally blank.

Non-Technical Summary

What is Strategic Environmental Assessment?

- N1. Lepus Consulting has prepared this Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Report of the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on behalf of Buckinghamshire Council.
- N2. SEA is the process which informs and influences the preparation of the SPD to help optimise its environmental performance.

Purpose and content of the Environmental Report

- N3. This SEA document is known as an Environmental Report and has been prepared to meet the requirements of the SEA Regulations¹.
- N4. The Environmental Report has been prepared to comply with procedural aspects of the SEA Regulations, whereby *“the requirement for environmental assessment also applies to other plans and programmes which set the framework for future development consent of projects if they are the subject of a determination under regulation 9(1) that the plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects (regulation 5(4); Article 3.4 of the Directive)”*.
- N5. This SEA Environmental Report accompanies the latest version of the Draft SPD (received 20th November 2023)² and follows on from the SEA Screening Report³ (December 2022) and Scoping Report⁴ (April 2023).
- N6. The purpose of this Environmental Report is to:
- Identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the SPD on biodiversity, flora and fauna; climate change; cultural heritage; and landscape;
 - Suggest measures by which any negative effects could be mitigated;
 - If appropriate, make recommendations to improve the environmental performance of the SPD; and
 - Provide an effective opportunity for statutory consultees, interested parties and the public to offer views on any aspect of the SEA process that has been carried out to date.

¹ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

² Buckinghamshire Council (2023) RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document Draft for consultation November 2023 (working draft version 5 provided to Lepus 20/11/23)

³ Buckinghamshire Council (2022) Site D-HAL003, RAF Halton SPD, Aylesbury Vale Area: Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening

⁴ Lepus Consulting (2023) Strategic Environmental Assessment of the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document: SEA Scoping Document, April 2023

N7. The Environmental Report contains:

- An outline of the contents and main objectives of the SPD and its relationship with other relevant plans, programmes and strategies;
- Details of the methodology used to prepare the assessment;
- Identification, description and evaluation of reasonable alternatives to the SPD;
- The likely significant environmental effects of the SPD; and
- The next steps for the SEA.

SEA Screening

N8. To understand whether or not a plan or SPD should be subject to strategic environmental assessment, the plan or SPD must be screened for likely environmental effects. The results of the evaluation should be shared with statutory consultees: the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England.

N9. An SEA and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening exercise conducted by Buckinghamshire Council (December 2022)⁵ identified that the RAF Halton SPD would be likely to lead to significant environmental effects on the topics of biodiversity, climate change, cultural heritage, and landscape. Following consultation on the Screening report, the conclusion that SEA was required was agreed on with the statutory bodies Historic England and Natural England. No comments were received from the Environment Agency.

N10. The SPD has therefore been screened into the SEA process.

The Scope of the SEA

N11. An SEA Scoping Report was prepared by Lepus in April 2023⁶, which identified relevant policies, plans, and programmes (PPPs) and baseline information relating to environmental issues in the area, drawing on the information gathered at the Screening stage. The scoping document set out an SEA Framework, against which the SPD was to be assessed, which focused on the topics which were screened in: biodiversity, flora and fauna; climatic factors; cultural heritage; and landscape. The SEA Framework included indicators and decision-making criteria for each SEA Objective.

N12. The SEA Scoping Report was consulted on with the statutory consultees between 4th April and 9th May 2023. Comments were received from Historic England and Natural England, and their recommendations were taken into consideration in the next SEA stages. No comments were received from the Environment Agency.

⁵ Buckinghamshire Council (2022) Site D-HAL003, RAF Halton SPD, Aylesbury Vale Area: Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening

⁶ Lepus Consulting (2023) Strategic Environmental Assessment of the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document - SEA Scoping Document

Evaluation of reasonable alternatives

N13. The assessment of reasonable alternatives refers to the plan-making stage of exploring options, where the SEA process is required to identify, describe and evaluate reasonable alternatives.

N14. During the preparation of the SPD, the Council identified potential options for the layout of the proposed development at the RAF Halton site, known as Site D-HAL003. Two reasonable alternatives were considered, relating to minor differences in the layout of the proposed development, as follows:

Overall concept masterplan: Option 1

- Retention of Groves and Henderson with parade ground park
- Grassland and woodland setting
- Extensive sports and leisure corridor
- Expanded school and local centre on Upper Icknield Way
- East-west tree-lined avenue
- Consolidated parkland corridor at Maitland barracks
- Development on Maitland parade ground
- Stables community/leisure use
- Trenchard Museum stays in situ

Overall concept masterplan: Option 2

- Retention of Groves and Henderson with parade ground park
- Grassland and woodland setting
- Sports and leisure corridor
- New school and local centre on Chestnut Avenue
- Old station building retained
- Maitland parade ground park
- Trenchard Museum relocated to former County Museum Resource Centre.

N15. Each reasonable alternative was appraised in the SEA process (see **Chapter 5** and **Appendix C**). The SEA Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives was issued as an internal document to the Council as an interim SEA output in April 2023 to help inform the preparation of the SPD.

N16. The assessment of reasonable alternatives identified potential for negative impacts to some extent in relation to the development of Site D-HAL003, regarding the following SEA topics:

- **Biodiversity** – For both options, a precautionary minor negative impact was identified with respect to potential adverse impacts associated with recreational pressure to the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as well as nearby Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and ancient woodland.
- **Climate change** – Under either option, the introduction of at least 1,000 new dwellings would be likely to cause an increase in energy consumption, pollution, and traffic during both the construction and occupancy stages, to some extent, resulting in a minor

negative impact on climate change. Although, positive impacts were identified for both options due to the proposed green infrastructure (GI) provisions, where Option 1 could potentially perform slightly better than Option 2 in terms of GI connectivity.

- **Cultural heritage** – Both options were found to perform similarly at the strategic scale in relation to cultural heritage, where potential minor negative impacts are associated with Site D-HAL003's location with respect to Halton House Registered Park and Garden (RPG), Grade II* Listed Buildings and archeological remains. Option 2 was found to potentially perform slightly better owing to its layout that could potentially retain the existing character and setting of the locally listed and non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) to a greater extent than Option 1.
- **Landscape** – Both options would be expected to have positive impacts in terms of promoting access to multi-functional greenspace, through various GI provisions including amenity greenspace alongside the proposed residential development. However, due to the nature and scale of the proposed development at Site D-HAL003, potential minor negative impacts on the setting of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the surrounding Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL) / Local Landscape Area (LLA) could not be ruled out.

N17. Both reasonable alternatives performed similarly in the SEA, with no single, best performing option identified owing to the small-scale differences identified between the options.

Assessment of the preferred option

N18. Taking into account the findings of the SEA, as well as other evidence base information, the Council are pursuing the approach as set out in the outline masterplan for Site D-HAL003 which is a combination of the two reasonable alternative layout options. The preferred approach which is proposed within the SPD has been appraised in **Chapter 6** of this report.

N19. Assessments have been considered prior to mitigation interventions, and in line with the precautionary principle, to help achieve transparency in the appraisal process. Given that the preferred option builds upon the two reasonable alternatives, the SEA findings were similar to those identified at the previous SEA stage.

N20. The assessment of the preferred option identified likely significant effects attributed to the following SEA topics:

- **Biodiversity, flora and fauna** – increased risk of development-related threats and pressures on habitats and ecological corridors, including the adjacent ancient woodland, and potential adverse recreational impacts on the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC (Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI component);
- **Climate change** – due to an increase in energy consumption, pollution, and traffic during both the construction and occupancy stages associated with the development of at least 1,000 dwellings;
- **Cultural heritage** – in particular, potential impacts on the setting of surrounding Listed Buildings (both designated and non-designated), areas of archaeological remains and the setting of Halton House RPG; and

- **Landscape** – including potential direct or cumulative adverse effects on the setting of, and views from, the Chilterns AONB which lies adjacent to the site, as well as potential alteration of the character of locally designated landscapes (LLA and AAL).

Mitigation

- N21. To meet the requirements of the SEA Regulations, the Environmental Report must provide details of the mitigation measures envisaged to help prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment which could occur due to the implementation of the SPD, as well as monitoring recommendations.
- N22. The mitigation hierarchy is a sequential process that operates in the following way: firstly, if possible, negative impacts should be avoided. Failing this, the nature of the effect should be reduced, if possible, so that it is no longer significant. If neither avoidance nor reduction is feasible, compensation measures should be considered.
- N23. As noted above and discussed within **Chapter 6 (Table 6.1)**, potential adverse impacts on the environment following the implementation of the SPD have been identified in relation to biodiversity, climate change, cultural heritage and landscape.
- N24. The implementation of the SPD would also be anticipated to result in a range of positive effects including the opportunity to provide new homes, community facilities and pedestrian routes for the enjoyment of current and future residents, as well as having the potential to deliver enhanced multi-functional GI and biodiversity net gain.
- N25. Various provisions proposed within the SPD and policies outlined in adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) would further help to ensure that future development takes into account the surrounding built and natural environment, heritage assets and landscape character.
- N26. The SEA has considered the extent to which each of the identified adverse effects could be mitigated through provisions within the SPD itself or within the adopted VALP policies. These mitigation considerations are presented within **Table 6.2** and can be summarised as follows:
- **Biodiversity, flora and fauna** – in accordance with the VALP policies, the proposed development will ensure that biodiversity and GI assets are conserved and enhanced, delivering at least 10% biodiversity net gain. The SPD will need to be in compliance with the established Mitigation Strategy for the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC at Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI which requires a financial contribution for each net new home within the 12.6km ZOI (Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM))⁷

⁷ Buckinghamshire Council. November 2022. Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation at Ashridge Commons and Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest and the Habitats Regulations Assessment. Statement of Common Ground Between Dacorum Borough Council; Buckinghamshire Council; Central Bedfordshire Council; and St. Albans City and District Council. Available at: <https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s52744/Agreement%20to%20the%20Statement%20of%20Common%20Ground%20for%20the%20Ashridge%20Commons%20and%20Woods%20Site%20of%20Special%20Scien.pdf> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

and provision of a bespoke Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) in line with the guidelines provided by Buckinghamshire Council⁸.

- **Climate change** – in line with the VALP policies, the SPD promotes a range of climate change adaptation and mitigation techniques including measures to improve energy efficiency, integrate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and GI enhancements, as well as a range of transport improvements which would help to encourage active travel.
- **Cultural heritage** – the SPD will be expected to ensure the conservation and enhancement of designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings in a manner appropriate to their significance, in accordance with the VALP policies and in particular the site-specific policy D-HAL003. There will be opportunities for sensitive redevelopment of on-site heritage assets.
- **Landscape** – the SPD seeks to create a carefully planned and well-managed GI network as well as high quality design for the new development. The setting of the Chilterns AONB and wider landscape character will be conserved and enhanced in line with the VALP policies.

Conclusions

N27. Following consideration of the mitigation measures as noted above, as well as the outputs of the emerging HRA and other evidence base documents, the potential for residual effects have been identified (see **Table 6.3**).

N28. Residual adverse effects have been ruled out for the following topics:

- **Biodiversity, flora and fauna** – provided that the SAMM and SANG requirements are effectively implemented to mitigate adverse recreational effects at the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, and taking into account the proposed conservation and enhancement of biodiversity assets including at least 10% biodiversity net gain, it is considered that a minor positive impact could be achieved.
- **Cultural heritage** – provided that the recommendations from Historic England are met, and the development is informed by the forthcoming Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), a significant residual adverse effect on cultural heritage is considered unlikely and an overall negligible effect has been identified.
- **Landscape** – provided that the development is informed by any recommendations and mitigation identified in the forthcoming Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), a significant residual adverse effect on landscape is considered unlikely and an overall negligible effect has been identified.

N29. However, a residual adverse effect has been identified for the following topic (see **Table 6.3**):

- **Climate change** – a residual minor adverse effect is identified, associated with a likely increase in GHG emissions during both construction and occupation of new

⁸ Buckinghamshire Council (2023) Guidelines for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace. Available at: <https://buckinghamshire.gov.uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Buckinghamshire-Council-Guidelines-for-Suitable-Alternative-Natural-Greenspace.pdf> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

homes associated with domestic and transport sources, which is considered to be a long term but potentially temporary effect.

Recommendations

- N30. Several recommendations have been made in this SEA report for the Council to consider (see **Table 6.4**) to potentially enhance the sustainability of the proposals within the SPD or to provide further clarity regarding certain issues.

Next steps

- N31. This Environmental Report will be published for consultation with the statutory consultation bodies of Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency, and the public alongside the RAF Halton SPD and other evidence base documents.

1 Introduction

1.1 Preface

- 1.1.1 Lepus Consulting is conducting a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on behalf of Buckinghamshire Council.
- 1.1.2 This document constitutes the SEA for the SPD and represents an Environmental Report as per the requirements of the SEA Regulations⁹. This represents Stage D of the SEA process according to the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal¹⁰¹¹.
- 1.1.3 SEA is the process of assessing plans and programmes to “*provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment*”.
- 1.1.4 SEA is also one of the ‘tests of soundness’ that examiners use to evaluate the soundness of planning documents.
- 1.1.5 A key objective of SEA is to promote a high level of environmental protection. The SEA is an objective assessment that helps to inform the identification of preferred options and the best way of implementing these with regard to environmental factors, but it does not necessarily dictate what these will be.

1.2 The SEA process

- 1.2.1 The European Union Directive 2001/42/EC or ‘SEA Directive’ applies to a wide range of public plans and programmes on land use, energy, waste, agriculture, transport etc. (see Article 3(2) of the Directive for other plan or programme types). The SEA procedure can be summarised as follows: an Environmental Report is prepared in which the likely significant effects on the environment and the reasonable alternatives of the proposed plan or programme are identified. The public and the relevant environmental authorities are informed and consulted on the draft plan or programme and the Environmental Report prepared.
- 1.2.2 Further details on methodology are explained in **Chapter 4**.

⁹ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

¹⁰ DLUHC & MHCLG (2020) Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

¹¹ EU Council (2001) Directive 2001/42/EC. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

- 1.2.3 The SEA Directive has been transposed into English law by the SEA Regulations. Detailed guidance on these regulations can be found in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) publication 'A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive'¹².
- 1.2.4 Under the requirements of the SEA Regulations, specific types of plans that set the framework for the future development consent of projects must be subject to an environmental assessment.
- 1.2.5 Where an SPD could have significant environmental effects, it may fall within the scope of the SEA Regulations and so would require an SEA.
- 1.2.6 Whether an SPD requires a SEA, and (if so) the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed in the SPD. An SEA may be required, for example, where:
- The SPD area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan; or
 - The SPD may have environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through an SA of higher order plans.

1.3 The RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document

- 1.3.1 This Environmental Report regards the proposed content of the SPD, as per the information presented in the latest version of the SPD provided to Lepus, titled 'RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Draft for consultation: November 2023' received 20th November 2023¹³.
- 1.3.2 The RAF Halton SPD will provide a framework for the development of the proposed Site D-HAL003 'RAF Halton' allocated within the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP), which was adopted in September 2021. Site D-HAL003 is identified as one in a suite of 'major sites' within VALP Policy D2.
- 1.3.3 Page 334 of the VALP says that the RAF Halton SPD will be required "*to ensure comprehensive development of the site that is likely to extend beyond the plan period*" and that "*the masterplan SPD for the site will establish the site layout and disposition of land uses*".
- 1.3.4 Site D-HAL003 is currently an active military site, although it has been confirmed by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) that the site will be decommissioned in 2027. The site is considered to be well located with respect to transport links and local services, providing an opportunity for a mixed-use redevelopment.
- 1.3.5 Due to the proximity of the RAF Halton site to Aylesbury, the development is proposed to follow the same principles as Aylesbury Garden Town (AGT).

¹² Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

¹³ Buckinghamshire Council (2023) RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document Draft for consultation November 2023 (working draft version 5 provided to Lepus 20/11/23)

1.3.6 Site D-HAL003 is proposed to include the development of the following land uses:

- At least 1,000 residential dwellings;
- Mixed-use local centre including a community hall;
- Two-form entry primary school and pre-school;
- Museum centre;
- Green infrastructure (GI) including the retention of existing sports facilities, new play space, allotments and community orchard, parkland, walking and cycling trails, and woodland and grassland habitat; and
- Associated infrastructure and access routes.

1.3.7 The boundary for Site D-HAL003 is shown in **Figure 1.1**. The site comprises approximately 82ha of partially developed land and lies to the south east of Aylesbury Town, and to the north east of the market town of Wendover. The site is located in Halton Parish, within the former Aylesbury Vale District which now forms part of Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority area.

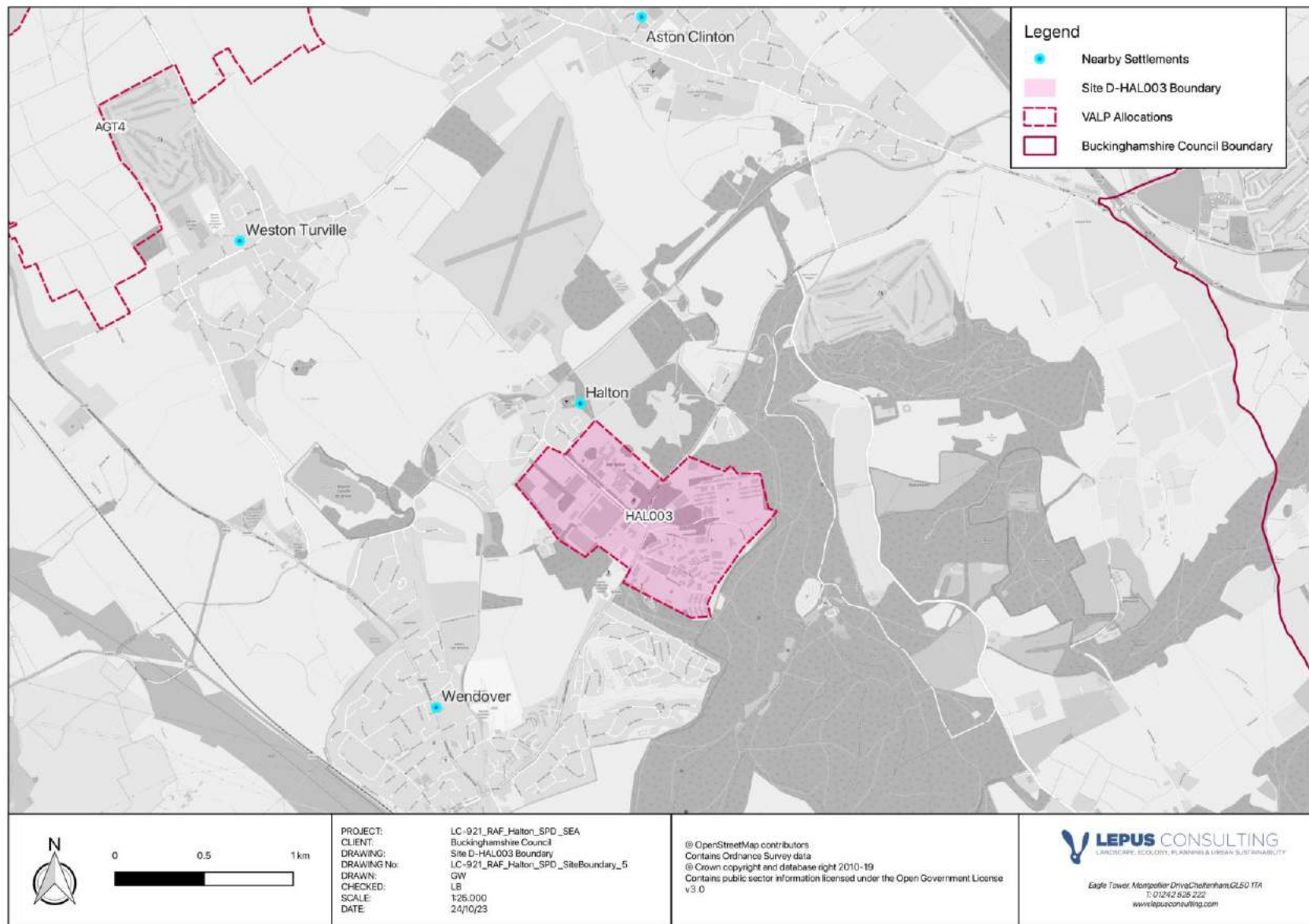


Figure 1.1: Proposed Site D-HAL003 boundary

- 1.3.8 The SPD takes the proposals from the VALP and adds further detail about phasing and implementation, as well as considering local aspirations and key issues that will influence the new development. The SPD will be a material consideration, which expands on policies set out in the VALP, to help guide the preparation and assessment of future planning applications within the site.
- 1.3.9 The key VALP policies for the allocation of RAF Halton site are:
- **Policy S2 Spatial Strategy for Growth:** Proposes the allocation of 1,000 homes at Halton Camp, representing the majority of the 1,142 homes planned for the Wendover area.
 - **Policy D-HAL003:** Sets out the requirement to provide a framework to help guide the preparation and assessment of future planning applications within the site, as well as key development and land use requirements for the allocation.
- 1.3.10 **Table 1.1** presents the criteria for development at Site D-HAL003 RAF Halton as proposed within the adopted VALP¹⁴.

Table 1.1: D-HAL003 RAF Halton Site Allocation criteria as presented in the VALP

Information	Site details
Site reference	HAL003
Site name	RAF Halton
Size (hectares)	82 ha
Allocated for (key development and land use requirements)	At least 1,000 homes during the Plan period and associated infrastructure, services and facilities including a primary school, new local centre, new access routes if needed and new green infrastructure
Expected time of delivery	25 homes to be delivered 2020-2025 and 975 homes to be delivered 2025-2033
Planning history and current planning status	No relevant planning history
Site-specific requirements	<p>Development proposals must be accompanied by the information required in the council's Local Validation List and comply with all other relevant policies in the plan, including the principles of development for Aylesbury Garden Town and the Masterplan SPD to be prepared for the site. In addition, proposals should comply with the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of land for at least 1,000 dwellings during this plan period at a density that takes account of the existing curtilage, the scale and massing of the buildings on the site, and that of the adjacent settlement character and identity if appropriate, as well as retaining the openness of the green belt Be planned in a manner that responds positively to the best characteristics of the surrounding area using a landscape-led approach, taking account of the character and setting of the Chilterns AONB Provision of junction improvements onto the B4009 Upper Icknield Way

¹⁴ Buckinghamshire Council (2021) Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2013 – 2033: Adopted Plan. Available at: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-development-plans/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

Information	Site details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. Provision for public transport into Wendover and to surrounding areas e. Establishment of and safeguarding for a network of cycling and walking links to and from Aylesbury Town and to the wider area f. Provision of 50% green infrastructure, to reflect the high level of open space already present on the site including green corridors, to link to other new development areas and the wider countryside g. Provision of land, buildings and car parking for a combined primary school including playing field provision h. Provision of land, buildings and car parking for a new local centre including community hall. i. The conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings whilst ensuring viable uses consistent with their conservation. j. The retention of existing sports facilities as part of a long-term strategy for sport and recreation to serve new residents and the existing community.
Phasing and delivery programme	Development of this site will come forward towards the latter part of the plan period as the site will not be fully released until 2025. Further detail about phasing and implementation will be set out in the masterplan SPD for the site.
Implementation approach	Development at RAF Halton will come forward towards the latter end of the Plan period, and only once a masterplan SPD for the allocation has been prepared and adopted by the council. Proposals for development within the RAF Halton Strategic Site Allocation will be expected to demonstrate how they deliver a comprehensive redevelopment of this site and positively contribute to the achievement of the SPD and the Aylesbury Garden Town principles as set out in Policy D1.

1.4 Best practice guidance

1.4.1 A range of documents have informed the approach to the SEA of the RAF Halton SPD, including national policy, guidance and best practice standards set out for SEA:

- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006): Biodiversity Duty (sections 40 and 41)¹⁵;
- HM Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' (2018)¹⁶ and Environmental Improvement Plan (2023)¹⁷;
- European Commission (2004) Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment¹⁸;

¹⁵ Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

¹⁶ DEFRA (2018) 25 Year Environment Plan. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

¹⁷ DEFRA (2023) Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

¹⁸ European Union (2001) SEA Guidance, Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/eia/pdf/030923_sea_guidance.pdf [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

- ODPM (2005) A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive¹⁹;
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (2023) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)²⁰;
- DLUHC & Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2023) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)²¹; and
- Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) (2018) Strategic Environmental Assessment, Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of SEA/SA for land use plans²².

1.4.2 Besides the documents listed above, several regionally and locally specific documents to the RAF Halton site have been utilised to inform the SEA process including:

- Neighbourhood Plans: Wendover Neighbourhood Plan (February, 2020)²³ and emerging Halton Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan²⁴;
- Biodiversity Action Plan: Forward to 2030 for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes²⁵;
- Vision and Principles for the Improvement of Green Infrastructure in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (2016) and the accompanying GI opportunities mapping (2018)²⁶;
- Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2013)²⁷ and Strategy (2009)²⁸;

¹⁹ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

²⁰ DLUHC (2023) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

²¹ DLUHC & MHCLG (2023) Planning Practice Guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

²² RTPI (2018) Strategic Environmental Assessment. Available at: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2018/january/strategic-environmental-assessment-seasa-for-land-use-plans/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

²³ Wendover Parish Council (2020) Wendover Neighbourhood Plan: Made Version, February 2020. Available at: https://buckinghamshire.gov.uk.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/documents/Wendover_Neighbourhood_Plan_gcckdbn.pdf [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

²⁴ Halton Parish Council (2023) Draft Halton Neighbourhood Plan 2023-2033. Available at: <https://www.halton-pc.gov.uk/community/halton-parish-council-20383/draft-halton-neighbourhood-plan/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

²⁵ Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (2021) Forward to 2030: Biodiversity Action Plan. Available at: <https://bucksmknep.co.uk/forward-to-2030/#:~:text=The%20BAP%20includes%20agreed%20targets,chalk%20downland%2C%20woodlands%20and%20wetlands> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

²⁶ Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (2018) Vision and Principles for the Improvement of Green Infrastructure. Available at: <https://bucksmknep.co.uk/projects/vision-and-principles-for-the-improvement-of-green-infrastructure/#:~:text=The%20new%20Vision%20and%20Principles,for%20Buckinghamshire's%20environment%2C%20health%20and> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

²⁷ LUC (2013) Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Available at: https://www.southbucks.gov.uk/media/5014/Buckinghamshire-Green-Infrastructure-Delivery-Plan-Buckinghamshire-and-Milton-Keynes-Natural-Environment-Partnership-August-2013-/pdf/5326-Bucks-GI-Delivery-Plan-FINAL-ISSUE_2013_08_07_low_res.pdf [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

²⁸ Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Consortium (2009) Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, April 2009. Available at: <https://bucksmknep.co.uk/download/797/?tmstv=1689310079> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

- The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2019-2024²⁹;
- Transport schemes under Policy T2 (Supporting and Protecting Transport Schemes) as within the adopted VALP (2013-2033);
- Infrastructure provision under Policy S5 of the adopted VALP;
- Policies D2 and D4 which regard residential development delivery as within the adopted VALP (2013-2033); and
- Other relevant VALP policies.

1.4.3 The plans and policies set out above require that development proposals protect the natural environment including internationally, nationally and locally designated biodiversity sites, and seek to ensure that ecological networks and GI assets are protected and enhanced, alongside delivering the required growth. The plans and policies above will help form decisions on site development for Site D-HAL003 with considerations to the local area.

1.5 Purpose of this report

1.5.1 This report has been prepared to help inform the preparation of the RAF Halton SPD. It is not the role of the SEA to decide which is the most appropriate form of the SPD, but instead to provide an assessment of the SPD and any reasonable alternatives which should be given due consideration in the decision-making process and identify best performing options.

1.5.2 Regulation 12 of the SEA Regulations³⁰ states that the Environmental Report “*shall identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the environment of – (a) implementing the plan or programme; and (b) reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme*”.

²⁹ The Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024. Available at: <https://www.chilternsaonb.org/what-we-do/future-proofing-the-chilterns/management-plan/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

³⁰ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Regulation 12. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/regulation/12/made> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

1.6 Meeting the requirements of the SEA Regulations

1.6.1 **Table 1.2** includes the requirements of the SEA Regulations and shows where they have been met within the SEA process.

Table 1.2: Requirements of the SEA Regulations³¹

Requirement for Environmental Report	Location
Include an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	See section 1.3 and Appendix B , and the SEA Scoping Report.
Include information on the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.	See Chapter 3 , and the SEA Scoping Report.
Describe the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	See Chapters 5 and 6 , and the SEA Scoping Report.
Specify any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.	See Chapters 3, 5 and 6 , and the SEA Scoping Report.
Consider the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	See Chapters 5 and 6 and Appendix B , and the SEA Scoping Report.
Assess 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, and cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.	See Chapters 5 and 6 and Appendix C .
Give details of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment as a result of implementing the plan or programme.	See Chapter 6 (in particular section 6.3).
Give 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.	See Chapter 5 and section 6.1 .
Include a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	See Chapter 7 .
Include a non-technical summary of the information provided.	See the Non-Technical Summary .

³¹ Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations requirements checklist. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/580073/Strategic_Environmental_Assessment_Regulations_requirements_checklist.pdf [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

2 SEA Screening

2.1 Screening

- 2.1.1 The RAF Halton SPD SEA and HRA Screening was undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council in December 2022³² to review whether the proposed RAF Halton SPD could potentially result in significant effects on the environment. The screening opinion recommended that the SPD should be screened in for full SEA.
- 2.1.2 Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations³³ states that the information provided in SEA should identify the likely significant effects on the environment³⁴, including: *“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 issues”*.
- 2.1.3 The SEA screening opinion considered the extent to which the SPD could potentially have a likely significant effect on each of the topics listed in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations. The screening opinion concluded that a significant effect could not be ruled out for the following topics:
- **Climate Change:** The introduction of at least 1,000 new dwellings, increase in energy consumption, and traffic owing to both construction and occupancy stages is likely to increase local greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, thus negatively impacting climatic factors.
 - **Cultural Heritage:** There are a range of heritage assets within the site boundary and in the surrounding area. The introduction of 1,000 new homes and redevelopment of the site has potential adverse effects on heritage assets and their settings.
 - **Landscape:** The site borders the Chilterns AONB. With the proposed construction and occupation of new dwellings and infrastructure at Site D-HAL003, negative impacts on the highly distinctive and sensitive character of the AONB could occur.
- 2.1.4 The findings from the HRA of the VALP indicate recreational pressure from the proposed housing development on the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Drawing on this, the HRA Screening of the RAF Halton SPD highlighted that a full HRA Appropriate Assessment was required for the SPD (see **section 2.2**). Therefore, the SEA topic **‘Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna’** has also been screened in alongside the topics listed in paragraph 2.1.3.

³² Buckinghamshire Council (2022) Site D-HAL003, RAF Halton SPD, Aylesbury Vale Area: Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening

³³ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

³⁴ These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects.

2.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 2.2.1 Conclusions from the RAF Halton SPD Screening Report³⁵ state that there is potential for likely significant effects on the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC associated with increased recreational pressure as a result of the proposed development Site D-HAL003.
- 2.2.2 The HRA Screening exercise noted that the VALP HRA findings regarding the need for recreational impact mitigation from the proposed housing growth on the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC led directly to the inclusion of policies and proposals on GI mitigation as set out in Policy I1 and D-AGT1 of VALP. As the SPD is expected to add further details on the type, location and management of GI in terms of how the policy requirements will be met on the RAF Halton site, it concluded that there was a need for a greater level of detail on mitigation to be evaluated in HRA terms. These details were not available at the time of the VALP HRA, and as such, it was concluded that an Appropriate Assessment should be carried out for the SPD to evaluate if the mitigation details proposed are adequate or if there would be adverse impacts on the integrity of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC, either as a result of the SPD alone or in combination with other plans and projects.
- 2.2.3 The HRA therefore has progressed to Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment, the findings of which has informed potential likely significant effects on the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, as outlined within **Chapter 6**, and required mitigation.

2.3 Consultation

- 2.3.1 The SEA and HRA Screening Report was subject to consultation with the statutory consultees of the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England. Following consultation on the report, the conclusion that SEA was required was agreed on by two of the statutory bodies: Historic England and Natural England. No comments were received from the Environment Agency. The responses received are summarised in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Statutory consultee responses to the SEA Screening Report

Consultee	Summary of consultee response
Environment Agency	N/A – No comment received.
Natural England (2 nd December 2022)	<i>“...Based on the plan submitted, Natural England agree with the assessment that the Supplementary Planning Document does require an SEA and HRA...”</i>
Historic England (16 th November 2022)	<i>“...On the basis that the proposed SPD is a plan which is both required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions and, in terms of our area of interest, seems likely to result in significant effects upon the historic environment, Historic England considers that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required for this document...”</i>

³⁵ Buckinghamshire Council (2022) Site D-HAL003, RAF Halton SPD, Aylesbury Vale Area: Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening

3 SEA Scoping

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The scoping stage represents Stage B of the SEA process, according to the strategic environmental assessment requirements³⁶. Scoping is the process of deciding the scope and level of detail of an SEA.
- 3.1.2 The purpose of Scoping is to set the criteria for assessment (including the SEA Framework), establish the environmental baseline and include a review of relevant policies, plans and programmes (referred to as PPPs). The scoping process can also help to identify key environmental issues relevant to the local area, highlighting areas of potential concern.
- 3.1.3 The SEA Framework is presented in **Appendix A**. Drawing on the information gained from the earlier SEA screening exercise, as detailed in **Chapter 2**, which concluded that the SPD would be likely to lead to a significant environmental impact in relation to the following topics: biodiversity, flora and fauna; climate change; cultural heritage; and landscape. The scope of the SEA is therefore focused on these four objectives.
- 3.1.4 The Scoping Report for the RAF Halton SPD was prepared by Lepus in April 2023³⁷.

3.2 Policies, plans and programmes review

- 3.2.1 A plan or programme may be influenced in various ways by other plans or programmes, or by external environmental protection objectives such as those laid down in policies or legislation.
- 3.2.2 The scoping exercise presented an analysis of the objectives of the key PPPs that are relevant to the SPD and the SEA assessment process, presented by their geographic relevance, from international to local level. The PPP Review is presented in **Appendix B**.

3.3 Baseline data and key sustainability issues

- 3.3.1 A key part of the scoping process is the collection of baseline data. The purpose of this exercise is to help identify key issues and opportunities facing the area which might be addressed by the RAF Halton SPD, and to provide an evidence base for the assessment.
- 3.3.2 Paragraph 016 of PPG on SEA³⁸ states that “*baseline information provides the basis against which to assess the likely effects of alternative proposals in the plan*”.

³⁶ MHCLG (2015) Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal: Sustainability appraisal requirements for local plans and spatial development strategies. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

³⁷ Lepus Consulting (2023) Strategic Environmental Assessment of the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document: SEA Scoping Document, April 2023

³⁸ DLUHC & MHCLG (2020) Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal#:~:text=The%20term%20'baseline%20information'%20refers,without%20implementation%20of%20new%20policies> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

3.3.3 The scoping exercise provided a review of existing environmental conditions within the local area and their likely evolution in absence of the RAF Halton SPD. **Table 3.1** provides an outline of the identified key sustainability issues and future evolution without the SPD, building on those identified in the Scoping Report.

Table 3.1: Key sustainability issues and evolution without the SPD

SEA Objective	Key sustainability issues	Evolution of the baseline without the SPD
Biodiversity, flora and fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development within 12.6km of the Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI within the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC has the potential to lead to increased recreational pressures³⁹. The SPD should ensure that damage through recreational pressure is avoided, promoting restoration and/or enhancement of the SAC, in line with the NPPF, and that the recommendations of the emerging HRA for the SPD are adhered to. There is a need to ensure that the proposed residential development for Site D-HAL003 addresses any potential impact on nearby SSSIs, in consultation with Natural England. There is potential for an adverse impact of development on existing ecological networks and protected habitats/species without careful planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sites designated for their national and international biodiversity value will continue to benefit from legislative protection. Without the SPD, it may be difficult to help ensure that development is not of a type, scale and location that could potentially have a major adverse impact on a biodiversity designation or on the functioning ecological network. It is likely that biodiversity features will be somewhat protected by policies set out the VALP, however, it is uncertain to what extent.
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing at least 1,000 new dwellings will be likely to increase energy consumption, pollution and traffic within the local area, with potential adverse effects on climatic factors. The potential adverse effects associated with the proposed mixed-use redevelopment and regeneration of the RAF Halton site in terms of releasing embodied carbon should be carefully considered, as well as the opportunity to improve the sustainability credentials through refurbishment/redevelopment of existing buildings to the same mass and scale. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the absence of the SPD, future planning applications for the land which encompasses Site D-HAL003 will be required to adhere to local and national policies regarding GHG emissions and particulate matter, energy efficiency, flood risk and moving towards Net Zero. The likely GHG emissions in absence of the SPD is uncertain and will depend on any future planning applications which would be required to fulfil the housing need. Irrespective of the SPD, climate change has the potential to lead to higher winter rainfall, hotter summers and more extreme weather events, which could have significant implications for infrastructure and public health.

³⁹ Buckinghamshire Council (2022) Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation Frequently Asked Questions. Available at: https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/FAQs_Chiltern_Beechwoods_SAC_DE_v8_25_11_2022_003_-_accessible_v1.pdf [Date accessed: 25/10/23]

SEA Objective	Key sustainability issues	Evolution of the baseline without the SPD
Historic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development within Site D-HAL003 could potentially alter the character and setting of historic assets, both designated and non-designated. In particular, potential effects on Halton House RPG (and opportunities to promote its conservation and enhancement) need to be taken into consideration in light of its status on the Heritage at Risk Register. Archaeological remains, including that which has not yet been discovered, are present in the area and could potentially be affected by the proposed development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the absence of the SPD, although designated heritage assets will continue to benefit from legislative protection and will be conserved in line with the VALP policies, there is an increased risk of development coming forward that could potentially harm the heritage significance of assets on site and less control over how the masterplan will respond to these heritage constraints. The extent to which the accessibility, local awareness or setting of heritage assets may be enhanced over time without the SPD is uncertain. The opportunities to enhance the condition and appreciation of local historic environment could be lost.
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site D-HAL003 is located adjacent to the Chilterns AONB. Development adjacent or in close proximity to the AONB should seek to conserve and enhance its setting, in line with the objectives of the AONB Management Plan and national legislation. The impact of development on the purposes of the Green Belt should be considered. The findings of the Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment should be considered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chilterns AONB will continue to be proactively and effectively managed by the Chilterns Conservation Board and, in the absence of the SPD, is likely to be conserved and enhanced through the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019 - 2024. However, there may be less opportunity to provide a coordinated and landscape-led approach to the development, without the SPD. In the absence of the SPD, important local landscape features are likely to be conserved in line with policies set out in the VALP. In the absence of the SPD, housing needs will likely be met through planning applications, and it is uncertain whether distinctive and long-distance countryside views within and of the site, and of any alternative site, would be altered. Policies set out in the VALP will be likely to protect some views, however without proactive management to conserve landscape features and open space advocated through the SPD, the quality of these views could potentially deteriorate over time.

3.4 The SEA Framework

- 3.4.1 The purpose of the SEA Framework is to provide a way of ensuring that the SPD considers the sustainability needs of Site D-HAL003 and enables the environmental effects of the SPD to be described, analysed and compared.

- 3.4.2 The SEA Framework consists of objectives, which are measurable using indicators. There is no statutory basis for setting objectives, but they are a recognised way of considering the environmental effects of development plans and comparing alternatives. The SEA Objectives are used to provide the basis against which effects of the SPD are assessed.
- 3.4.3 The SEA Framework for the RAF Halton SPD is focused on biodiversity, climate change, cultural heritage and landscape, drawing on information from the Screening stage (see **Chapter 2**), and was established within the Scoping Report⁴⁰. The SEA Framework has been developed through the PPP review, the baseline data collection and the key issues identified for the SPD area. The SEA topics identified in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations⁴¹ were one of the key determinants when considering the SEA Objectives to be used for appraisal purposes. The updated SEA Framework, reflecting recommendations made by the statutory consultees on the Scoping Report (see **section 3.5**), is presented in **Appendix A**.

3.5 Consultation

- 3.5.1 The SEA Scoping Report was consulted on with the statutory bodies between 4th April and 9th May 2023. Responses received and the associated actions taken to ensure comments have been addressed through the SEA process are summarised within **Table 3.2**.

Table 3.2: Statutory consultee responses to the SEA Scoping Report

Consultee	Summary of consultee response	Actions taken
Environment Agency	N/A – No comment received.	No action required.
Natural England (26 th April 2023)	<p>“Chilterns AONB Boundary Review:</p> <p><i>The plan area is within a proposed area of search which Natural England is considering as a possible boundary variation to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Although the assessment process does not confer any additional planning protection, paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance valued landscapes and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Natural England advises that this area should be considered as a valued landscape with appropriate Local Plan policies to protect and enhance its intrinsic character and natural beauty Furthermore, Paragraph 176 of the NPPF states that development in the settings of AONBs should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise impacts on the designated areas.</i></p> <p>...</p> <p>Ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees:</p> <p><i>You should consider any impacts on ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees in line with paragraph 180 of the NPPF. Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland Inventory which can help identify ancient woodland. Natural England and the Forestry Commission have produced standing advice for planning authorities in relation to ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees. It should</i></p>	<p>Further discussion with Natural England and the Council has highlighted that it is unlikely the boundary review will significantly affect the proposed development at RAF Halton Site D-HAL003, however several recommendations have been proposed in Table 6.4 to ensure that the SPD conserves and enhances the setting of the Chilterns AONB.</p> <p>Ancient woodland has been considered in the SEA assessments. It has been recommended in Table 6.4 that the SPD could benefit from stronger wording in relation to both ancient</p>

⁴⁰ Lepus Consulting (2023) Strategic Environmental Assessment of the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document: SEA Scoping Document, April 2023

⁴¹ Biodiversity flora and fauna; Population; Human health; Soil; Water; Air; Climatic factors; Material assets; Cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage); and Landscape.

Consultee	Summary of consultee response	Actions taken
	<i>be taken into account by planning authorities when determining relevant planning applications...</i>	woodland and ancient and veteran trees.
Historic England (5 th May 2023)	<p>“Baseline</p> <p>We note paragraph 5.2.2 states that Historic England agrees to the conversion of the Barracks to residential development. Please note this is not unqualified support i.e. it needs to be done sensitively, responding to the significance of the buildings and site.</p> <p>Also, while the full SEA Framework on page 37 refers to the Historic Environment Record (HER) in the context of monitoring indicators, the baseline should refer to the HER, as well as relevant archaeological notification areas and non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs). Considering each of these in turn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As stated in our Advice Note on planning and archaeology, HERs provide detailed information about the known historic environment of a given area and form an essential part of the planning system. The HER needs to be referenced as an important source of information in this scoping exercise. Figure 5.1 maps archaeological notification sites, but to ensure they are not over-looked, it would be preferable to refer to them explicitly in the baseline too. We’re aware that significant work has been done recently to review and, where appropriate, revise the list of NDHAs on site. On completion of the Council’s review of NHDAs at RAF Halton, relevant details should be incorporated into the baseline and SEA process. <p>Reviewing relevant plans, policies and programmes (PPPs)</p> <p>...the Government’s Heritage Statement 2010 is referenced in paragraph 5.1.3 but has since superseded by a new statement in 2017 (with an update published in 2018) which arguably is by now somewhat dated. Also, Historic England’s most recent Corporate Plan is dated 2022-23 (rather than 2021-22).</p> <p>...In Appendix B, we recommend adding the RPG’s Conservation Management Plan and the Conservation Area Appraisal for Halton to the relevant PPPs.</p> <p>SEA Framework</p> <p>We broadly support the SEA Framework detailed in Appendix A, with the following notes and caveats on heritage:</p> <p>The wording for the objective associated with cultural heritage in Table 7.1 is not the same as the wording in Appendix A... To reconcile these differences, we suggest combining the two e.g. “Conserve, enhance and manage sites, features and areas of historic and cultural importance, including their setting. <u>This includes both designated and non-designated heritage assets</u>”.</p> <p>We suggest revised wording of the decision-making criteria as detailed below, adding detail that we hope would support effective assessment:</p> <p>“Will it conserve/ preserve buildings of special architectural or historic interest, and, where necessary, encourage their conservation lead to the repair and adaptive re-use of those assets and encourage high quality design?”</p> <p>Will it improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings, without unacceptably harming their significance?</p>	<p>Recommendations noted. The SEA has considered the implications for the SPD and reasonable alternatives on relevant aspects of the historic environment, based on data made available by the Council, which includes NDHAs and local heritage information, in addition to the nationally available designations datasets.</p> <p>The PPP Review (see Appendix B) has been updated to reflect the suggested documents, the content of which has been considered during the preparation of this Environmental Report.</p> <p>Suggested wording changes relating to the SEA Objectives and associated indicators have been incorporated into the SEA Framework (see Appendix A).</p> <p>Where relevant, recommendations relating to cultural heritage, drawing on Historic England’s advice, have been made for the Council to consider in Table 6.4.</p>

Consultee	Summary of consultee response	Actions taken
	<p><i>Will it conservepreserve or enhance archaeological sites and features, and their settings?</i></p> <p><i>Will it conservepreserve or enhance the setting or character of cultural heritage assets or areas and provide for increased access to and enjoyment of the historic environment?"</i></p> <p><i>We advise simplifying and broadening the first indicator to connect with designated heritage assets e.g. to include not only the Listed Buildings but also the Scheduled Monument and RPG. Also, we advise adding an indicator assessing impacts on NDHAs, and referring to heritage assets (rather than historic assets) in what is currently the second indicator. Finally, we query whether the indicator linked with the HER will help to assess the impact of development proposals.</i></p> <p><i>... Regarding the section on landscape, we recommend further consideration be given to the importance of and approach to all sensitive views, not only those that relate to the AONB. We propose revising the relevant decision-making criteria as follows: "Will it incorporate landscape-led development with consideration of long-distance views of the Chilterns AONB and the protection or enhancement of other sensitive views?"</i></p> <p><i>Historic England strongly advises that the Council's conservation team and its archaeological advisors are closely involved throughout the preparation of this SEA. They are best placed to advise on: local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the HER; how the policy or proposal can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets. We have produced guidance for all involved in undertaking SEA/SA exercises which gives advice on issues relating to the historic environment. This can be found here.</i></p> <p><i>...</i></p>	

4 Methodology

4.1 Approach to assessment

- 4.1.1 The assessment process has used the SEA Framework, the review of PPPs, and the baseline (including various mapped data sources) to assess the SPD and its reasonable alternatives. Assessments have been undertaken using this empirical evidence and, to a lesser extent, expert judgement. The precautionary principle⁴² is applied to all assessments.

4.2 Appraisal process

- 4.2.1 When evaluating significance of effect, the SEA draws on criteria in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations, derived from Annex II of the SEA Directive (see **Box 4.1**), and identifies a significance value using the guide in **Table 4.1**.

Box 4.1: Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations⁴³

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations)

- 1. The characteristics of 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 (e.g. 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 transboundary nature of the effects;
 - (d) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. 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;
 - iii. intensive land-use; and
 - (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

⁴² Judgement of 7 September 2004 in case C-127/02 (Waddenzee, paragraph 45).

⁴³ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

Table 4.1: Guide to scoring significant effects

Significance	Definition (not necessarily exhaustive)
Major Negative --	<p>The size, nature and location of a reasonable alternative would be likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanently degrade, diminish or destroy the integrity of a quality receptor, such as a feature of international, national or regional importance; • Cause a very high-quality receptor to be permanently diminished; • Be unable to be entirely mitigated; • Be discordant with the existing setting; and/or • Contribute to a cumulative significant effect.
Minor Negative -	<p>The size, nature and location of a reasonable alternative would be likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not quite fit into the existing location or with existing receptor qualities; and/or • Affect undesignated yet recognised local receptors.
Negligible 0	Either no impacts are anticipated, or any impacts are anticipated to be negligible.
Uncertain +/-	It is entirely uncertain whether impacts would be positive or adverse.
Minor Positive +	<p>The size, nature and location of a reasonable alternative would be likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve undesignated yet recognised receptor qualities at the local scale; • Fit into, or with, the existing location and existing receptor qualities; and/or • Enable the restoration of valued characteristic features.
Major Positive ++	<p>The size, nature and location of a reasonable alternative would be likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance and redefine the location in a positive manner, making a contribution at a national or international scale; • Restore valued receptors which were degraded through previous uses; and/or • Improve one or more key elements/features/characteristics of a receptor with recognised quality such as a specific international, national or regional designation.

4.2.2 The results of the assessment will apply a single value from **Table 4.1** to the corresponding SEA Objective for each reasonable alternative or any other part of the plan which is being assessed as part of the SEA. Justification for the likely impact and corresponding score is presented in an accompanying narrative assessment text.

4.3 Significance

4.3.1 Where an environmental impact has been identified, the significance of effect has been categorised as minor or major. **Table 4.1** lists the significance matrix and explains the terms used. The nature of the significant effect can be either beneficial or adverse depending on the proposal.

- 4.3.2 Each reasonable alternative that has been assessed in the SEA process has been scored according to its predicted performance in relation to the SEA Objectives in the Framework, using the values in **Table 4.1**.
- 4.3.3 It is important to note that the scores are high level indicators. The narrative assessment text which details the key decision-making criteria behind each awarded score should always be read alongside the score. Assumptions and limitations to the scores are presented in **Table 4.4** and **sections 4.7** and **4.8**.
- 4.3.4 Significance of effect is a combination of impact sensitivity and magnitude.

4.4 Impact sensitivity

- 4.4.1 Impact sensitivity is measured through consideration as to how the receiving environment will be impacted by a plan proposal. This includes assessment of the value and vulnerability of the area, whether environmental quality standards will be exceeded, and if impacts will affect, for example, designated areas.
- 4.4.2 A guide to the range of scales used in the impact significance matrix is presented in **Table 4.2**. For most receptors, sensitivity increases with geographic scale.

Table 4.2: *Geographic scales of receptors*

Scale	Typical criteria
International/ national	Designations that have an international aspect or consideration of transboundary effects beyond national boundaries. This applies to effects and designations/receptors that have a national or international dimension.
Regional	This includes the regional and sub-regional scale, including county-wide level and regional areas.
Local	This is the district and neighbourhood scale.

4.5 Impact magnitude

- 4.5.1 Impact magnitude relates to the degree of change the receptor will experience, including the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact. Impact magnitude is determined based on the susceptibility of a receptor to the type of change that will arise, as well as the value of the affected receptor (see **Table 4.3**).

Table 4.3: *Impact magnitude*

Impact magnitude	Typical criteria
High	<p>Likely total loss of or major alteration to the receptor in question;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of a new receptor/feature; or The impact is permanent and frequent.

Impact magnitude	Typical criteria
Medium	<p>Partial loss/alteration/improvement to one or more key features; or</p> <p>The impact is one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent and short-term; • Frequent and reversible; • Long-term (and frequent) and reversible; • Long-term and occasional; or • Permanent and occasional.
Low	<p>Minor loss/alteration/improvement to one or more key features of the receptor; or</p> <p>The impact is one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reversible and short-term; • Reversible and occasional; or • Short-term and occasional.

4.6 Predicting effects

- 4.6.1 SEA is a tool for predicting potential significant effects. Predicting effects relies on an evidence-based approach and incorporates professional judgement. It is often not possible to state with absolute certainty whether effects will occur, as many impacts are influenced by a range of factors such as the design and the success of mitigation measures.
- 4.6.2 The assessments in this report are based on the best available information. Every attempt has been made to predict effects as accurately as possible.
- 4.6.3 SEA operates at a strategic level which uses available secondary data for the relevant SEA Objective. All reasonable alternatives are assessed in the same way using the same method. Sometimes, in the absence of more detailed information, forecasting the potential impacts of development can require making reasonable assumptions based on the best available data and trends.

4.7 Assessment assumptions

- 4.7.1 Assumptions have been used to help incorporate proportionality to the SEA of reasonable alternatives. In terms of published policy guidance, it is assumed that the following policies will apply to Site D-HAL003 and surrounding environments, and have been borne in mind when completing the assessment of reasonable alternatives:
- Adopted VALP 2013 – 2033 policies⁴⁴;
 - The Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024⁴⁵; and

⁴⁴ Buckinghamshire Council (2021) Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2013 – 2033. Available at: https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Aylesbury_local_plan_L46JWaT.pdf [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁴⁵ The Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024. Available at: <https://www.chilternsaonb.org/what-we-do/future-proofing-the-chilterns/management-plan/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

- The NPPF (2023)⁴⁶ and related PPG advice⁴⁷.

4.7.2 Other topic-specific assumptions have been applied to the report. These are presented in **Table 4.4**.

Table 4.4: Assumptions for the SEA Objectives

SEA Objective	Assessment assumptions
1. Biodiversity: Protect, enhance, restore and manage the flora, fauna biodiversity and geodiversity assets of the areas affected by the development of Site D-HAL003.	<p>The biodiversity objective considers adverse impacts of the proposed development at a landscape-scale. It focuses on an assessment of proposed development on a network of designated and undesignated sites, wildlife corridors and individual habitats within and surrounding Site D-HAL003. Receptors include the following:</p> <p>Designated Sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitats sites; (Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar sites). • Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). • National Nature Reserves (NNR). • Local Nature Reserves (LNR). • Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). • Local Geological Sites (LGS). <p>Habitats and Species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient woodland. • Priority habitats. <p>Negative impacts would be expected where the ecological or geological designations listed above may be harmed or lost as a result of proposals. The assessment is largely based on a consideration of the proximity of a site and the attributes and qualities of the receptor in question.</p> <p>For the purposes of this assessment, impacts on priority habitats protected under the 2006 NERC Act⁴⁸ have been considered in the context of Natural England's publicly available Priority Habitat Inventory database⁴⁹. It is acknowledged this may not reflect current local site conditions in all instances.</p> <p>It should be noted that no detailed ecological surveys have been completed by Lepus to inform the assessments made in this report.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the Council will require detailed ecological surveys and assessments to accompany future planning applications. Such surveys will determine on a site-by-site</p>

⁴⁶ DLUHC (2023) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date accessed: 24/10/23]

⁴⁷ DLUHC & MHCLG (2023) Planning Practice Guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁴⁸ Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁴⁹ Natural England (2023) Priority Habitat Inventory (England). Available at: <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/4b6ddab7-6c0f-4407-946e-d6499f19fcde/priority-habitat-inventory-england> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

SEA Objective	Assessment assumptions
	<p>basis the presence of Priority Species and Priority Habitats protected under the NERC Act.</p> <p>It is assumed that the loss of biodiversity assets, such as ancient woodland or an area of priority habitat, are permanent effects.</p> <p>It is assumed that mature trees and hedgerows will be retained where possible.</p> <p>Where development proposals coincide with a Habitats site, a SSSI, NNR, LNR, CWS, CGS or ancient woodland, or are adjacent to a Habitats site, SSSI or NNR, it is assumed that development would have a permanent impact on these nationally important biodiversity and geodiversity assets, and a major negative impact would be expected.</p> <p>Where development proposals coincide with priority habitats, are adjacent to an ancient woodland, LNR, LWS, are located within a SSSI IRZ⁵⁰ which states to “<i>consult Natural England</i>” or are located in close proximity to a Habitats site, SSSI, NNR, LNR or stand of ancient woodland, it is assumed that development would have an impact on these biodiversity assets, and a minor negative impact would be expected.</p> <p>Where a development proposal would not be anticipated to significantly impact a biodiversity asset, a negligible impact would be expected for this objective.</p> <p>Where development proposals would be anticipated to enhance biodiversity through the designation of a biodiversity site, a positive impact would be expected.</p>
<p>2. Climate change: Mitigate and Reduce Site D-HAL003's contribution towards climate change.</p>	<p>Development proposals which would be likely to increase GHG emissions in the local area would make it more difficult for the Council to reduce their contribution towards the causes of climate change.</p> <p>The incorporation of GI within developments presents several opportunities to mitigate climate change, for example, through providing natural cooling to combat the 'urban heat island' effect, reducing the effects of air pollution and providing more pleasant outdoor environments to encourage active travel⁵¹.</p> <p>The increase in GHG emissions caused by new developments is associated with impacts of the construction phase, the occupation and operation of homes and businesses, oil, gas and coal consumption and increases in local road transport with associated emissions. This impact is considered to be permanent and non-reversible.</p>
<p>3. Cultural Heritage: Protect, enhance and manage heritage assets, including designated and non-designated, as well as features and areas of</p>	<p>Impacts on heritage assets will be largely determined by the specific layout and design of the development proposal, as well as the nature and significance of the heritage asset. There is a risk of adverse effects occurring, some of which may be unavoidable. As such, this risk has been reflected in the assessment as a negative impact where a site is in close proximity to heritage assets.</p> <p>Adverse impacts are recorded for options which have the potential to have an adverse impact on sensitive heritage designations, including Grade I, II* and II Listed Buildings,</p>

⁵⁰ Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) are a Geographical Information System (GIS) tool which allow a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks posed by development proposals to: SSSIs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites. They define zones around each site which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicate the types of development proposal which could potentially have adverse impacts.

Natural England (2023) SSSI Impact Risk Zones (England), 07 September 2023. Available at: <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/5ae2af0c-1363-4d40-9d1a-e5a1381449f8/sssi-impact-risk-zones> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁵¹ Landscape Institute (no date) Green Infrastructure (GI). Available at: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/policy/green-infrastructure/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

SEA Objective	Assessment assumptions
and heritage importance.	<p>Scheduled Monuments (SM), Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG), and Conservation Areas. Potential effects on non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) have also been considered.</p> <p>Adverse impacts on heritage assets are predominantly associated with impacts on the existing setting of the asset and the character of the local area, as well as adverse impacts on views of, or from, the asset.</p> <p>Where development proposals are not located in close proximity to any heritage asset, or the nature of development is determined not to affect the setting or character of the nearby heritage asset, a negligible impact would be expected for this objective.</p> <p>When considering any planning application that affects a Conservation Area, authorities must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance⁵². A replacement of a building that currently has a detrimental impact on a Conservation Area could potentially result in a neutral or a minor beneficial effect.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the Council will require a Heritage Statement to be prepared to accompany future planning applications, where appropriate. The Heritage Statement should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposals, including any contribution made by their settings.</p> <p>It is assumed that desk-based assessments will be required on a site-by-site basis for planning proposals which could potentially impact archaeological features (followed by field evaluation / potential trial trenching where appropriate).</p>
<p>4. Landscape: Conserve, enhance, restore and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening their distinctiveness</p>	<p>Impacts on landscape will be largely determined by the specific layout and design of development proposals, as well as the site-specific landscape circumstances. Detailed proposals for each development are uncertain at this stage of the assessment. Therefore, the nature of the potential impacts on the landscape are, to an extent, uncertain. However, there is a risk of negative effects occurring, some of which may be unavoidable. As such, this risk has been reflected in the assessment as a negative impact where a development proposal is located in close proximity to sensitive landscape receptors. The level of impact has been assessed based on the nature and value of, and proximity to, the landscape receptor in question.</p> <p>Where a development proposal would not be anticipated to impact a local or designated landscape, a negligible impact would be expected for this objective. Where the development or enhancement of GI / landscape features is proposed, which could potentially enhance the local landscape character, a minor positive impact is recorded.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the Council will require developers to undertake Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) to accompany any future proposals, where relevant. The LVIAs should seek to provide greater detail in relation to the landscape character of the development proposals and its surroundings, the views available towards the</p>

⁵² Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/section/69> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

SEA Objective	Assessment assumptions
	<p>development, the character of those views and the sensitivity and value of the relevant landscape and visual receptors.</p> <p>Development proposals which are considered to increase the risk of future development spreading further into the wider landscape would be expected to have a minor negative impact on the landscape objective.</p> <p>Development proposals which are considered to reduce the separation between existing settlements and increase the risk of the coalescence of settlements would be expected to have a potential minor negative impact on the landscape objective.</p>

4.8 Limitations

- 4.8.1 SEA is a tool for predicting potential significant effects. Predicting effects relies on an evidence-based approach and incorporates expert judgement. It is often not possible to state with absolute certainty whether effects will occur, as many impacts are influenced by a range of factors such as the design and the success of mitigation measures.
- 4.8.2 The assessments in this report are based on the best available information, including information that is publicly available. Every attempt has been made to predict effects as accurately as possible.
- 4.8.3 All data used to inform the SEA assessments is secondary data provided by Buckinghamshire Council or freely available on the internet.

5 Reasonable alternatives

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 The SEA Regulations require that the SEA process considers “*reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme*” (Regulation 12) and gives “*an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with*” (Schedule 2).
- 5.1.2 The SEA process must record how reasonable alternatives were identified, described, and evaluated. The plan makers must identify all reasonable alternatives, providing an explanation as to their provenance and qualities that qualify them as reasonable.
- 5.1.3 The findings of the SEA can help with refining and further developing these options in an iterative and on-going way. The SEA findings do not form the sole basis for decision-making; other studies, the feasibility of the option and consultation feedback will also contribute to the decision of identifying a preferred option.
- 5.1.4 The SEA results may reveal that there is no single, best performing option. Where there is no obvious discernible difference at a strategic scale, the SEA process will record this as an outcome.

5.2 Identifying and describing reasonable alternatives

- 5.2.1 PPG notes that ‘reasonable alternatives’ are the different realistic options considered by the plan-maker in developing the policies in its plan. It notes that the SEA process should provide conclusions on the overall sustainability of the different alternatives and that the alternatives must be realistic and deliverable⁵³.
- 5.2.2 Reasonable alternatives for a development could constitute:
- Growth alternatives for housing and employment use e.g., the total number of dwellings or employment floorspace across the development area;
 - Alternative site allocations for development; and
 - Alternative policies, including a comparison between the inclusion of policies against the ‘do nothing’ approach.

⁵³ DLUHC & MHCLG (2023) Planning Practice Guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

5.2.3 There are two reasonable alternatives which have been identified during the preparation of the RAF Halton SPD, relating to the layout of the proposed development Site D-HAL003 for evaluation in the SEA process (see **Figure 5.1** and **5.2**):

- **Overall concept masterplan: Option 1:**
 - Retention of Groves and Henderson with parade ground park
 - Grassland and woodland setting
 - Extensive sports and leisure corridor
 - Expanded school and local centre on Upper Icknield Way
 - East-west tree-lined avenue
 - Consolidated parkland corridor at Maitland barracks
 - Development on Maitland parade ground
 - Stables community/leisure use
 - Trenchard Museum stays in situ
- **Overall concept masterplan: Option 2:**
 - Retention of Groves and Henderson with parade ground park
 - Grassland and woodland setting
 - Sports and leisure corridor
 - New school and local centre on Chestnut Avenue
 - Old station building retained
 - Maitland parade ground park
 - Trenchard Museum relocated to former County Museum Resource Centre.

5.2.4 The boundary for Site D-HAL003 is identical in both the masterplan options. The main differences between the masterplan options can be summarised as follows:

- Extent of sports and leisure corridor
- Location of school and local centre
- Location of Trenchard Museum
- Extent of pedestrian and cycle routes
- Location of play provisions

5.2.5 In this instance, a 'do nothing' approach would not be appropriate as a reasonable alternative, as Policy D2 within the adopted VALP requires an SPD to be produced in order to co-ordinate development at Site D-HAL003.

5.2.6 The full assessment of reasonable alternatives, which was provided to the Council in May 2023 to help inform the preparation of the SPD, is presented in **Appendix C. Section 5.3** provides a summary of the key findings from this stage of the SEA process.

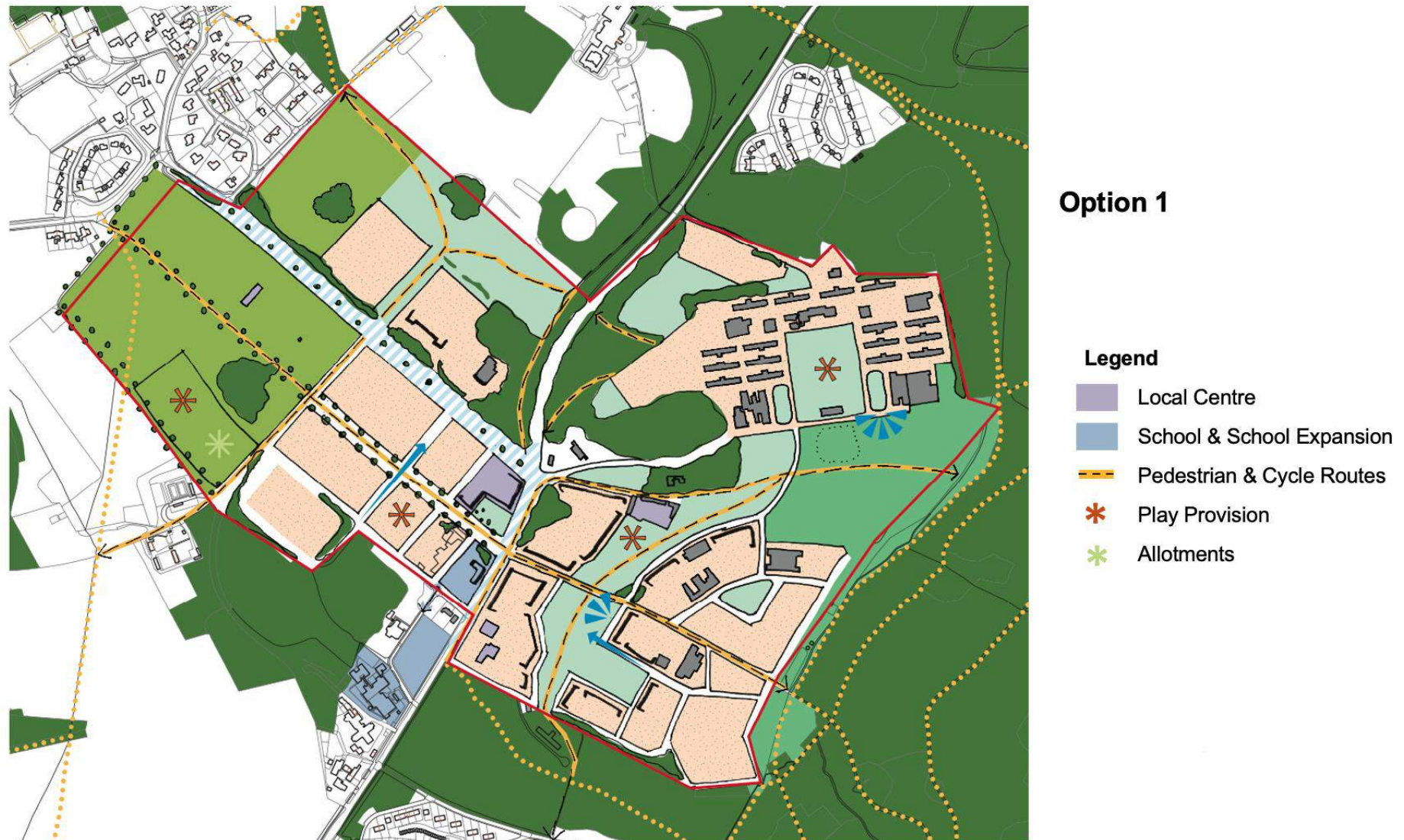


Figure 5.1: Masterplan Layout for Site D-HAL003- Option 1 (Source: Buckinghamshire Council and Hyas)

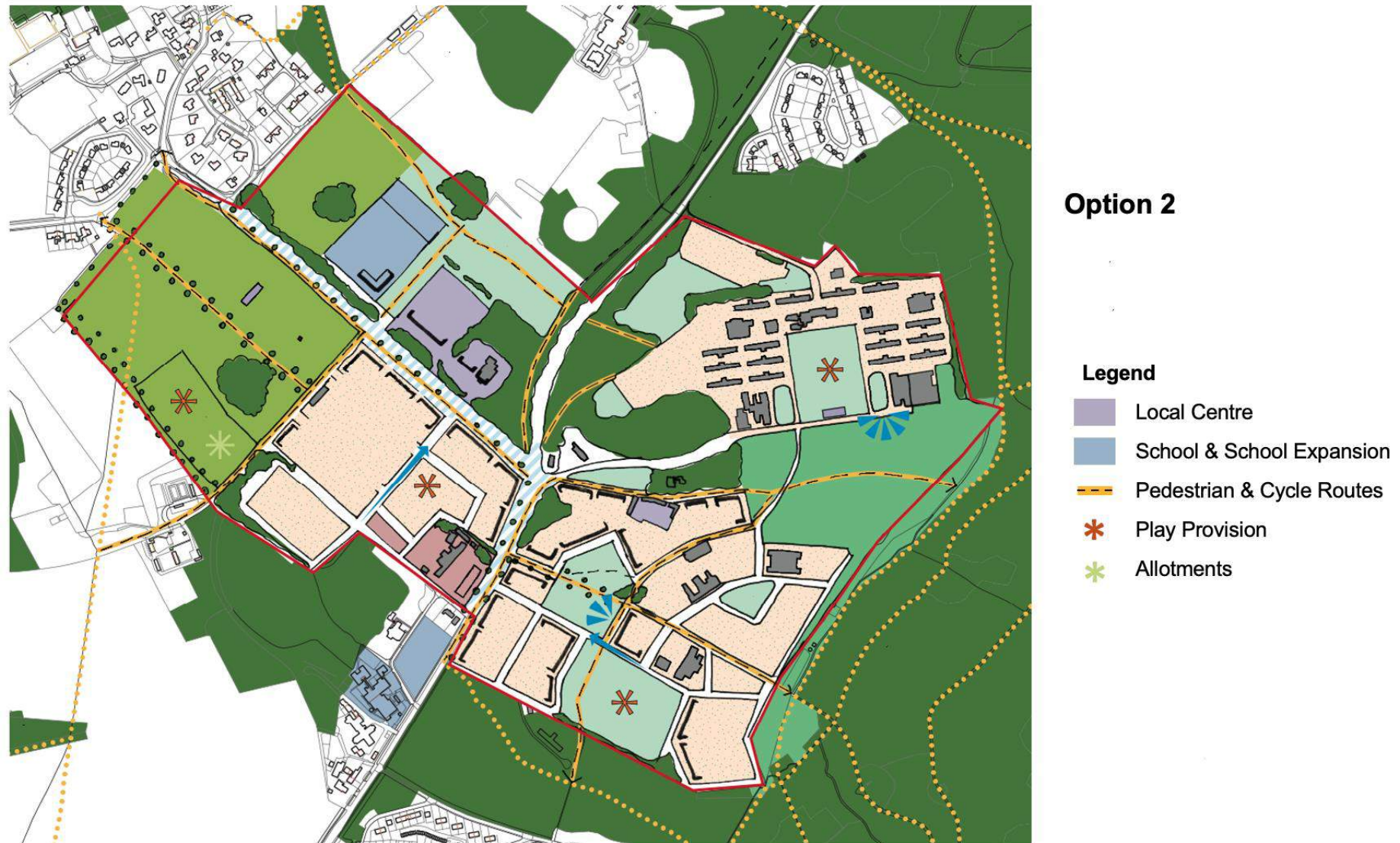


Figure 5.2: Masterplan Layout for Site D-HAL003- Option 2 (Source: Buckinghamshire Council and Hyas)

5.3 Evaluating the reasonable alternatives

- 5.3.1 Each reasonable alternative has been assessed against the SEA Framework and its receptors, which itself focuses on biodiversity, climate change, cultural heritage and landscape. The full assessment against all the receptors is presented in **Appendix C**.
- 5.3.2 Whilst the assessment findings have drawn on the assumptions in **Table 4.4**, all assessment information excludes consideration of detailed mitigation i.e. additional detail or modification to the reasonable alternative that has been introduced specifically to reduce identified environmental effects of that site. Presenting assessment findings in this way facilitates transparency to the decision makers.
- 5.3.3 The impact matrices for each reasonable alternative assessed in the SEA have been brought together in **Tables 5.1 to 5.4**. These impacts should be read in conjunction with the assessment text narratives in **Appendix C**, as well as the topic-specific methodologies and assumptions presented in **Chapter 4**.
- 5.3.4 Since the boundary and proposed development is the same in both options, it can be observed that both reasonable alternatives perform similarly across the identified SEA Objectives, prior to mitigation considerations. The assessment of reasonable alternatives can be summarised as follows:
- For **SEA Objective 1 'Biodiversity, flora and fauna'**, the details proposed within the two options regarding the layout of Site D-HAL003 are likely to perform similarly at the strategic scale. Both options were scored positively for the receptor 'biodiversity net gain' and negatively for receptors 'habitat sites', 'SSSI IRZs' and 'ancient woodland', in line with the precautionary principle. Both options would need to consider the requirements for SANG and SAMM in line with the strategic mitigation approach for Chilterns Beechwoods SAC.
 - The difference in overall performance of the reasonable alternatives for **SEA Objective 2 'Climate Change'** is insignificant as both options propose the same overall level of housing growth, leading to potential adverse effects in terms of increase in energy consumption and GHG emissions, and both would locate the site end users wholly within Flood Zone 1 leading to positive effects. The only difference can be observed is in terms of connectivity of GI, where Option 1 could potentially perform slightly better than Option 2.
 - As identified in the assessment for **SEA Objective 3 'Cultural Heritage'**, the proposed development under either of the layout options has the potential to impact the setting of heritage assets within and around Site D-HAL003 in a similar manner at a strategic level, except that Option 2 could perform slightly better owing to its layout that could potentially retain the existing character and setting of the locally listed and non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) to a greater extent than Option 1. Both Options were score negatively across all the receptors (Listed Buildings, CA, SM, RPG and NDHAs) as a precautionary measure.
 - Given the proximity of Site D-HAL003 to the Chilterns AONB and local landscape designations within the site, both options would tend to perform similarly and potentially result in minor negative impact for **SEA Objective 4 'Landscape'**. Both Options are likely to have a positive impact on the receptor 'provision of multifunctional greenspace' and negative impact on the receptor 'AAL and LLA'.

Table 5.1: Summary of reasonable alternative assessments for SEA Objective 1 biodiversity, flora and fauna

Reasonable alternative	Habitats site	SSSI (IRZ)	Ancient woodland	Local Nature Reserve	Priority habitat	Biodiversity Net Gain	Overall score for SEA1
Option 1	-	-	-	0	0	+	-
Option 2	-	-	-	0	0	+	-

Table 5.2: Summary of reasonable alternative assessments for SEA Objective 2 climate change

Reasonable alternative	Green Infrastructure	GHG emissions	Flood Zone	Overall score for SEA2
Option 1	+	-	+	-
Option 2	+	-	+	-

Table 5.3: Summary of reasonable alternative assessments for SEA Objective 3 cultural heritage

Reasonable alternative	Listed Buildings	Conservation Area	Scheduled Monument	Registered Parks and Gardens	Non-designated Heritage Assets	Overall score for SEA3
Option 1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Option 2	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 5.4: Summary of reasonable alternative assessments for SEA Objective 4 landscape

Reasonable alternative	Chilterns AONB	Alteration of views from PRoW network	Provision of multi-functional greenspace	AAL and LLA	Overall score for SEA4
Option 1	-	0	+	-	-
Option 2	-	0	+	-	-

5.3.5 The assessment findings from the evaluation of reasonable alternatives were fed back to the Council to aid their decision-making process (as presented in **Appendix C**). This is discussed further in **section 6.1** in terms of how the Council considered the assessment findings, alongside other considerations, to identify the preferred option for the SPD.

6 The preferred approach

6.1 Selection and rejection of reasonable alternatives

- 6.1.1 PPG states that the Environmental Report accompanying the SPD should outline the reasons why alternatives were selected and the reasons that the rejected options were not taken forward.
- 6.1.2 As discussed in **section 5.3** and **Appendix C**, the two reasonable alternatives perform similarly in the SEA, with no single, best performing option identified owing to the small-scale differences identified between the options. Drawing on this information, the Council identified that:
- 6.1.3 *“Accepting the site allocation is for the re-development of an existing developed site in the Green Belt there were limited alternative options that could be followed. Two alternatives were considered as described in the assessment of reasonable alternatives report. The SEA assessment found little difference between the two alternative options being assessed for the site. Both had some minor positive and negative points. For example, Option 1 could potentially result in a greater benefit for GI when compared to Option 2, owing to the greater extent of GI links through the proposed “east-west treelined avenue”. Both options could potentially impact on the historic heritage of the site depending on the success of the conversion of existing listed barrack blocks and other heritage buildings. Both options could adversely affect the registered park and garden and the adjacent scheduled monument. Option 2 could perform better in terms of retention of the existing character and setting of the non-designated heritage assets, including maintaining the openness of the parade ground. Both Option 1 and 2 could potentially lead to an alteration of the landscape character owing to the introduction of approximately 1,000 new homes as a result both options could potentially have a negative impact on the setting of the AONB. However, despite the slight differences between the two options there was nothing significant that would direct the team towards one option over the other.*
- 6.1.4 *Given the almost neutral assessment officers decided the best option was a combination of the two alternatives picking the best ideas for the site. For instance, the chosen school location off Chestnut Avenue enables a lower form of development adjacent to the registered park and garden thus enhancing the parkland setting. The decision to replace the proposed tree lined avenue in option one with a series of interlinked green spaces enables the retention of a local heritage asset the former train station building whilst still retaining the benefits of a tree lined space. The proposed relocation of the Trenchard Museum enables the existing building to be utilised by the community while focusing heritage artifacts on the museum site.*
- 6.1.5 *The combined option chosen allows the site to deliver on its policy requirements whilst maximising the benefits of the proposed development”.*

6.2 Preferred option

- 6.2.1 For the Concept Masterplan, a composite approach using elements of both Options 1 and 2 (see **Figure 6.1**) has been considered as the best approach for Site D-HAL003. As set out in the SPD and discussed in **section 6.1**, the Council identified this approach taking into account feedback from workshops and technical advice from stakeholders, as well as the SEA.
- 6.2.2 **Table 6.1** presents an assessment of the likely significant effects associated with the SPD in relation to the SEA Objectives of biodiversity, cultural heritage, landscape and climate change.
- 6.2.3 Each of the topic sections have drawn on information presented in the SEA Scoping Report and **Chapter 3** in terms of baseline, impacts and key issues for the area affected by the SPD.
- 6.2.4 The assessment includes consideration of the impacts arising as a consequence of the inter-relationship between the different topics and identify secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects where they arise.

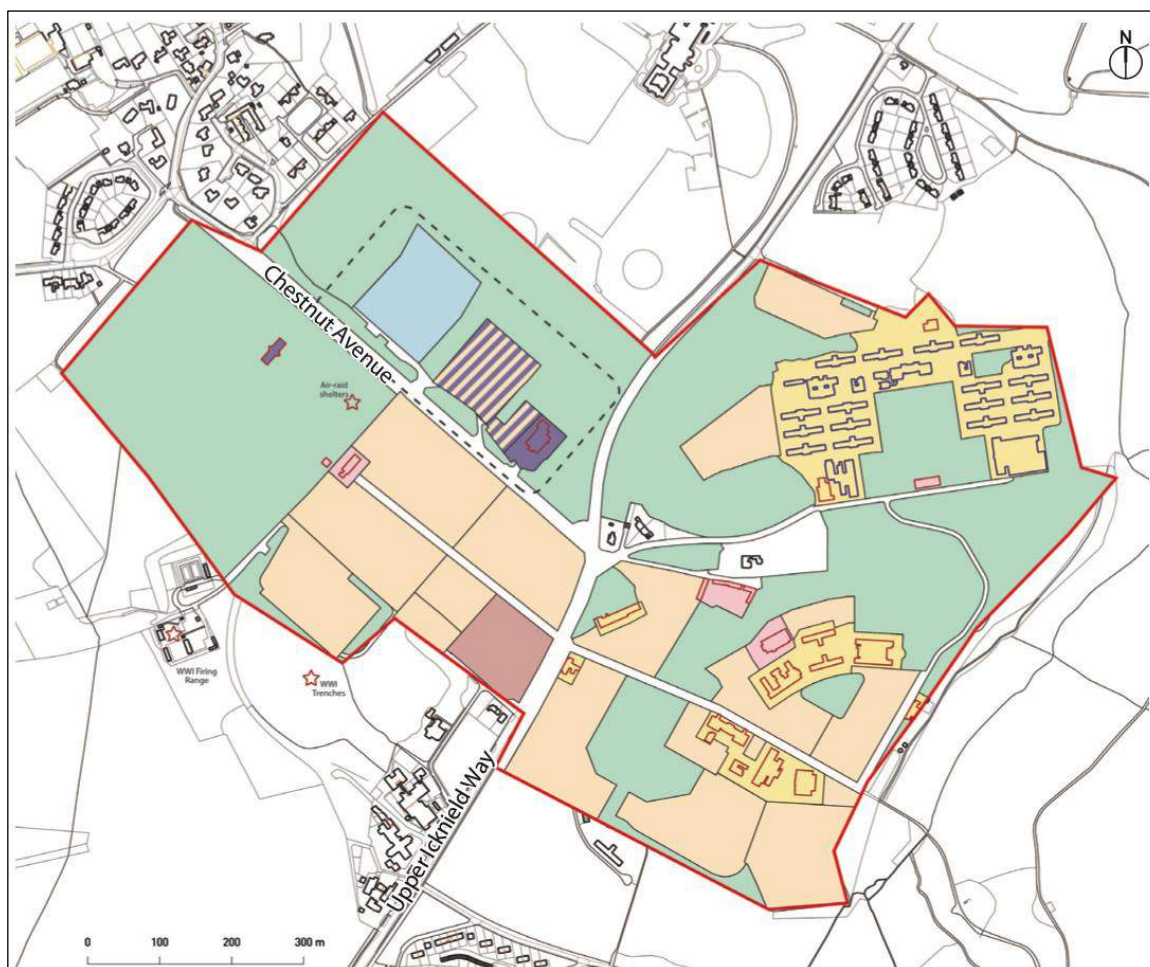


Fig. 4: Land use

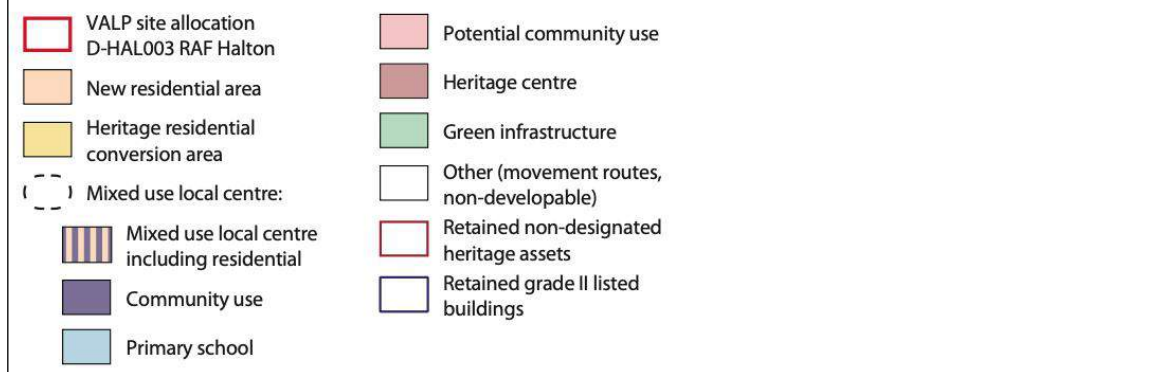


Figure 6.1: Proposed land uses for Site D-HAL003 (source: RAF Halton SPD)

Table 6.1: Summary of identified impacts by SEA Objective

Identified sustainability effects of the RAF Halton SPD
<p>Objective 1: Biodiversity, flora and fauna</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site D-HAL003 is an operational RAF base and therefore largely comprises previously developed land occupied by existing buildings, roads and footpaths, car parking and hardstanding areas. However, the undeveloped land within the site boundary features several biodiversity assets including priority habitat (some extents of deciduous woodland, and a small area of traditional orchard) and a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) known as 'N & SW of Haddington Hill'. A stand of ancient woodland, 'Hale Wood', lies adjacent to the site. Whilst in many cases these habitats can be conserved alongside development, as the proposed development will not utilise any previously undeveloped land within the site boundary, it is possible that fragmentation or degradation of habitats and connections between habitats could occur as a result of development-related threats and pressures during both construction and occupation. This could lead to direct and cumulative effects associated with fragmentation of the existing ecological networks and protected habitats/ species, with indirect or secondary impacts on reduction of genetic diversity and loss of species richness. Site D-HAL003 lies within an IRZ which flags "<i>residential development with net gain in residential units</i>" as a potential threat. As such, there may be potential for adverse effects on the reasons for designation of nearby SSSIs that should be explored through consultation with Natural England. Potential adverse recreational impacts have been identified upon the Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI component of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC from Site D-HAL003, owing to its location within the identified Zone of Influence (ZOI). This is discussed further in the HRA⁵⁴.
<p>Objective 2: Climate change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The introduction of 1,000 or more new dwellings will inevitably cause an increase in energy consumption, pollution, and traffic during both the construction and occupancy stages, to some extent, resulting in an increase in GHG emissions. It is therefore expected that the development at Site D-HAL003 could potentially have an adverse impact on climate change, to some extent. An increase in carbon emissions is likely to contribute towards cumulative effects which exacerbate national and global climate change issues such as extreme weather events. The proposed incorporation of GI within the site alongside the residential development and other hard infrastructure will be expected to help offset GHG emissions, to some extent, and will be expected to provide areas of shade and shelter which may have beneficial impacts in terms of adapting to climate change. Although Site D-HAL003 is located wholly within Flood Zone 1, with likely benefits in terms of situating new development away from areas currently at risk of fluvial flooding, some areas of the site are susceptible to surface water flooding. Furthermore, it is possible that all types of flood risk will become more prevalent in future years due to higher flood plain levels and climate change introducing more extreme weather events including higher volumes of rainfall.

⁵⁴ Lepus Consulting (2023) Habitats Regulations Assessment of RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document. Habitats Regulations Assessment Report, December 2023

Identified sustainability effects of the RAF Halton SPD

Objective 3: Cultural heritage

- Site D-HAL003 and the surrounding area contains an array of distinctive heritage assets and historic areas recognised through designations including various Listed Buildings, SMs and an RPG, as well as a range of locally listed and NDHAs. According to Historic England's listing data, seven Grade II Listed Buildings (which incorporates the 16 blocks associated with the Groves and Henderson Barracks) lie within the site boundary, and the east of the site coincides with an SM known as 'long barrow 200m east of parade ground'. Halton Conservation Area lies just over 100m from the site boundary. The site intersects with Halton House Grade II RPG, which is also listed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register⁵⁵. The proposed development has potential to cause a negative impact on cultural heritage, in relation to these heritage assets and their settings. In particular, the proposed development has the potential to irreversibly change the setting of Halton House Grade II* Listed Building and Halton House Grade II RPG, potentially resulting in a significant adverse impact.
- The Archaeology Data Service shows records of physical archaeological evidence within and surrounding the site boundary⁵⁶. This includes records of known features as well as digs and excavations, some of which resulted in archaeological finds. Development on Site D-HAL003 could potentially directly impact archaeological remains, both discovered and undiscovered, with potential adverse effects.

Objective 4: Landscape

- The Chilterns AONB occupies partially elevated land and is located adjacent to the site, to the east. The boundary of the AONB is currently being reviewed and could potentially change to encompass the RAF Halton site area owing to the natural beauty and intrinsic character of the landscape in this area surrounding the existing AONB⁵⁷. New development can lead to the loss of landscape features and changes to landscape character and views, as well as potential reduction in tranquility owing to traffic generated by the new development. The proposed development at Site D-HAL003 could potentially have a negative impact on the surrounding landscape by altering the setting of, and the views from, the Chilterns AONB. Adverse effects may also arise in combination with development proposals at other locations in the Vale of Aylesbury, with the potential to result in a cumulative adverse impact on views from more sensitive locations within the designated landscape.
- Site D-HAL003 coincides with other locally designated landscapes such as 'Halton' Local Landscape Area (LLA) and 'Halton/Wendover' Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL), which may be sensitive to development owing to the wide and undulating character associated with chalk geology. The proposed development could be threat to the landscape character as the site has the potential to adversely impact surrounding areas that have otherwise remained largely open and undeveloped.

⁵⁵ Historic England (2023) Halton House, Halton / Aston Clinton - Buckinghamshire (UA) (2023). Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/list-entry/26108> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁵⁶ Archaeology Data Service (2018) ARCHSEARCH. Available at: <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁵⁷ Chilterns AONB Boundary Review Update (January, 2023) Available at: <https://www.chilternsaonb.org/news/chilterns-aonb-boundary-review-update-january-2023/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

6.3 Mitigation considerations

- 6.3.1 The mitigation hierarchy is a sequential process that operates in the following way: firstly, if possible, negative impacts should be avoided. Failing this, the nature of the effect should be reduced, if possible, so that it is no longer significant. If neither avoidance nor reduction is feasible, compensation measures should be considered.

Table 6.2: Summary of mitigation measures by SEA Objective

Mitigation considerations for the RAF Halton SPD
Objective 1: Biodiversity, flora and fauna
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed development at Site D-HAL003 must be in accordance with VALP policies including Policies NE1 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity), I1 (Green Infrastructure) and NE8 (Trees, hedgerows and woodlands) which seek to protect and enhance designated sites, protected habitats/species and GI, and deliver biodiversity net gain. The built development on site will therefore be expected to conserve the existing priority habitat and LWS on site, and improve the biodiversity value of the site as a whole. Biodiversity net gain of at least 10% will be delivered on site in line with national requirements, and in accordance with the Biodiversity Accounting SPD for Buckinghamshire⁵⁸ to ensure that best practice is followed. This could lead to longer term positive effects on biodiversity if net gains are successful. VALP Policy D-HAL003 states that “<i>Provision of 50% green infrastructure, to reflect the high level of open space already present on the site including green corridors, to link to other new development areas and the wider countryside</i>”. This is reflected in the Open Space and Green / Blue Infrastructure provisions within the SPD. This includes an enhanced “<i>green corridor</i>” to include amenity space, tree planting, as well as allotments and community orchards which may provide additional space for nature. The SPD also states that the biodiversity value of existing woodland and grassland habitats will be retained between the two planned neighbourhoods. As set out in section 4.3 of the SPD, the development at the RAF Halton site will be in compliance with the established Mitigation Strategy for the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC at Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI, which requires a financial contribution for each net new home within the 12.6km ZOI (SAMM)⁵⁹ and provision of a bespoke SANG in line with the guidelines provided by Buckinghamshire Council⁶⁰. The DIO has commissioned a SANG Preliminary Management Plan Strategy for RAF Halton⁶¹ to demonstrate that suitable SANG can be delivered at the site in compliance with Buckinghamshire Council's guidelines. The Strategy illustrates how capacity can be achieved for 1,000 new homes at a SANG capacity of 8ha per 1000 population. It also sets out how each quality criteria will be met including provision of a

⁵⁸ Buckinghamshire Council (2022) Biodiversity Net Gain – Supplementary Planning Document. Available at: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-document-biodiversity-net-gain/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁵⁹ Buckinghamshire Council. November 2022. Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation at Ashridge Commons and Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest and the Habitats Regulations Assessment. Statement of Common Ground Between Dacorum Borough Council; Buckinghamshire Council; Central Bedfordshire Council; and St. Albans City and District Council. Available at: <https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s52744/Agreement%20to%20the%20Statement%20of%20Common%20Ground%20for%20the%20Ashridge%20Commons%20and%20Woods%20Site%20of%20Special%20Scien.pdf> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁶⁰ Buckinghamshire Council (2023) Guidelines for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace. Available at: <https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Buckinghamshire-Council-Guidelines-for-Suitable-Alternative-Natural-Greenspace.pdf> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁶¹ WSP (2023) RAF Halton Aylesbury. SANG + Preliminary Management Plan Strategy – High Level Position Statement Summary.

Mitigation considerations for the RAF Halton SPD

circular walking route. Finally, it outlines the requirements for a SANG Management Plan which will include information on implementation of the required quality criteria, costing and funding, maintenance in perpetuity and monitoring.

Objective 2: Climate change

- The SPD sets out measures for mitigating and adapting to climate change including through reducing energy use, promotion of energy efficiency measures and use of renewable energy throughout the development, in line with Policy C3 of the VALP. This includes carrying out a feasibility assessment to explore the potential for district heating/cooling systems and decentralised energy schemes.
- The SPD states that *“bespoke, sustainable architecture and landscape architecture will deliver beautiful places to live which support Buckinghamshire’s commitment to addressing the climate emergency and increasing the development’s resilience to climate change”*, which will help to ensure opportunities for adaptive techniques and energy efficient design are considered.
- The SPD states that SuDS will be integrated into the development, seeking to deliver multi-functional benefits including *“providing semi-natural habitat value alongside surface water flood mitigation”*.
- The SPD will ensure the new community is in line with the AGT Principles as set out in VALP Policy D1, which states *“new garden communities should be designed to be resilient places that allow for changing demographics, future growth and the impacts of climate change by anticipating opportunities for technological change including renewable energy measures and 5G”*.
- The emerging Halton Neighbourhood Plan⁶² has proposed improved provision of public transport to Wendover and Aylesbury, and other improvements to the local transport network such as Policy HAL15 ‘Provision of foot and cycle paths’ and Policy HAL16 ‘Traffic Mitigation’. Taking into account these emerging projects, the SPD seeks connection and integration with the development in Wendover, through strategic walking and cycling routes with Aylesbury Town Centre to support active travel, thus reducing reliance on private cars and potentially helping to reduce associated GHG emissions.
- The SPD, in alignment with VALP Policy D-HAL003, also sets out provision of a primary school, a local centre, car parks and retention of existing sports facilities, to provide community facilities to the new residents that are in closer proximity and in a highly accessible location, which will help to reduce the need to travel further afield to access day-to-day services.

Objective 3: Cultural heritage

- The SPD, in line with the site-specific requirement of VALP Policy D-HAL003, seeks to ensure the *“conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their setting whilst ensuring viable uses consistent with their conservation”*, such as the conversion of Groves and Henderson Barracks to residential use.
- Drawing on Halton Parish Council’s aspirations for the local area identified in their emerging Neighbourhood Plan for Halton Parish, the importance of delivering *“a distinctive place which reflects its RAF and Rothschild heritage”* has been emphasised within the SPD, which includes *“securing a future for Halton House, its gardens and parkland; The Trenchard Museum; the McCudden Flight Centre; the First World War Trenches; the historic windows in St Georges Church; the RAF Hangars; the RAF Halton Circle⁶³; Pill Boxes and shelters”*.

⁶² Halton Parish Council (2023) Draft Halton Neighbourhood Plan 2023-2033. Available at: <https://www.halton-pc.gov.uk/community/halton-parish-council-20383/draft-halton-neighbourhood-plan/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁶³ NB: The RAF Halton Airfield Circle relates to a grass runway marker, which falls outside the SPD area.

Mitigation considerations for the RAF Halton SPD

- Various VALP policies, such as BE1 (Heritage Assets) seeks to ensure that development in RAF Halton minimises impacts on heritage assets. According to the VALP, all development should seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, including their setting, and seek enhancement wherever possible.
- Retention of the significant features associated with RAF Halton's military and cultural heritage in addition to creating an attractive and legible residential neighbourhood has been addressed in the SPD. As stated in the development principle, RAF Halton's *"history as an estate parkland and military base will be evident in the design of the new neighbourhoods. Heritage assets will be retained and repurposed, including a new parade ground park. A heritage trail and new museum hub will encourage wider interest in Halton's history"*. These measures will help to improve understanding and awareness of the historic environment.
- With regard to Halton House RPG, the SPD proposes this to *"become publicly accessible green space with an estate parkland character including groups of trees and woodland in keeping with its historic role as part of the Halton House estate"*; through careful consideration of layout and design, this will provide the opportunity to conserve and enhance the RPG including opening up views to Halton House, better revealing its historic significance. The SPD seeks to improve the setting of Halton House whilst minimising negative visual impacts arising from the new development.

Objective 4: Landscape

- The VALP sets out policies and strategic objectives for the built environment. This provides guidelines for new buildings and seeks to ensure that all development conserves and enhances the natural, built and historic environment of the site. VALP Policies NE3 and NE4 focus on ensuring new developments conserve and enhance the Chilterns AONB, landscape character and locally important landscapes. Policy BE2 will ensure that the design of new development reflects local distinctiveness and is in keeping with surroundings.
- VALP Policy D-HAL003 states that the development proposal at RAF Halton must *"be planned in a manner that responds positively to the best characteristics of the surrounding area using a landscape-led approach, taking account of the character and setting of the Chilterns AONB"*.
- The need for creating a *"strong landscape structure for the development, with green infrastructure accounting for 50% of the site area, focussing on the existing mature landscape of the site and connecting this with the surrounding AONB and Green Belt landscape"* has been addressed in the SPD. A carefully planned and well- managed GI network, as advocated by the VALP, will be expected to minimise intrusion on the nationally important landscape of the Chilterns AONB. The proposed integration of green corridors and open spaces alongside high-quality built development will help to promote strong placemaking, with benefits to local character and distinctiveness.
- The SPD states that *"an exceptional design response"* will be required to ensure the high-quality setting and heritage of the local area is conserved. Requirements set out in the SPD will help to ensure that the height and density of buildings reflects the existing buildings within and surrounding the site, and that *"in important gateway or corner locations a particularly high quality and well considered design response is required given their visibility"*.

6.4 Residual effects and recommendations

6.4.1 Following consideration of mitigation measures as outlined in **Table 6.2**, the following conclusions have been made, as presented in **Table 6.3**, regarding the residual effects of the SPD.

Table 6.3: Summary of identified residual effects by SEA Objective

SEA topic	Identified residual effects	SEA score
Objective 1: Biodiversity, flora and fauna	<p>The HRA⁶⁴ concluded that, on the basis that financial contributions will be made towards SAMM and implementation of effective SANG is possible through the SANG Preliminary Management Plan Strategy, appropriate mitigation can be delivered to ensure there is no adverse impact upon the integrity of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC from development at RAF Halton alone.</p> <p>Provisions in the SPD and VALP will be expected to ensure that biodiversity, flora and fauna on site and in the surrounding areas are conserved and enhanced, and that biodiversity net gain is delivered. Overall, it is considered that a minor positive impact on biodiversity, flora and fauna could be achieved.</p>	+
Objective 2: Climate change	<p>The VALP and SPD set out various requirements which aim to help mitigate the adverse impacts relating to climatic factors. The SPD seeks to ensure that climate change impacts are minimised through incorporating sustainable designs and construction techniques including the re-use of buildings where possible. However, the implementation of these requirements would not be expected to fully mitigate the adverse impacts associated with net increases in GHGs, arising from domestic and road transport sources. A minor negative impact is identified.</p> <p>An increase in carbon emissions is likely to be a long term but potentially temporary significant effect.</p>	-
Objective 3: Cultural heritage	<p>Provisions in the SPD and VALP will be expected to ensure that designated and non-designated heritage assets within and surrounding the site are conserved and enhanced in line with their significance. In accordance with the VALP, the SPD will ensure a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is prepared to inform planning applications, which would include archaeological considerations. The SPD seeks to meet the recommendations of Historic England officers. Provided that these recommendations are satisfied, and that any further findings identified through the HIA, or once development begins, are carefully considered in consultation with Historic England, it is considered that the development would not lead to a significant residual adverse effect on cultural heritage. A negligible impact is identified.</p>	0

⁶⁴ Lepus Consulting (2023) Habitats Regulations Assessment of RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document. Habitats Regulations Assessment Report, December 2023

SEA topic	Identified residual effects	SEA score
Objective 4: Landscape	<p>The SPD, drawing on the requirements of the VALP, sets out a positive framework for pursuing a landscape-led design and layout which incorporates 50% of the site area for GI. The SPD will help to ensure that the character and setting of the Chilterns AONB (including the surrounding LLA/AAL) is conserved and enhanced; an LVIA will be prepared to help inform the planning application. Provided that the recommendations and any further mitigation identified in the LVIA are incorporated into the masterplan, in consultation with the Chilterns AONB Conservation Board and other relevant consultees, it is anticipated that adverse effects on the landscape will be minimised.</p> <p>Overall, it is considered that the development would not lead to a significant residual adverse effect on landscape. A negligible impact is identified.</p>	0

6.4.2 Therefore, the SPD is considered to have potential to lead to a residual minor adverse effect in relation to climate change (SEA Objective 2).

6.4.3 **Table 6.4** outlines further recommendations which may help to mitigate or offset identified adverse impacts, or further enhance the sustainability of the SPD.

Table 6.4: Recommendations to further improve sustainability of the SPD

SEA topic	Recommendations
Objective 1: Biodiversity, flora and fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SPD should seek to incorporate the aims, objectives and principles of the Biodiversity Action Plan to ensure that the land can be effectively managed to support Buckinghamshire's biodiversity beyond protected sites and sites managed for wildlife, and seek to embrace the priorities of the future publications from the Natural Environment Partnership including the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The development should secure management and monitoring of biodiversity features on and off-site, and consider opportunities for enhancing connectivity of the wider ecological networks associated with designated biodiversity sites, including ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees. The SPD should seek to ensure that all tree planting and GI enhancements use native species, or locally important species, where possible. Tree planting should be informed by a qualified arboriculturalist, and it should be ensured that trees are in appropriate locations with management procedures in place to ensure they establish well, and their health is maintained.

SEA topic	Recommendations
Objective 2: Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for increasing the proportion of trips made through sustainable transport should be understood and pursued, in line with the hierarchy of decarbonisation recommended in the RTPI's Net Zero Transport paper⁶⁵. • In line with the NPPF, the SPD should seek to prioritise renewable and low carbon energy sources, opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers. Energy statements could be required in order to demonstrate how carbon emissions have been minimised for the development over its lifetime. • The SPD could seek Net Zero design principles to be prepared for the construction and operation of the site, such as with reference to the guide prepared by LETI⁶⁶. • Ensure that new buildings are sited and designed to cope with climate change impacts (e.g. green roofs, improved water efficiency, good ventilation) and to minimise energy consumption (e.g. reducing solar gain in summer).
Objective 3: Cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with Historic England and the Council's Conservation team / archaeological advisors is recommended with respect to the local historic environment and HER, and to inform the nature and design of the site. • Where there is potential for development to adversely affect a heritage asset, including the setting of that asset, an assessment should be undertaken to establish the extent of this potential effect as per guidelines provided by Historic England⁶⁷. Historic England have also produced specific advice on rural planning⁶⁸ and guidance on the management of Conservation Areas⁶⁹. The findings of any such assessment should be used to inform planning applications for the site. • Where the opportunity exists, proposals should seek to increase the awareness of cultural heritage assets in the local area. • The SPD should promote innovative re-use of existing building stocks, including developments which would improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings and take into account their embodied carbon value when considering their retention and re-use, versus their replacement. The Council should refer to Historic England's guidance on keeping historic buildings in good repair⁷⁰. • As noted in the SPD, Historic England have made several recommendations and should continue to be consulted throughout the development process. This includes updating the Conservation Management Plan for Halton House RPG, removal of existing building blocks which are not in keeping with the setting of surrounding heritage assets, and ensuring that the development is informed by a HIA.

⁶⁵ RTPI (2021) Net Zero Transport: the role of spatial planning and place-based solutions. Available at: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2020/june/net-zero-transport-the-role-of-spatial-planning-and-place-based-solutions/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁶⁶ LETI (2020) Climate Emergency Design Guide: How new buildings can meet UK climate change targets. Available at: http://b80d7a04-1c28-45e2-b904-e0715cfac93.filesusr.com/ugd/252d09_3b0f2acf2bb24c019f5ed9173fc5d9f4.pdf [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁶⁷ Historic England (2017) The Setting of Heritage Assets - Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁶⁸ Historic England (2023) Rural Planning. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/rural-planning/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁶⁹ Historic England (2023) Designating and Managing a Conservation Area. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/conservation-areas/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁷⁰ Historic England (2023) Stopping the Rot: A guide to enforcement action to save historic buildings. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/stoppingtherot/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

SEA topic	Recommendations
Objective 4: Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close working with the Chilterns Conservation Board and Natural England is recommended to ensure that future development takes into account any proposed changes to the Chilterns AONB boundary and the implications this may have for the RAF Halton site or its surroundings⁷¹. • It is anticipated that an LVIA will be required to accompany any future proposals, where relevant, given the proximity of the AONB. The LVIA should seek to provide greater detail in relation to the landscape character of the proposal and its surroundings, the views available towards the development proposal, the character of those views and the sensitivity and value of the relevant landscape and visual receptors. The SPD should make this requirement clear to ensure that the design and development is informed by these processes. • Landscaping proposals should include the use locally important native tree and hedge species, and development should be guided by the Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment for the Wendover Foothills⁷². Where screening is considered appropriate, guidelines for species selection and conditions for screening foliage are provided by the Royal Horticultural Society⁷³.

⁷¹ Chilterns AONB Boundary Review Update (January, 2023) Available at: <https://www.chilternsaonb.org/news/chilterns-aonb-boundary-review-update-january-2023/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁷² Jacobs (2008) Aylesbury Vale District Council & Buckinghamshire County Council Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment: LCA 10.4 Wendover Foothills. Available at: <https://buckinghamshire.gov.uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/lca-104-wendover-foothills.pdf> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁷³ Royal Horticultural Society (2017) Plants for Screening. Available at: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=636> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

7 Monitoring

7.1 Monitoring proposals

- 7.1.1 Regulation 17(1) of the SEA Regulations states that “*The responsible authority shall monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of each plan or programme with the purpose of identifying unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and being able to undertake appropriate remedial action*”.
- 7.1.2 According to Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations, the Environmental Report should also provide information on a “*description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring*”.
- 7.1.3 The monitoring requirements typically associated with the SEA process are recognised as placing heavy demands on authorities with SEA responsibilities. For this reason, the proposed monitoring framework should focus on those aspects of the environment that are likely to be negatively impacted upon, where the impact is uncertain or where particular opportunities for improvement might arise.
- 7.1.4 The purpose of monitoring is to measure the environmental effects of a plan, as well as to measure success against the plan’s objectives. It is therefore beneficial if the monitoring strategy builds on monitoring systems that are already in place. Monitoring is particularly useful in answering the following questions:
- Were the assessment’s predictions of sustainability effects accurate?
 - Does the development contribute to the achievement of desired sustainability objectives?
 - Are mitigation measures performing as well as expected?
 - Are there any unforeseen adverse effects, and if so, are these within acceptable limits, or is remedial action required?
- 7.1.5 The SEA guidance suggests that SEA monitoring and reporting activities can be integrated into the regular planning cycle. As part of the monitoring process, Buckinghamshire Council are required to prepare Annual Monitoring Reports⁷⁴. It is anticipated that elements of the SEA monitoring programme for the development could be incorporated into these processes. The monitoring targets are informed by the SEA Framework and its indicators (see **Appendix A**).
- 7.1.6 Whilst the SEA process has not identified any significant negative effects associated with the development it is considered that monitoring may be beneficial to ensure the successful implementation of recommended mitigation and enhancement measures set out within the SPD. Monitoring suggestions are provided in **Table 7.1**.
- 7.1.7 It is recommended that impact of the development proposals in the SPD over the SPD area are reviewed at least annually.

⁷⁴ Buckinghamshire Council (2023) Planning Reports. Available at: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/planning-reporting/#:~:text=The%20Buckinghamshire%20Council%20Authority%20Monitoring,much%20development%20is%20taking%20place> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

Table 7.1: Proposals for monitoring adverse sustainability impacts of the SPD

Indicators for SEA Objective 1: Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	Target
Number of new residents which generate adverse impacts on sites of biodiversity importance, such as the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC	Zero
Area and condition of sites designated for biodiversity interest	Increase
Quality and extent of priority habitats (habitats of principal importance)	Increase
Amount of biodiversity net gain provided in new developments measured using the DEFRA biodiversity metric	Increase – at least 10%
Visitor surveys to monitor successful implementation and effectiveness of the SANG	TBC – to be informed by the emerging SANG Strategy
Indicators for SEA Objective 2: Climate Change	Target
Extent and connectivity of multi-functional GI	Increase
Proximity to, and frequency of, public transport links and cycling and walking infrastructure for new development	Increase
Number or percentage of new homes which incorporate adaptive techniques, such as passive heating/cooling, SuDS and drainage designed for 'exceedance' events	Increase
Average energy efficiency of new buildings	Increase
Carbon emissions from domestic and transport sources	Decrease
Amount of renewable energy generated	Increase
Indicators for SEA Objective 3: Cultural Heritage	Target
Impact on the setting or significance of designated heritage assets	Zero
Impact on the setting or significance of non-designated heritage assets	Zero
Number of heritage assets on the Heritage at Risk register	Zero
Condition of heritage assets on the Heritage at Risk register (including Halton House)	Increase
Indicators for SEA Objective 4: Landscape	Target
Use of locally sourced materials	Increase
Re-use of brownfield land and/or derelict buildings	Increase
Planning applications granted permission contrary to the advice of the Chilterns AONB Conservation Board	Zero
Extent of local PRoWs	Increase
Area of new greenspace created per capita	Increase
Change in tranquility in the open countryside	Zero

- 7.1.8 Details of any monitoring programme are, at this stage, preliminary and may evolve over time based on the results of consultation and the identification of additional data sources, for example through the LVIA and HIA to be prepared alongside planning applications for the site, and as part of the emerging SANG Management Plan in terms of ensuring the SANG is monitored and maintained in perpetuity.

8 Conclusion and next steps

8.1 Overview

8.1.1 This document constitutes an Environmental Report for the purposes of the SEA Regulations, in order to:

- Provide an outline of the contents and main objectives of the SPD and its relationship with other relevant plans;
- Consider the environmental protection objectives established at international, national or community level and how these objectives are relevant to the SPD;
- Assess the likely significant effects on the environment caused by the SPD (including biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, and cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors);
- Give details of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the SPD;
- Give 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; and
- Include a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.

8.1.2 The assessment of reasonable alternatives identified that the two options performed similarly in the SEA, with no single, best performing option identified owing to the small-scale differences between the layouts.

8.1.3 The Council are pursuing the approach as set out in the SPD, based on the various findings and documents comprising their evidence base and the adopted VALP⁷⁵ policies.

8.1.4 Prior to mitigation considerations, the SEA identified potential negative effects as a result of the proposed development on:

- **Biodiversity, flora and fauna** – increased risk of development-related threats and pressures on habitats and ecological corridors, including the adjacent ancient woodland, and potential adverse recreational impacts on the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC (Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI component);
- **Climate change** – due to an increase in energy consumption, pollution, and traffic during both the construction and occupancy stages associated with the development of at least 1,000 dwellings;
- **Cultural heritage** – in particular, potential impacts on the setting of surrounding Listed Buildings (both designated and non-designated), areas of archaeological remains and the setting of Halton House RPG; and

⁷⁵ Buckinghamshire Council (2021) Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2013 – 2033. Available at: https://buckinghamshire.gov.uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Aylesbury_local_plan_L46JWaT.pdf [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

- **Landscape** – including potential direct or cumulative adverse effects on the setting of, and views from, the Chilterns AONB which lies adjacent to the site, as well as potential alteration of the character of locally designated landscapes (LLA and AAL).
- 8.1.5 The implementation of the SPD would also be anticipated to result in a range of positive effects including the opportunity to provide new homes, community facilities and pedestrian routes for the enjoyment of current and future residents, as well as having the potential to deliver enhanced multi-functional GI and biodiversity net gain.
- 8.1.6 Various provisions proposed within the SPD and policies outlined in adopted VALP would further help to ensure that future development takes into account the surrounding built and natural environment, heritage assets and landscape character.
- 8.1.7 The SEA has considered the extent to which each of the identified adverse effects could be mitigated through provisions within the SPD itself or within the adopted VALP policies.
- 8.1.8 Following consideration of mitigation measures (see **Table 6.2**), as well as the outputs of the emerging HRA and other evidence base documents, residual adverse effects have been ruled out for the following topics (see **Table 6.3**):
- **Biodiversity, flora and fauna** – provided that the SAMM and SANG requirements are effectively implemented to mitigate adverse recreational effects at the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, and taking into account the proposed conservation and enhancement of biodiversity assets including at least 10% biodiversity net gain, it is considered that a minor positive impact could be achieved.
 - **Cultural heritage** – provided that the recommendations from Historic England are met, and the development is informed by the forthcoming HIA, a significant residual adverse effect on cultural heritage is considered unlikely and an overall negligible effect has been identified.
 - **Landscape** – provided that the development is informed by any recommendations and mitigation identified in the forthcoming LVIA, a significant residual adverse effect on landscape is considered unlikely and an overall negligible effect has been identified.
- 8.1.9 However, a residual adverse effect has been identified for the following topic (see **Table 6.3**):
- **Climate change** – a residual minor adverse effect is identified, associated with a likely increase in GHG emissions during both construction and occupation.
- 8.1.10 Several recommendations have been made in this SEA report (see **Table 6.4**) to potentially enhance the sustainability of the proposals within the SPD or to provide further clarity regarding certain issues.

8.2 Next steps

- 8.2.1 This Environmental Report will be subject to consultation with the statutory bodies and the public.
- 8.2.2 Following the consultation period, responses will be considered by the Council to inform the final version of the SPD. If the Council members vote in favour of the RAF Halton SPD, the SPD will become adopted as part of the statutory development plan.
- 8.2.3 SEA Regulations 16.3(c) (iii) and 16.4 require that a 'statement' be made available to accompany the plan, as soon as possible after the adoption of the plan or programme, known as a post-adoption statement. The purpose of the SEA statement is to outline how the SEA process has influenced and informed the SPD development process and demonstrate how consultation on the SEA has been taken into account.
- 8.2.4 In accordance with the SEA Regulations, the statement should contain the following information:
- The reasons for choosing the preferred policies for the SPD as adopted in the light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with;
 - How environmental considerations have been integrated into the SPD;
 - How consultation responses have been taken into account; and
 - Measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the SPD.

8.3 Commenting on the Environmental Report

- 8.3.1 Any comments on this SEA Report should be directed through Buckinghamshire Council.

Appendix A: SEA Framework

	SEA Objective	Decision making criteria	Indicators
1	Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna: Protect, enhance, restore and manage the flora, fauna, biodiversity and geodiversity assets of the areas affected by the development of Site D-HAL003.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it result in a net loss or a net gain for biodiversity? Will it protect or enhance wildlife sites or biodiversity? Will it protect sites and habitats designated for nature conservation including protected species? Will it protect and enhance the water environment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new residents which generate adverse impacts on sites of biodiversity importance, such as the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC. Area and condition of sites designated for biodiversity interest. Provision and connectivity of multi-functional green infrastructure. Quality and extent of priority habitats (habitats of principal importance). Amount of biodiversity net gain provided in new developments measured using the DEFRA biodiversity metric.
2	Climate Change: Mitigate and reduce Site D-HAL003's contribution towards climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it reduce emissions from transport and the built environment? Will it help to reduce reliance on private car use? Will it encourage renewable energy generation or use of energy from renewable or low-carbon sources? Will it reduce flood risk? Will it conserve water resources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision and connectivity of green infrastructure. Proximity to, and frequency of, public transport links and cycling and walking provision for new development. Implementation of adaptive techniques, such as passive heating/cooling, SuDS and drainage designed for 'exceedence' events. Carbon emissions from domestic and transport sources.
3	Cultural Heritage: Protect, enhance and manage sites, features and areas of historic and cultural importance, including their setting. This includes both designated and non-designated heritage assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it conserve buildings of special architectural or historic interest, lead to the repair and adaptive re-use of those assets and encourage high quality design? Will it improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings, without unacceptably harming their significance? Will it conserve or enhance archaeological sites and features, and their settings? Will it conserve or enhance the setting or character of cultural heritage assets or areas and provide for increased access to and enjoyment of the historic environment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on the heritage significance of designated heritage assets. Impact on the heritage significance of non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) Number and condition of heritage assets on the Heritage at Risk register (including Halton House)

SEA Objective	Decision making criteria	Indicators
<div data-bbox="192 244 235 518">4</div> <div data-bbox="235 244 607 518"> Landscape: Conserve, enhance, restore and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening their distinctiveness. </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it protect and enhance the character of the landscape and local distinctiveness? • Will it re-use previously developed land or existing buildings? • Will it protect and enhance visual amenity, including light and noise pollution? • Will it incorporate landscape-led development with consideration of long-distance views of the Chilterns AONB and the protection or enhancement of other sensitive views? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of locally sourced materials. • Re-use of brownfield land and/or derelict buildings. • Is development in-keeping with surroundings (e.g. character of Wendover)? • Protection of local PRoWs. • Area of new greenspace created per capita

Appendix B: Plans, Policies and Programmes Review

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP in relation to biodiversity, flora and fauna
UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) ⁷⁶	The aims of the Convention include the conservation of biological diversity (including a commitment to significantly reduce the current rate of biodiversity loss), the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.
Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979) ⁷⁷	The Convention seeks to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats, and to monitor and control endangered and vulnerable species.
Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora 1992 (the Habitats Directive) ⁷⁸	<p>The main aim of the Habitats Directive is to promote the maintenance of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species listed on the Annexes to the Directive at a favourable conservation status, introducing robust protection for those habitats and species of European importance. In applying these measures Member States are required to take account of economic, social and cultural requirements, as well as regional and local characteristics. The provisions of the Directive require Member States to introduce a range of measures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain or restore European protected habitats and species listed in the Annexes at a favourable conservation status as defined in Articles 1 and 2; • Contribute to a coherent European ecological network of protected sites by designating Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for habitats listed on Annex I and for species listed on Annex II. These measures are also to be applied to Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under Article 4 of the Birds Directive. Together SACs and SPAs make up the Natura 2000 network (Article 3); • Ensure conservation measures are in place to appropriately manage SACs and ensure appropriate assessment of plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of an SAC. Projects may still be permitted if there are no alternatives, and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In such cases compensatory measures are necessary to ensure the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network (Article 6); • Member States shall also endeavour to encourage the management of features of the landscape that support the Natura 2000 network (Articles 3 and 10); • Undertake surveillance of habitats and species (Article 11); • Ensure strict protection of species listed on Annex IV (Article 12 for animals and Article 13 for plants); and • Report on the implementation of the Directive every six years (Article 17), including assessment of the conservation status of species and habitats listed on the Annexes to the Directive.
The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the Habitats regulations) ⁷⁹	This transposes into national law the Habitats Directive and also consolidates all amendments that have been made to the previous 1994 Regulations. This means that competent authorities have a general duty in the exercise of any of their functions to have regard to the Directive.

⁷⁶ UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/legal/cbd-en.pdf> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

⁷⁷ Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979) Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680078aff> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

⁷⁸ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:31992L0043> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

⁷⁹ The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitats Regulations) Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2017/1012/contents/made> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP in relation to biodiversity, flora and fauna
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018) ⁸⁰	<p>The document sets out government action to help achieve natural world regain and retain good health. The main goals of the 25YEP are to achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean air; • Clean and plentiful water; • Thriving plants and wildlife; • A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought; • Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently; and • Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment. <p>The Environment Act (2021) embeds several of these aspects into new legislation.</p>
Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 ⁸¹	<p>The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023 for England is the first revision of the 25YEP. It builds on the 25YEP vision with a new plan setting out how the government will work with landowners, communities and businesses to deliver each of the goals for improving the environment, matched with interim targets to measure progress. Taking these actions will help to restore nature, reduce environmental pollution, and increase the prosperity of our country.</p>
DEFRA: Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services (2011) ⁸²	<p>England's biodiversity strategy 2020 ties in with the EU biodiversity strategy in addition to drawing links to the concept of ecosystem services. The strategy's vision for England is: <i>"By 2050 our land and seas will be rich in wildlife, our biodiversity will be valued, conserved, restored, managed sustainably and be more resilient and able to adapt to change, providing essential services and delivering benefits for everyone"</i>.</p> <p>The Strategy's overall mission is: <i>"to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people"</i>.</p>
TCPA: Biodiversity by Design: A Guide for Sustainable Communities (2004) ⁸³	<p>The development process should consider ecological potential of all areas including both greenfield and brownfield sites. Local authorities and developers have a responsibility to mitigate impacts of development on designated sites and priority habitats and species and avoid damage to ecosystems.</p>
National Planning Policy Framework (2023) ⁸⁴	<p>The NPPF includes guidance on promoting the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. It requires the planning system to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils; • recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;

⁸⁰ A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

⁸¹ DEFRA (2023) Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

⁸² DEFRA (2011) Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (2011) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-2020-a-strategy-for-england-s-wildlife-and-ecosystem-services> [Date accessed: 05/10/23]

⁸³ TCPA: Biodiversity by Design: A Guide for Sustainable Communities (2004) Available at: https://library.uniteddiversity.coop/ECovillages_and_Low_Impact_Development/Biodiversity%20by%20Design.pdf [Date accessed: 05/10/23]

⁸⁴ DLUHC (2023) National Planning Policy Framework Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date accessed: 05/10/23]

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP in relation to biodiversity, flora and fauna
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures; • preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and • remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
<p>Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network (2010)⁸⁵</p>	<p>The Making Space for Nature report, which investigated the resilience of England's ecological network to multiple pressures, concluded that England's wildlife sites do not comprise a coherent and resilient ecological network. The report advocates the need for a step change in conservation of England's wildlife sites to ensure they are able to adapt and become part of a strong and resilient network. The report summarises what needs to be done to improve England's wildlife sites to enhance the resilience and coherence of England's ecological network in four words; more, bigger, better, and joined. There are five key approaches which encompass these, which also take into account of the land around the ecological network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the quality of current sites by better habitat management. • Increase the size of current wildlife sites. • Enhance connections between, or join up, sites, either through physical corridors, or through 'stepping stones'. • Create new sites. • Reduce the pressures on wildlife by improving the wider environment, including through buffering wildlife sites.
<p>The England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024 (2021)⁸⁶</p>	<p>The Trees Action Plan sets out how the Government will tackle the challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change, in line with the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan. The plan provides a strategic framework for implementing the Nature for Climate Fund and outlines over 80 policy actions the government is taking over this Parliament to help deliver this vision. Planting vastly more trees in England, and protecting and improving our existing woodlands, will be key to the government's plan to achieve net zero and to create a Nature Recovery Network across the length of England.</p>
<p>The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature. The Natural Environment White Paper (2011)⁸⁷</p>	<p>Published in June 2011, the Natural Environment White paper sets out the Government's plans to ensure the natural environment is protected and fully integrated into society and economic growth. The White Paper sets out four key aims:</p> <p>(i) <u>Protecting and improving our natural environment</u></p> <p>There is a need to improve the quality of our natural environment across England, moving to a net gain in the value of nature. It aims to arrest the decline in habitats and species and the degradation of landscapes. It will protect priority habitats and safeguard vulnerable non-renewable resources for future generations. It will support natural systems to function more effectively in town, in the country and at sea. It will achieve this through joined-up action at local and national levels to create an ecological network which is resilient to changing pressures.</p> <p>(ii) <u>Growing a green economy</u></p> <p>The ambition is for a green and growing economy which not only uses natural capital in a responsible and fair way but also contributes to improving it. It will properly value the stocks and flows of natural capital. Growth will be green because it is intrinsically linked to the health of the</p>

⁸⁵ Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network (2010) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/making-space-for-nature-a-review-of-englands-wildlife-sites-published-today> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

⁸⁶ DEFRA (2021) England Trees Action Plan 2021 to 2024. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-trees-action-plan-2021-to-2024> [Date accessed: 06/10/23]

⁸⁷ The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature. The Natural Environment White Paper. (HM Government 2011) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-natural-choice-securing-the-value-of-nature> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP in relation to biodiversity, flora and fauna
	<p>country's natural resources. The economy will capture the value of nature. It will encourage businesses to use natural capital sustainably, protecting and improving it through their day-to-day operations and the management of their supply chains.</p> <p>(iii) <u>Reconnecting people and nature</u></p> <p>The ambition is to strengthen the connections between people and nature. It wants more people to enjoy the benefits of nature by giving them freedom to connect with it. Everyone should have fair access to a good-quality natural environment. It wants to see every child in England given the opportunity to experience and learn about the natural environment. It wants to help people take more responsibility for their environment, putting local communities in control and making it easier for people to take positive action.</p> <p>(iv) <u>International and EU leadership</u></p> <p>The global ambitions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> internationally, to achieve environmentally and socially sustainable economic growth, together with food, water, climate and energy security; and to put the EU on a path towards environmentally sustainable, low-carbon and resource-efficient growth, which is resilient to climate change, provides jobs and supports the wellbeing of citizens.
Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2013 - 2033 ⁸⁸	The adopted VALP, which allocates Site D-HAL003, sets out various policies which will protect and enhance the local environment, including those focused on biodiversity.
Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Biodiversity Action Plan 2030 ⁸⁹	<p>The Forward to 2030 Biodiversity Action Plan aims to reverse biodiversity decline by working together to create more, bigger, better and more joined-up habitats across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes by 2030. Key aims of the BAP are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Retain, enhance, expand and create priority habitats everywhere, with a focus on BOAs and strategically-identified areas 2. Increase the overall land area of wildlife-important habitats and of land positively managed for wildlife and high nature value habitats 3. Enhance existing habitats and improve habitat condition 4. Create and manage buffers around existing and new areas of priority habitat and other core and high-quality biodiversity and habitat sites following best practice guidelines 5. Connect quality habitats across the landscape to enable species movement across larger areas to improve habitat and species resilience to external pressures, with a focus on connectivity within and between BOAs as well as into the wider landscape 6. Improve people's connectedness with nature, so that communities across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes value and understand the role of nature in mental and physical wellbeing 7. Ensure biodiversity is a key factor in the design of the urban environment and of new developments
Vision and Principles for the Improvement of Green Infrastructure in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (2016) and the	The NEP, in conjunction with its experts and Partners across the sectors, has approved a new Vision and Principles for Green Infrastructure in Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes, along with a set of 9 Principles which should be followed to achieve the Vision by 2030. The new Vision and Principles responds to expected unprecedented levels of housing growth and emphasises the need for well-designed and planned, connected green infrastructure managed into the long term, to contribute to the delivery of objectives and targets for Buckinghamshire's environment, health and economy, including in responding to consultations on Local Plans.

⁸⁸ Buckinghamshire Council (2021) Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2013 – 2033. Available at: https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Aylesbury_local_plan_L46JWaT.pdf [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁸⁹ Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (2021) Forward to 2030: Biodiversity Action Plan. Available at: <https://bucksmknep.co.uk/forward-to-2030/#:~:text=The%20BAP%20includes%20agreed%20targets,chalk%20downland%2C%20woodlands%20and%20wetlands> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP in relation to biodiversity, flora and fauna
accompanying GI opportunities mapping (2018) ⁹⁰	
Technical Note: RAF Halton - Ecology (2022) ⁹¹	Prepared by WSP, the technical note summarises the ecological technical evidence gathered to date by the DIO to support masterplan development for at least 1,000 units on the allocated Barracks Site at RAF Halton, including the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which identified site of biodiversity importance within the site and the surrounding area, and a baseline assessment for biodiversity net gain which indicated the biodiversity units on site.

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP for climate change
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) ⁹²	Sets an overall framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle the challenge posed by climate change.
IPCC Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1997) ⁹³	Commits member nations to reduce their emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, or engage in emissions trading if they maintain or increase emissions of these gases.
EU Sustainable Development Strategy (2006) ⁹⁴	This Strategy identifies key priorities for an enlarged Europe. This includes health, social inclusion and fighting global poverty. It aims to achieve better policy integration in addressing these challenges, and to ensure that Europe looks beyond its boundaries in making informed decisions about sustainability. The Sustainable Development Strategy was reviewed in 2009 and <i>“underlined that in recent years the EU has mainstreamed sustainable development into a broad range of its policies. In particular, the EU has taken the lead in the fight against climate change and the promotion of a low-carbon economy. At the same time, unsustainable trends persist in many areas and the efforts need to be intensified”</i> . Sustainable development is a key focus of the EU and the strategy continues to be monitored and reviewed.
UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009) ⁹⁵	The UK has committed to sourcing 15% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020 – an increase in the share of renewables from about 2.25% in 2008. The Renewable Energy Strategy sets out how the Government will achieve this target through utilising a variety of mechanisms to encourage Renewable Energy provision in the UK. This includes streamlining the planning system, increasing investment in technologies as well as improving funding for advice and awareness raising.

⁹⁰ Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (2018) Vision and Principles for the Improvement of Green Infrastructure. Available at: <https://bucksmlnep.co.uk/projects/vision-and-principles-for-the-improvement-of-green-infrastructure/#:~:text=The%20new%20Vision%20and%20Principles,for%20Buckinghamshire's%20environment%2C%20health%20and> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

⁹¹ WSP (2022) Technical note: RAF Halton – Ecology

⁹² UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) Available at: <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf> [Date accessed: 06/10/23]

⁹³ IPCC Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1997) Available at: <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/kpeng.pdf> [Date accessed: 06/10/23]

⁹⁴ EU Sustainable Development Strategy (2006) Available at: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/policy-documents/renewed-eu-strategy-for-sustainable-development> [Date accessed: 06/10/23]

⁹⁵ UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-renewable-energy-strategy> [Date accessed: 06/10/23]

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP for climate change
UK Renewable Energy Roadmap Update (2013) ⁹⁶	This is the second update to the 2011 Renewable Energy Roadmap. It sets out the progress that has been made and the changes that have occurred in the sector over the past year. It also describes the continuing high ambitions and actions along with the challenges going forward.
The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan (2009) ⁹⁷	<p>The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan sets out how the UK will meet the Climate Change Act's legally binding target of 34 per cent cut in emissions on 1990 levels by 2020. It also seeks to deliver emissions cuts of 18% on 2008 levels. The main aims of the Transition Plan include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producing 30% of energy from renewables by 2020; • Improving the energy efficiency of existing housing; • Increasing the number of people in 'green jobs'; and • Supporting the use and development of clean technologies.
National Planning Policy Framework (2023) ⁹⁸	<p>The NPPF includes guidance on climate change, flooding, and coastal change. Plans should take account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape. New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure. To increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts); • consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and • identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers. • Local Plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development to avoid where possible flood risk to people and property and manage any residual risk, taking account of the impacts of climate change, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applying the sequential test and then, if necessary, applying the exception test; • safeguarding land from development that is required for current and future flood management; • using opportunities offered by new development to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding; and • where climate change is expected to increase flood risk so that some existing development may not be sustainable in the long-term, seeking opportunities to facilitate the relocation of development, including housing, to more sustainable locations.
Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 ⁹⁹	The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023 for England is the first revision of the 25YEP. It builds on the 25YEP vision with a new plan setting out how the government will work with landowners, communities and businesses to deliver each of the goals for improving the

⁹⁶ UK Renewable Energy Roadmap Update Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-renewable-energy-roadmap-second-update> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

⁹⁷ The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-low-carbon-transition-plan-national-strategy-for-climate-and-energy> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

⁹⁸ DLUHC (2023) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

⁹⁹ DEFRA (2023) Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP for climate change
	<p>environment, matched with interim targets to measure progress. Taking these actions will help to restore nature, reduce environmental pollution, and increase the prosperity of our country. To mitigate and adapt to climate change, the EIP sets out to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on our progress and plans to reach net zero • Publish a Land Use Framework in 2023, setting out how we will balance multiple demands on our land including climate mitigation and adaptation • Publish the third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) in 2023 that will set out our five year strategy to build the UK's climate resilience • Continue our role as a global leader in tackling climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation and push for an integrated approach to international action
Department for Transport: An Evidence Base Review of Public Attitudes to Climate Change and Transport Behaviour (2006) ¹⁰⁰	This is a summary report of the findings of an evidence base review investigating the research base on public attitudes towards climate change and transport behaviour.
Energy Saving Trust: Renewable Energy Sources for Homes in Urban Environments (2005)	This document provides information about the integration of renewable energy sources into new and existing dwellings in urban environments. It covers the basic principles, benefits, limitations, costs and suitability of various technologies.
HM Government: The Road to Zero (2018) ¹⁰¹	This report outlines how the Government will support the transition to zero-emission road transport. This includes measures to reduce emissions from vehicles including specific targets for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs), promoting low- and zero- emission cars and developing high quality electric vehicle infrastructure networks.
The Climate Crisis: A Guide for Local Authorities on Planning for Climate Change (2021) ¹⁰²	<p>This guide is intended as an introduction to some of the key issues associated with the climate crisis, to ensure that Local Planning Authorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that tackling the climate crisis is at the heart of the vision for the future of our communities; 2. Recognise how vital planning is to securing that vision – both directly, through facilitating the extension of renewable energy generation, and strategically, through practical nature-based solutions and design actions that can promote sustainable travel, urban cooling, or natural flood defence; and 3. Finally, recognise how many of the actions necessary to tackle the climate crisis are also key in creating healthy, ecologically rich, prosperous and beautiful places for us and for future generations. <p>The guide is intended as a starting point on the vital journey to put in place practical solutions which will halt the rise in temperatures and begin to reverse the climate crisis.</p>

¹⁰⁰ Department for Transport: An Evidence Base Review of Public Attitudes to Climate Change and Transport Behaviour (2006) Available at: <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.180.9540&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹⁰¹ HM Government (2018) The Road to Zero: Next steps towards cleaner road transport and delivering out Industrial Strategy. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/739460/road-to-zero.pdf [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹⁰² TCPA & RTPI (2021) The Climate Crisis: A Guide for Local Authorities on Planning for Climate Change. Available at: https://tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/tcpa-rtpi-climateguide_oct2021_final.pdf [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP for climate change
DECC Energy White Paper: Meeting the Energy Challenge (2007) ¹⁰³	<p>Sets out Government's long-term energy policy, including requirements for cleaner, smarter energy; improved energy efficiency; reduced carbon emissions; and reliable, competitive and affordable supplies. The White Paper sets out the UK's international and domestic energy strategy, in the shape of four policy goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aiming to cut CO₂ emissions by some 60% by about 2050, with real progress by 2020; • maintaining the reliability of energy supplies; • promoting competitive markets in the UK and beyond; and • ensuring every home is heated adequately and affordably.
Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2013 - 2033 ¹⁰⁴	<p>The adopted Local Plan, which allocates Site D-HAL003, sets out various policies which will protect and enhance the local environment, including those which seek to reduce contributions towards the causes of climate change.</p>
Buckinghamshire Council: Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy (2021) ¹⁰⁵	<p>The strategy seeks to reduce emissions, improve air quality and adapt to climate change and sets out the following targets to achieve aims through various objectives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve net zero carbon emissions across council operations no later than 2050 and possibly before this, potentially by 2030, subject to resources. • Support communities to achieve net zero carbon emissions <p>The strategy guides activity for nearly 30 years, and sets out actions required to meet the targets outlined within the document.</p>
Aylesbury Transport Strategy (2017) ¹⁰⁶	<p>The strategy is intended to address current issues on the transport network and accommodate future planned growth. Additionally, it allows for the single coordinated approach to planning improvements and contains objectives aimed at improving transport connectivity within Aylesbury town, air quality and pollution and accessibility to other urban centres and new growth areas outside Aylesbury town, such as the site of the RAF Halton SPD.</p>
Buckinghamshire County Council: Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (2017) ¹⁰⁷	<p>The strategy seeks to explain the current understanding of flood risk across the county and ensure that development does not increase flood risk, for example through encouraging the use of sustainable drainage techniques and working with natural processes.</p>

¹⁰³ DECC Energy White Paper: Meeting the Energy Challenge Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/meeting-the-energy-challenge-a-white-paper-on-energy> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹⁰⁴ Buckinghamshire Council (2021) Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2013 – 2033. Available at: [https://buckinghamshire.gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Aylesbury_local_plan_L46JWaT.pdf](https://buckinghamshire.gov.uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Aylesbury_local_plan_L46JWaT.pdf) [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

¹⁰⁵ Buckinghamshire Council (2021) Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy. Available at: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/environment/climate-change-and-sustainability/view-the-climate-change-and-air-quality-strategy/climate-change-and-air-quality-strategy/> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹⁰⁶ AECOM (2017) Aylesbury Transport Strategy. Available at: <https://buckinghamshire.gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/aylesbury-transport-strategy-final-jan-17.pdf> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹⁰⁷ Buckinghamshire County Council (2017) Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. Available at: <https://buckinghamshire.gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/bcc-lfrms-final-version-may-2017.pdf> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP for climate change
Aylesbury Vale District Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (May 2017) ¹⁰⁸	This Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) 2017 document considers all sites identified for potential allocation within the VALP, including the RAF Halton Site HAL003. The document will be used to inform decisions on the location of future development and the preparation of sustainable policies for the long-term management of flood risk. The SFRA identified that Site HAL003 would not require a Level 2 SFRA as it is entirely within Flood Zone 1, although the report also notes that "There are some minor surface water routes following the existing roads on site. This level of risk can be managed through design of site drainage".

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP for cultural heritage
Council of Europe: Convention on the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (1985) ¹⁰⁹	Aims for signatories to protect their architectural heritage by means of identifying monuments, buildings and sites to be protected; preventing the disfigurement, dilapidation or demolition of protected properties; providing financial support by the public authorities for maintaining and restoring the architectural heritage on its territory; and supporting scientific research for identifying and analysing the harmful effects of pollution and for defining ways and means to reduce or eradicate these effects.
Council of Europe: The Convention on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (Revised) (Valetta Convention) (1992) ¹¹⁰	The convention defines archaeological heritage and identifies measures for its protection. Aims include integrated conservation of the archaeological heritage and financing of archaeological research and conservation.
National Planning Policy Framework (2023) ¹¹¹	<p>The NPPF and related guidance given within the PPG includes direction on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. It seeks to ensure local authorities plan recognise heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner that reflects their significance. Local planning authorities should take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring; the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

¹⁰⁸ JBA Consulting (2017) Aylesbury Vale District Council Level 1 Flood Risk Assessment, Final Report May 2017. Available at: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-development-plans-and-guidance/local-development-plans/> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹⁰⁹ Council of Europe: Convention on the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (1985). Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/herein-system/council-of-europe> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹¹⁰ Council of Europe: The Convention on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (Revised). Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/herein-system/council-of-europe> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹¹¹ DLUHC (2023) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP for cultural heritage
Heritage 2020: strategic priorities for England's historic environment 2015-2020 ¹¹²	<p>Over the next five years the commitment to the Heritage 2020 framework will achieve a step change in the understanding, valuing, caring and enjoyment of the historic environment of England. The vision concentrates on five strategic areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovery, identification & understanding • Constructive conservation and sustainable management • Public engagement • Capacity building • Helping things to happen.
Historic England: Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (2008) ¹¹³	<p>This Historic England document sets out the framework for the sustainable management of the historic environment. This is presented under the following six headline 'principles':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle 1: The historic environment is a shared resource • Principle 2: Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment • Principle 3: Understanding the significance of places is vital • Principle 4: Significant places should be managed to sustain their values • Principle 5: Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent • Principle 6: Documenting and learning from decisions is essential.
Historic England (2015) The Historic Environment in Local Plans, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 1 ¹¹⁴	<p>This advice note provides information to assist Local Authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing historic environment policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the related guidance given in the National Planning Practice Guide (PPG).</p>
Historic England (2015) Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 ¹¹⁵	<p>The purpose of this Historic England Good Practice Advice note is to provide information in relation to assessing the significance of heritage assets, using appropriate expertise, historic environment records, recording and furthering understanding, neglect and unauthorised works, marketing and design and distinctiveness.</p>

¹¹² Heritage Environment Forum (2015) Heritage 2020: strategic priorities for England's historic environment 2015-2020. Available at: https://historicenvironmentforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Heritage2020-framework-text-2016-06-20_final.pdf [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹¹³ Historic England: Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (2008). Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹¹⁴ Historic England (2015) The Historic Environment in Local Plans, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 1. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa1-historic-environment-local-plans/> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹¹⁵ Historic England (2015) Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa2-managing-significance-in-decision-taking/> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP for cultural heritage
Historic England (2015) The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 ¹¹⁶	This document sets out guidance, against the background of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the related guidance given in the Planning Practice Guide (PPG), on managing change within the settings of heritage assets, including archaeological remains and historic buildings, sites, areas, and landscapes.
Historic England (2022) Planning and Archaeology: Historic England Advice Note 17 ¹¹⁷	This Historic England Advice Note describes how archaeology works in the English planning system. Its aims are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summarise key responsibilities (of planning authorities and applicants) to archaeology through the planning process; • support the application of relevant legislation, national planning policy and guidance; • promote the need for rigour at key stages in the process; and • enthuse about the benefits arising from this work (including making public value apparent).
Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2013 - 2033 ¹¹⁸	The adopted Local Plan, which allocates Site D-HAL003, sets out various policies which will protect and enhance the local environment, including the historic environment and cultural heritage features.
Halton Conservation Area Appraisal ¹¹⁹	Conservation Area Appraisals (CAAs) highlight the special interest of each area and are used to inform planning decisions. The report describes the criteria that have been used, and the judgements made, in defining the Conservation Area boundaries within Halton. It provides an appraisal that identifies, describes and illustrates the features and characteristics of the village that justify the Conservation Area designation.
Technical note: RAF Halton – Historic Environment (2022) ¹²⁰	Prepared by WSP, the technical note summarises the historic environment technical evidence gathered to date by the DIO to support masterplan development for at least 1,000 units on the allocated Barracks Site at RAF Halton. The evidence gathered has been focused across both the Airfield Site and the Barracks Site to ensure all proposed development options are considered alongside the existing military drawdown process. This approach ensures recommendations made by the SETA team to the DIO project team allow opportunities and synergies to be considered across both land parcels, and existing military operations to continue safely and securely until phased land disposals are completed. It also summarises the limitations and opportunities in regard to change of use or demolition of buildings across the site allocation.

¹¹⁶ Historic England (2015) The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹¹⁷ Historic England (2022) Planning and Archaeology: Historic England Advice Note 17. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/planning-archaeology-advice-note-17/> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹¹⁸ Buckinghamshire Council (2021) Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2013 – 2033. Available at: https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Aylesbury_local_plan_L46JWaT.pdf [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

¹¹⁹ Aylesbury Vale District Council (2003) Halton Conservation Area. Available at: <https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Updated-Halton-document-2009.pdf> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹²⁰ WSP (2022) Technical note: RAF Halton – Historic Environment

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP for landscape
Council of Europe: European Landscape Convention (2006) ¹²¹	Aims to promote the protection, management and planning (including active design and creation of Europe's landscapes, both rural and urban, and to foster European co-operation on landscape issues.
National Planning Policy Framework (2023) ¹²²	The NPPF and related guidance given within the PPG states that development could seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness; both aesthetic considerations and connections between people and places should be considered. The NPPF also promotes the protection and enhancements of valued landscapes, giving greatest weight to National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 ¹²³	<p>The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023 for England is the first revision of the 25YEP. It builds on the 25YEP vision with a new plan setting out how the government will work with landowners, communities and businesses to deliver each of the goals for improving the environment, matched with interim targets to measure progress. To enhance beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment, the EIP sets out to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfil a new and ambitious commitment that everyone should live within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space; • Continue our delivery of the England Coast Path and the Coast to Coast National Trail; • Green the Green Belt as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper by identifying key areas for nature restoration; • Invest in a new national landscapes partnership for National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and National Trails; • Extend the delivery of our Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, using lessons learned to inform future farming schemes; and • Invest in active travel, with a vision for half of all journeys in towns and cities to be cycled or walked by 2030. £35 million funding has already been committed this financial year.
MHCLG: National Design Guide: Planning Practice Guidance for Beautiful, Enduring and Successful Places (2021) ¹²⁴	This design guide illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. It forms part of the government's collection of planning practice guidance and should be read alongside the separate planning practice guidance on design process and tools.
Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework (2023) ¹²⁵	<p>The Green Infrastructure Framework is a commitment in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. It supports the greening of our towns and cities and connections with the surrounding landscape as part of the Nature Recovery Network. The Green Infrastructure Framework comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Green Infrastructure Principles</u>: the why, what and how of good Green Infrastructure • <u>Green Infrastructure Standards</u>: guidance on national standards for Green Infrastructure quantity and quality • <u>Green Infrastructure Maps</u>: mapped environmental, socio-economic datasets to support the standards • <u>Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide</u>: practical, evidence-based advice on how to design good quality Green Infrastructure • <u>Green Infrastructure Process Journeys</u>: guides on how to apply all the products in the Green Infrastructure Framework

¹²¹ Council of Europe: European Landscape Convention (2006) Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/236096/8413.pdf [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹²² DLUHC (2023) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹²³ DEFRA (2023) Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹²⁴ MHCLG & DLUHC (2021) National design guide. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹²⁵ Natural England (2023) Green Infrastructure Framework. Available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP for landscape
English Heritage and CABI: Guidance on Tall Buildings (2007) ¹²⁶	Provides advice and guidance on good practice in relation to tall buildings in the planning process and to highlight other related issues, which need to be considered, i.e. where tall buildings would and would not be appropriate.
Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2013 - 2033 ¹²⁷	The adopted Local Plan, which allocates Site D-HAL003, sets out various policies which will protect and enhance the local environment. The RAF Halton SPD is proposed to be prepared in accordance with the Aylesbury Garden Town principles, which focuses on delivering high quality development which is distinctive and responds to local characteristics.
Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019 - 2024 ¹²⁸	This management plan of the Chilterns AONB sets out a series of policies and actions that, through effective long-term planning and decision making, aim to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns and enhance public understanding and enjoyment of the special quality of the AONB. The management plan notes the special qualities of the AONB to be protected, including panoramic views which can be harmed by development, and has produced Position Statements on Development Affecting the Setting of the Chilterns AONB and their cumulative impacts, to help protect the long-term interests of the landscape.
Aylesbury Landscape Character Assessment (2008) ¹²⁹	The AVLCA was carried out to inform the preparation by AVDC of the Aylesbury Vale Local Development Framework. It has been carried out at the Local Authority (district) level to a methodology following national guidance in which biodiversity and historic environment factors are fully integrated with physiographic, natural, cultural and visual considerations. The assessment identified 79 landscape character areas grouped within 13 landscape character types, and identified the key characteristics, condition, sensitivity and guidelines for each. It should be noted that Buckinghamshire Council have commissioned consultants to prepare a review of the Landscape Character Assessment. The Review is due to be completed in the Spring 2023.
Defining the special qualities of local landscape designations in Aylesbury Vale District (2016)	The report provides evidence on the special qualities and values of locally designated landscapes within the district - the Areas of Attractive Landscape (AAL) and Local Landscape Areas (LLAs), to enhance the Council's landscape evidence base and to inform the Local Plan. Information on the local landscape designations may therefore be useful for a number of purposes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a baseline against which to assess the impact of a proposed development on the landscape by comparing the characteristics of the proposal against the area's special qualities; • to inform sensitive siting and design of new development both in development control and for prospective developers; • to communicate the distinctive characteristics of Aylesbury Vale as part of baseline data for future landscape studies; • to inform policies for the future development and management of Aylesbury Vale.

¹²⁶ English Heritage and CABI (2007) Guidance on tall buildings. Available at: https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/fileadmin/uploads/dc/Documents/guidance-on-tall-buildings_0.pdf [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

¹²⁷ Buckinghamshire Council (2021) Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2013 – 2033. Available at: https://buckinghamshire.gov.uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Aylesbury_local_plan_L46JWaT.pdf [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

¹²⁸ The Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024. Available at: <https://www.chilternsaonb.org/what-we-do/future-proofing-the-chilterns/management-plan/> [Date accessed: 21/11/23]

¹²⁹ Jacobs (2008) Aylesbury Vale District Council & Buckinghamshire County Council: Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment, May 2008. Available at: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/landscape-policy-and-assessments/landscape-character-assessments/> [Date accessed: 23/11/23]

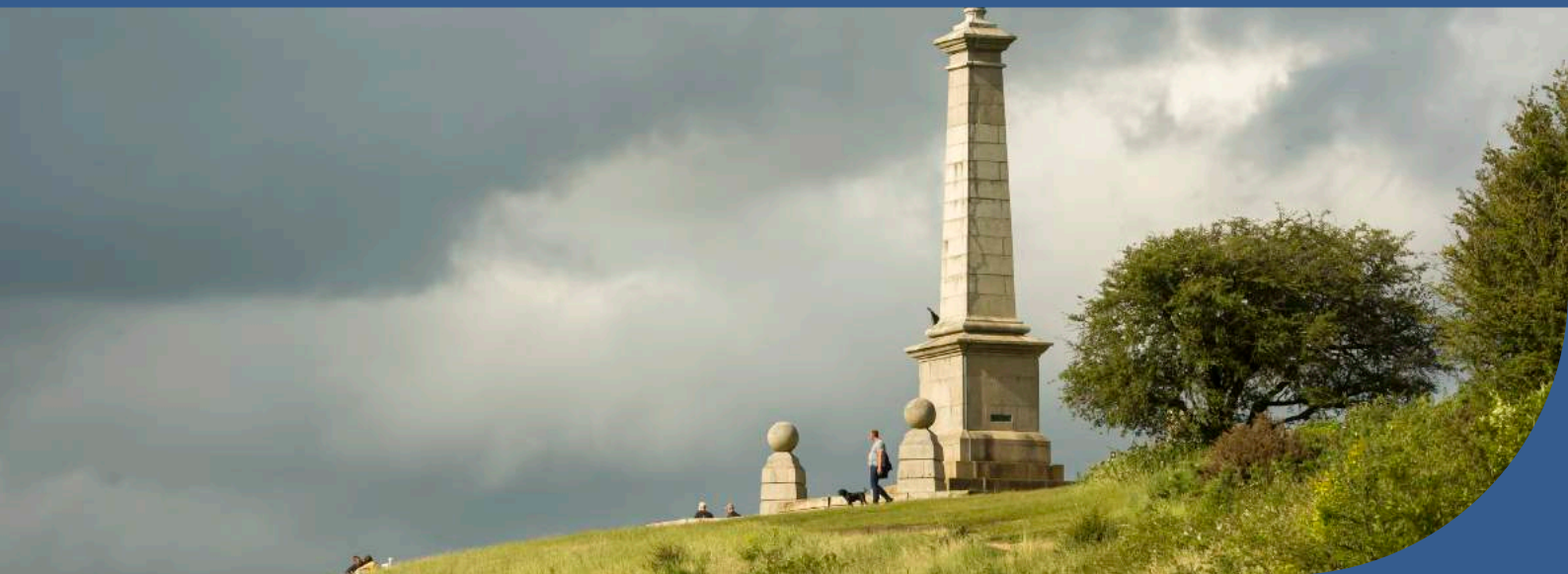
Plan, policy and/or programme (PPP)	Main objectives and requirements of PPP for landscape
Strategic Landscape and Visual Capacity Study (2017)	Instructed by AVDC, Bradley Murphy Design Ltd. (BMD) have undertaken a strategic appraisal of the capacity in landscape and visual terms, for approximately 100 sites throughout the borough, to identify their suitability for allocation for residential or economic development, or a mix of both.

Appendix C: Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives

Strategic Environmental Assessment of the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document

Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives

April 2023



LEPUS CONSULTING
LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY, PLANNING & URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

Report for Internal Use Only

Strategic Environmental Assessment of the D-HAL003 RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document

Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives

LC-921	Document Control Box
Client	Buckinghamshire Council
Report Title	Strategic Environmental Assessment of the D-HAL003 RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document: Draft Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives
Status	Interim SEA Report for Client Information
Filename	LC-921_RAF_Halton_SPD_Reasonable_Alternatives_3_210423SS.docx
Date	April 2023
Author	SS
Reviewed	LB
Approved	ND

About this report & notes for readers

Lepus Consulting Ltd (Lepus) has prepared this report for the use of Buckinghamshire Council. There are a number of limitations that should be borne in mind when considering the results and conclusions of this report. No party should alter or change this report whatsoever without written permission from Lepus.

© Lepus Consulting Ltd

The conclusions below are based on the best available information, including information that is publicly available. No attempt to verify these secondary data sources has been made and they have been assumed to be accurate as published.

This report was prepared during April 2023 and is subject to and limited by the information available during this time.

This report has been prepared with reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the contract with the client. Lepus Consulting accepts no responsibility to the client and third parties of any matters outside the scope of this report. Third parties to whom this report or any part thereof is made known rely upon the report at their own risk.

Client comments can be sent to Lepus using the following address.

Eagle Tower,
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL50 1TA

Telephone: 01242 525222

E-mail: enquiries@lepusconsulting.com

www.lepusconsulting.com

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	This report.....	1
1.2	The RAF Halton Supplementary Plan Document	2
1.3	Relationship to the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan.....	3
1.4	Best Practice SEA Guidance.....	3
2	Methodology	5
2.1	Screening	5
2.2	SEA scoping stage.....	6
2.3	Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives	6
2.4	Significance	9
2.5	Impact sensitivity	9
2.6	Impact magnitude.....	9
2.7	Predicting effects	10
2.8	Assessment assumptions	10
2.9	Limitations.....	14
3	Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives	15
3.1	Overview.....	15
3.2	Reasonable Alternatives.....	16
3.3	Assessment of alternatives.....	19
3.4	SEA Objective 1 – Biodiversity	19
3.5	SEA Objective 2 – Climate change	20
3.6	SEA Objective 3 – Cultural heritage.....	22
3.7	SEA Objective 4 – Landscape	23
3.8	Overview of Assessments.....	26
4	Conclusion	27
4.1	Overview.....	27
4.2	Next steps	27
	Appendix A: SEA Framework.....	A1

Tables

Table 2.1: Guide to scoring significant effects	7
Table 2.2: Geographic scales of receptors.....	9
Table 2.3: Impact magnitude.....	10
Table 2.4: Assumptions for the SEA Objectives.....	11
Table 3.1: Impact matrix for Site D-HAL003 (Biodiversity).....	20
Table 3.2: Impact matrix for Site D-HAL003 (Climate change)	21
Table 3.3: Impact matrix for Site D-HAL003 (Cultural heritage)	23
Table 3.4: Impact matrix for Site D-HAL003 (Landscape)	25
Table 3.5: Summary of assessment findings for Reasonable Alternatives	26

Figures

Figure 3.1 Masterplan Layout for Site D-HAL003- Option 1 (Source: Buckinghamshire Council and Hyas)	17
Figure 3.2 Masterplan Layout for Site D-HAL003- Option 2 (Source: Buckinghamshire Council and Hyas)	18

Acronyms

AAL	Area of Attractive Landscape
AGT	Aylesbury Garden Town
ANGSt	Accessible Natural Green Space Standards
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EA	Environment Agency
EU	European Union
GI	Green Infrastructure
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
IRZ	Impact Risk Zone
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment
LCT	Landscape Character Type
LLA	Local Landscape Areas
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
MHCLG	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government
NCA	National Character Area
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
PPP	Plan, Policy and Programme
PRoW	Public Right of Way
RAF	Royal Air Force
RPG	Registered Park and Garden
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SM	Scheduled Monument
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
VALP	Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan

1 Introduction

1.1 This report

1.1.1 Lepus Consulting has been appointed by Buckinghamshire Council to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

1.1.2 The role of SEA is to inform the plan-making group in their selection and assessment of alternatives. The findings of the SEA can help with refining and further developing these reasonable alternatives in an iterative and on-going way. The SEA findings do not form the sole basis for decision-making; other evidence studies, the feasibility of the reasonable alternatives and consultation feedback will also contribute to the decision.

1.1.3 The purpose of this document is to provide an appraisal of the reasonable alternatives considered by Buckinghamshire Council during the preparation of the D-HAL003 RAF Halton SPD, in line with Article 5 Paragraph 1 of Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment¹ (SEA Directive):

"Where an environmental assessment is required under Article 3(1), an environmental report shall be prepared in which the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme, are identified, described and evaluated".

1.1.4 Buckinghamshire Council has identified two reasonable alternatives for evaluation in the SEA process:

i. Overall concept masterplan: Option 1

- Retention of Groves and Henderson with parade ground park
- Grassland and woodland setting
- Extensive sports and leisure corridor
- Expanded school and local centre on Upper Icknield Way
- East-west tree-lined avenue
- Consolidated parkland corridor at Maitland barracks
- Development on Maitland parade ground
- Stables community/leisure use
- Trenchard Museum stays in situ

¹ SEA Directive. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN> [Date Accessed: 10/04/23]

ii. Overall concept masterplan: Option 2

- Retention of Groves and Henderson with parade ground park
- Grassland and woodland setting
- Sports and leisure corridor
- New school and local centre on Chestnut Avenue
- Old station building retained
- Maitland parade ground park
- Trenchard Museum relocated to former County Museum Resource Centre

1.1.5 In this instance, a 'do-nothing' approach would not be appropriate as a reasonable alternative, as Policy D2 within the adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) sets out Site D-HAL003 as an allocation, and Policy D-HAL003 requires an SPD to be produced in order to co-ordinate development at Site D-HAL003.

1.1.6 Each reasonable alternative has been assessed against the SEA Framework defined in the Scoping Report, which itself focuses on biodiversity, climate change, cultural heritage, and landscape.

1.2 The RAF Halton Supplementary Plan Document

1.2.1 The RAF Halton SPD will provide a framework for the development of the proposed site D-HAL003 'RAF Halton' allocated within the VALP, which was adopted in September 2021. D-HAL003 is identified as one in a suite of 'major sites' in the strategic settlements and in North East Aylesbury Vale for development, within VALP Policy D2.

1.2.2 Site D-HAL003 is currently an active military site, although it has been confirmed by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) that the site will be decommissioned in 2027. The site is considered to be well located with respect to transport links and local services, providing an opportunity for a mixed use redevelopment.

1.2.3 Due to the proximity of the RAF Halton site to Aylesbury, the development is proposed to follow the same principles as Aylesbury Garden Town (AGT).

1.2.4 Site D-HAL003 is proposed to include the development of:

- At least 1,000 dwellings;
- New primary school;
- New local centre, including a community hall;
- Junction improvements onto B4009 (Upper Icknield Way);
- New green infrastructure (GI); and
- Access routes.

1.3 Relationship to the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan

- 1.3.1 The emerging SPD is a planning document, produced at the local level to provide more detail, advice or guidance on local policies. The SPD will be a material consideration, which expands on policies set out in the VALP, to help guide the preparation and assessment of future planning applications within the site. The SPD will set out the agreed strategy and comprehensive Masterplan for the delivery of future development at the D-HAL003 site allocated within the VALP.

1.4 Best Practice SEA Guidance

- 1.4.1 A range of documents have informed the approach to the SEA of the site D-HAL003 'RAF Halton' SPD, including national guidance and best practice standards set out for SEA:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021);
- Planning Practice Guidance (June 2021);
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006): Biodiversity Duty (sections 40 and 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006);
- HM Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' (2018);
- Environment Act (2021);
- European Commission (2004) Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment²;
- Office of Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive³;
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁴;
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities & Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)⁵; and
- Royal Town Planning Institute (2018) Strategic Environmental Assessment, Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of SEA/SA for land use plans⁶.

² European Union (2001) SEA Guidance, Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/eia/pdf/030923_sea_guidance.pdf [Date Accessed: 14/04/23]

³ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf [Date Accessed: 14/04/23]

⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date Accessed: 14/04/23]

⁵ Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) Planning Practice Guidance Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance> [Date Accessed: 14/04/23]

⁶ RTPI (2018) Strategic Environmental Assessment. Available at: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2018/january/strategic-environmental-assessment-seasa-for-land-use-plans/> [Date Accessed: 14/04/23]

1.4.2 Besides the documents listed above, several regionally and locally specific documents to the RAF Halton site have been utilised to inform the SEA process and these include:

- Biodiversity Action Plan: Forward to 2030 for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes;
- Vision and Principles for the Improvement of Green Infrastructure in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (2018) and the accompanying Green Infrastructure opportunities mapping (2018);
- Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2013) and Strategy (2009);
- Transport schemes under Policy T2 (Supporting and Protecting Transport Schemes) as within the adopted VALP (2013-2033);
- Infrastructure provision under Policy S5 of the adopted VALP;
- Policies D2 and D4 which regard residential development delivery as within the adopted VALP (2013-2033); and
- Other relevant VALP policies.

2 Methodology

2.1 Screening

2.1.1 The SEA Screening report⁷ (December 2022) reviewed the extent to which the emerging RAF Halton SPD could potentially result in significant effects on the environment.

2.1.2 Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations⁸ states that the information provided in SEA should identify the likely significant effects on the environment⁹, including:

"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 issues".

2.1.3 The screening opinion concluded that a significant effect on the environment could not be ruled out for the following topics:

- Climate Change;
- Cultural Heritage; and
- Landscape.

2.1.4 The findings from the HRA of the VALP indicate recreational pressure from the proposed housing development on the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The HRA Screening highlighted a full HRA Appropriate Assessment was required for the SPD. Therefore, the SEA topic 'Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna' has also been screened in.

⁷ Lepus Consulting (2023) Strategic Environmental Assessment of the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document - SEA Scoping Document

⁸ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date accessed: 13/03/23]

⁹ These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects.

2.2 SEA scoping stage

- 2.2.1 Following screening, the second stage of the SEA process was the scoping stage. The SEA Scoping Document for the site D-HAL003 'RAF Halton' SPD was prepared by Lepus Consulting in April 2023¹⁰. This represented Stage B of SEA, according to the strategic environmental assessment requirements¹¹.
- 2.2.2 In considering the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the SEA process, and importantly the environmental report, the Scoping Report identified potential biodiversity, climate change, cultural heritage and landscape issues associated with Site D-HAL003.
- 2.2.3 All other topics in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations (Annex 1(f) of the SEA Directive) have been scoped out of further consideration in the assessment process.

2.3 Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives

- 2.3.1 The assessment process has used the SEA Framework, the review of plans, programmes and policies, and the baseline (including various mapped data sources), as presented in the SEA Scoping Report, to assess each reasonable alternative.
- 2.3.2 When evaluating significance of effect, the SEA draws on criteria in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations (see **Box 2.1**) and identifies a significance value using the guide in **Table 2.1**.

Box 2.1: Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations¹²

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations)

The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:

- the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;
- the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;
- environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste- management or water protection).

¹⁰ Lepus Consulting (2023) Strategic Environmental Assessment of the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document: SEA Scoping Document.

¹¹ MHCLG (2015) Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal: Sustainability appraisal requirements for local plans and spatial development strategies. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal> [Date Accessed: 06/04/23]

¹² The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date Accessed: 19/04/23]

Box 2.1: Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations¹²

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations)

Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;
- the cumulative nature of the effects;
- the transboundary nature of the effects;
- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);
- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;
 - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;
 - intensive land-use; and
- the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

Table 2.1: Guide to scoring significant effects

Significance	Definition (not necessarily exhaustive)
Major Negative --	The size, nature and location of a reasonable alternative would be likely to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanently degrade, diminish or destroy the integrity of a quality receptor, such as a feature of international, national or regional importance; • Cause a very high-quality receptor to be permanently diminished; • Be unable to be entirely mitigated; • Be discordant with the existing setting; and/or • Contribute to a cumulative significant effect.
Minor Negative -	The size, nature and location of a reasonable alternative would be likely to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not quite fit into the existing location or with existing receptor qualities; and/or • Affect undesignated yet recognised local receptors.
Negligible 0	Either no impacts are anticipated, or any impacts are anticipated to be negligible.
Uncertain +/-	It is entirely uncertain whether impacts would be positive or adverse.
Minor Positive +	The size, nature and location of a reasonable alternative would be likely to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve undesignated yet recognised receptor qualities at the local scale; • Fit into, or with, the existing location and existing receptor qualities; and/or • Enable the restoration of valued characteristic features.

Significance	Definition (not necessarily exhaustive)
Major Positive ++	<p>The size, nature and location of a reasonable alternative would be likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance and redefine the location in a positive manner, making a contribution at a national or international scale; Restore valued receptors which were degraded through previous uses; and/or Improve one or more key elements/features/characteristics of a receptor with recognised quality such as a specific international, national or regional designation.

- 2.3.3 The results of the assessment will apply a single value from **Table 2.1** to the corresponding SEA Objective for each reasonable alternative or any other part of the SPD which is being assessed as part of the SEA. Justification for the likely impact and corresponding score is presented in an accompanying narrative assessment text.
- 2.3.4 When selecting a single value to best represent the sustainability performance, and to understand the significance of effects of an option in terms of the relevant SEA Objective, the precautionary principle¹³ has been used. This is a worst-case scenario approach. If a positive effect is identified in relation to one criterion within the SEA Framework and a negative effect is identified in relation to another criterion within the same SEA Objective, the overall impact has been assigned as negative for that objective. It is therefore essential to appreciate that the impacts are indicative summarily and that the accompanying assessment text provides a fuller explanation of the sustainability performance of the option.
- 2.3.5 For the assessment of reasonable alternatives, to enable further transparency and to provide the reader with contextual information that is relevant to each SEA Objective, the full assessments presented in the SEA report appendices have been set out per 'receptor' (see **sections 3.4 – 3.7**).
- 2.3.6 The assessment considers, on a strategic basis, the degree to which a location can accommodate change without adverse effects on valued or important receptors (identified in the baseline).
- 2.3.7 It is important to note that the assessment scores presented in **Table 2.1** are high level indicators. The assessment narrative text should always read alongside the significance scores. A number of topic specific methodologies and assumptions have been applied to the appraisal process for specific SEA Objectives (see **Table 2.4**), offering further insight into how each significant effect score was determined. These should be borne in mind when considering the assessment findings.

¹³ The European Commission describes the precautionary principle as follows: "If a preliminary scientific evaluation shows that there are reasonable grounds for concern that a particular activity might lead to damaging effects on the environment, or on human, animal or plant health, which would be inconsistent with protection normally afforded to these within the European Community, the Precautionary Principle is triggered".

2.4 Significance

- 2.4.1 Where an environmental impact has been identified, the significance of effect has been categorised as minor or major. **Table 2.1** lists the significance matrix and explains the terms used. The nature of the significant effect can be either beneficial or adverse depending on the proposal.
- 2.4.2 Each reasonable alternative assessed in this report has been scored according to its predicted performance in relation to the SEA Objectives in the Framework, using the values in **Table 2.1**.
- 2.4.3 It is important to note that the scores are high level indicators. The narrative assessment text which details the key decision-making criteria behind each awarded score should always be read alongside the score. Assumptions and limitations to the scores are presented in **Table 2.4** and **sections 2.7** and **2.8**.
- 2.4.4 Significance of effect is a combination of impact sensitivity and magnitude.

2.5 Impact sensitivity

- 2.5.1 Impact sensitivity is measured through consideration as to how the receiving environment will be impacted by a proposal. This includes assessment of the value and vulnerability of the area, whether environmental quality standards will be exceeded, and if impacts will affect, for example, designated areas.
- 2.5.2 A guide to the range of scales used in the impact significance matrix is presented in **Table 2.2**. For most receptors, sensitivity increases with geographic scale.

Table 2.2: *Geographic scales of receptors*

Scale	Typical criteria
International/ national	Designations that have an international aspect or consideration of transboundary effects beyond national boundaries. This applies to effects and designations/receptors that have a national or international dimension.
Regional	This includes the regional and sub-regional scale, including county-wide level and regional areas.
Local	This is the district and neighbourhood scale.

2.6 Impact magnitude

- 2.6.1 Impact magnitude relates to the degree of change the receptor will experience, including the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact. Impact magnitude is determined based on the susceptibility of a receptor to the type of change that will arise, as well as the value of the affected receptor (see **Table 2.3**).

Table 2.3: Impact magnitude

Impact magnitude	Typical criteria
High	<p>Likely total loss of or major alteration to the receptor in question;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of a new receptor/feature; or The impact is permanent and frequent.
Medium	<p>Partial loss/alteration/improvement to one or more key features; or</p> <p>The impact is one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent and short-term; Frequent and reversible; Long-term (and frequent) and reversible; Long-term and occasional; or Permanent and occasional.
Low	<p>Minor loss/alteration/improvement to one or more key features of the receptor; or</p> <p>The impact is one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reversible and short-term; Reversible and occasional; or Short-term and occasional.

2.7 Predicting effects

- 2.7.1 SEA is a tool for predicting potential significant effects. Predicting effects relies on an evidence-based approach and incorporates professional judgement. It is often not possible to state with absolute certainty whether effects will occur, as many impacts are influenced by a range of factors such as the design and the success of mitigation measures.
- 2.7.2 The assessments in this report are based on the best available information. Every attempt has been made to predict effects as accurately as possible.
- 2.7.3 SEA operates at a strategic level which uses available secondary data for the relevant SEA Objective. All reasonable alternatives are assessed in the same way using the same method. Sometimes, in the absence of more detailed information, forecasting the potential impacts of development can require making reasonable assumptions based on the best available data and trends.

2.8 Assessment assumptions

- 2.8.1 Assumptions have been used to help incorporate proportionality to the SEA of reasonable alternatives. In terms of published policy guidance, it is assumed that the following policies will apply to Site D-HAL003 and surrounding environments, and have been borne in mind when completing the assessment of reasonable alternatives:

- Adopted VALP 2013 – 2033 policies¹⁴;
- The Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024; and
- The NPPF (2021)¹⁵ and related PPG advice¹⁶.

2.8.2 Other topic-specific assumptions have been applied to the report. These are presented in **Table 2.4**.

Table 2.4: Assumptions for the SEA Objectives

SEA Objective	Assessment Assumptions
1. Biodiversity: Protect, enhance, restore and manage the flora, fauna biodiversity and geodiversity assets of the areas affected by the development of Site D-HAL003.	<p>The biodiversity objective considers adverse impacts of the proposed development at a landscape-scale. It focuses on an assessment of proposed development on a network of designated and undesignated sites, wildlife corridors and individual habitats within and surrounding Site D-HAL003. Receptors include the following:</p> <p>Designated Sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitats sites; (Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar sites). • Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). • National Nature Reserves (NNR). • Local Nature Reserves (LNR). • Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). • Local Geological Sites (LGS). <p>Habitats and Species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient woodland. • Priority habitats. <p>Negative impacts would be expected where the ecological or geological designations listed above may be harmed or lost as a result of proposals. The assessment is largely based on a consideration of the proximity of a site and the attributes and qualities of the receptor in question.</p> <p>For the purposes of this assessment, impacts on priority habitats protected under the 2006 NERC Act¹⁷ have been considered in the context of Natural England's publicly available Priority Habitat Inventory database¹⁸. It is acknowledged this may not reflect current local site conditions in all instances.</p> <p>It is assumed that construction and occupation of previously undeveloped greenfield land would result in a net reduction in vegetation cover and Green Infrastructure in the</p>

¹⁴ Buckinghamshire Council (2021) Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) 2013 – 2033. Available at: https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Aylesbury_local_plan_L46JWaT.pdf [Date Accessed: 17/04/23]

¹⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date Accessed: 17/04/23]

¹⁶ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) Planning Practice Guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance> [Date Accessed: 17/04/23]

¹⁷ Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents> [Date Accessed: 17/04/23]

¹⁸ Natural England (2021) Priority Habitat Inventory (England). Available at: <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/4b6ddab7-6c0f-4407-946e-d6499f19fcde/priority-habitat-inventory-england> [Date Accessed: 17/04/23]

SEA Objective	Assessment Assumptions
	<p>Plan area. Development proposals which would be likely to result in the loss of greenfield land are therefore expected to contribute towards a cumulative loss in vegetation cover. This would also be expected to lead to greater levels of fragmentation and isolation across the wider ecological network, such as the loss of habitat stepping-stones and corridors.</p> <p>It should be noted that no detailed ecological surveys have been completed by Lepus to inform the assessments made in this report.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the Council will require detailed ecological surveys and assessments to accompany future planning applications. Such surveys will determine on a site-by-site basis the presence of Priority Species and Priority Habitats protected under the NERC Act.</p> <p>It is assumed that the loss of biodiversity assets, such as ancient woodland or an area of priority habitat, are permanent effects.</p> <p>It is assumed that mature trees and hedgerows will be retained where possible.</p> <p>Where development proposals coincide with a Habitats site, a SSSI, NNR, LNR, LWS, LGS or ancient woodland, or are adjacent to a Habitats site, SSSI or NNR, it is assumed that development would have a permanent impact on these nationally important biodiversity and geodiversity assets, and a major negative impact would be expected.</p> <p>Where development proposals coincide with priority habitats, are adjacent to an ancient woodland, LNR, LWS, are located within a SSSI IRZ¹⁹ which states to consult Natural England or are located in close proximity to a Habitats site, SSSI, NNR, LNR or stand of ancient woodland, it is assumed that development would have an impact on these biodiversity assets, and a minor negative impact would be expected.</p> <p>Where a development proposal would not be anticipated to significantly impact a biodiversity asset, a negligible impact would be expected for this objective.</p> <p>Where development proposals would be anticipated to enhance biodiversity through the designation of a biodiversity site, a positive impact would be expected.</p>
<p>2. Climate change:</p> <p>Mitigate and Reduce Site D-HAL003's contribution towards climate change.</p>	<p>Development proposals which would be likely to increase greenhouse gas emissions in the local area would make it more difficult for the Council to reduce the Plan area's contribution towards the causes of climate change.</p> <p>The incorporation of GI within developments presents several opportunities to mitigate climate change, for example, through providing natural cooling to combat the 'urban</p>

¹⁹ Natural England (2023) Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) are a Geographical Information System (GIS) tool which allow a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks posed by development proposals to: SSSIs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites. They define zones around each site which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicate the types of development proposal which could potentially have adverse impacts.

Natural England's Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 31 March 2023. Available at: <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/5ae2af0c-1363-4d40-9d1a-e5a1381449f8/sss-i-impact-risk-zones> [Date Accessed: 21/04/23]

SEA Objective	Assessment Assumptions
	<p>heat island' effect, reducing the effects of air pollution and providing more pleasant outdoor environments to encourage active travel²⁰.</p> <p>It is assumed that development on previously undeveloped or greenfield land would result in an increase in GHG emissions due to the increase in the local population and the number of operating businesses and occupied homes.</p> <p>The increase in GHG emissions caused by new developments is associated with impacts of the construction phase, the occupation and operation of homes and businesses, oil, gas and coal consumption and increases in local road transport with associated emissions. This impact is considered to be permanent and non-reversible.</p>
<p>3. Cultural Heritage: Protect, enhance and manage heritage assets, including designated and non-designated, as well as features and areas of and heritage importance.</p>	<p>Impacts on heritage assets will be largely determined by the specific layout and design of the development proposal, as well as the nature and significance of the heritage asset. There is a risk of adverse effects occurring, some of which may be unavoidable. As such, this risk has been reflected in the assessment as a negative impact where a site is in close proximity to heritage assets.</p> <p>Adverse impacts are recorded for options which have the potential to have an adverse impact on sensitive heritage designations, including Grade I, II* and II Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments (SM), Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG), and Conservation Areas (CAs).</p> <p>Adverse impacts on heritage assets are predominantly associated with impacts on the existing setting of the asset and the character of the local area, as well as adverse impacts on views of, or from, the asset.</p> <p>Where development proposals are not located in close proximity to any heritage asset, or the nature of development is determined not to affect the setting or character of the nearby heritage asset, a negligible impact would be expected for this objective.</p> <p>When considering any planning application that affects a Conservation Area, authorities must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance²¹. A replacement of a building that currently has a detrimental impact on a Conservation Area could potentially result in a neutral or a minor beneficial effect.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the Council will require a Heritage Statement to be prepared to accompany future planning applications, where appropriate. The Heritage Statement should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposals, including any contribution made by their settings.</p> <p>It is assumed that desk-based assessments will be required on a site-by-site basis for planning proposals which could potentially impact archaeological features (followed by field evaluation / potential trial trenching where appropriate).</p>

²⁰ TCPA (2007) The essential role of green infrastructure: eco-towns green infrastructure worksheet. Available at: <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=dd06b21d-6d41-4c4e-bec5-4f29a192f0c6> [Date Accessed: 10/04/23]

²¹ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/section/69> [Date Accessed: 10/04/23]

SEA Objective	Assessment Assumptions
<p>4. Landscape: Conserve, enhance, restore and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening their distinctiveness</p>	<p>Impacts on landscape will be largely determined by the specific layout and design of development proposals, as well as the site-specific landscape circumstances. Detailed proposals for each development are uncertain at this stage of the assessment. Therefore, the nature of the potential impacts on the landscape are, to an extent, uncertain. However, there is a risk of negative effects occurring, some of which may be unavoidable. As such, this risk has been reflected in the assessment as a negative impact where a development proposal is located in close proximity to sensitive landscape receptors. The level of impact has been assessed based on the nature and value of, and proximity to, the landscape receptor in question.</p> <p>Where a development proposal would not be anticipated to impact a local or designated landscape, a negligible impact would be expected for this objective. Where the development or enhancement of green infrastructure / landscape features is proposed, which could potentially enhance the local landscape character, a minor positive impact on the landscape objective would be recorded.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the Council will require developers to undertake Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) to accompany any future proposals, where relevant. The LVIAs should seek to provide greater detail in relation to the landscape character of the development proposals and its surroundings, the views available towards the development, the character of those views and the sensitivity and value of the relevant landscape and visual receptors.</p> <p>Development proposals which are considered to increase the risk of future development spreading further into the wider landscape would be expected to have a minor negative impact on the landscape objective.</p> <p>Development proposals which are considered to reduce the separation between existing settlements and increase the risk of the coalescence of settlements would be expected to have a potential minor negative impact on the landscape objective.</p>

2.9 Limitations

- 2.9.1 SEA is a tool for predicting potential significant effects. Predicting effects relies on an evidence-based approach and incorporates expert judgement. It is often not possible to state with absolute certainty whether effects will occur, as many impacts are influenced by a range of factors such as the design and the success of mitigation measures. The assessments in this report are based on the best available information, including information that is publicly available. Every attempt has been made to predict effects as accurately as possible.
- 2.9.2 All data used is secondary data available from Buckinghamshire Council or freely available on the Internet.

3 Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 The SEA Regulations requires that the SEA process considers "*reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme*" (Regulation 12) and gives "*an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with*" (Schedule 2).
- 3.1.2 The purpose of this Reasonable Alternatives SEA Report is to enable the plan makers (Buckinghamshire Council) to make an informed decision about the final content of the SPD. The role of SEA is to inform the plan making group in their selection and assessment of reasonable alternatives.
- 3.1.3 The findings of this Reasonable Alternatives SEA Report can help with refining and further developing these options in an iterative and on-going way. The SEA findings do not form the sole basis for decision-making; other studies, the feasibility of the option and consultation feedback will also contribute to the decision of identifying a preferred option.
- 3.1.4 The results of the Reasonable Alternatives SEA Report may reveal that there is no single, best performing option. Where there is no obvious discernible difference at a strategic scale, the SEA process will record this as an outcome.
- 3.1.5 It should be noted that a further SEA Report will be produced, known as an Environmental Report.
- 3.1.6 PPG notes that 'reasonable alternatives' are the different realistic options considered by the plan-maker in developing the policies in its plan. It notes that the SEA process should provide conclusions on the overall sustainability of the different alternatives and that the alternatives must be realistic and deliverable²².
- 3.1.7 Reasonable alternatives for a development could constitute:
- Growth alternatives for housing and employment use e.g., the total number of dwellings or employment floorspace across the development area;
 - Alternative site allocations for development; and

²²MHCLG (2021) Planning Practice Guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>
[Date Accessed: 09/04/23]

- Alternative policies, including a comparison between the inclusion of policies against the 'do nothing' approach.

3.1.8 The remainder of this chapter sets out the SEA of reasonable alternatives. Identified impact 'scores' have been presented by SEA Objective in tables which include assessment narrative text. The reasonable alternatives have been assessed per the methodology set out in **Chapter 2**.

3.2 Reasonable Alternatives

3.2.1 There are two reasonable alternatives which have been identified during the preparation of the SPD, relating to the layout of the proposed development Site D-HAL003 as shown in **Figure 3.1** and **Figure 3.2**:

i. Overall concept masterplan: Option 1

- Retention of Groves and Henderson with parade ground park
- Grassland and woodland setting
- Extensive sports and leisure corridor
- Expanded school & local centre on Upper Icknield Way
- East-west tree-lined avenue
- Consolidated parkland corridor at Maitland barracks
- Development on Maitland parade ground
- Stables community/leisure use
- Trenchard Museum stays in situ

ii. Overall concept masterplan: Option 2

- Retention of Groves and Henderson with parade ground park
- Grassland and woodland setting
- Sports and leisure corridor
- New school & local centre on Chestnut Avenue
- Old station building retained
- Maitland parade ground park
- Trenchard Museum relocated to former County Museum Resource Centre.

3.2.2 The site boundary for D-HAL003 is identical in both the masterplan options. The main differences between the masterplan options can be summarised as follows:

- Extent of sports and leisure corridor
- Location of school and local centre
- Location of Trenchard Museum
- Extent of pedestrian and cycle routes
- Location of play provisions



Figure 3.1 Masterplan Layout for Site D-HAL003- **Option 1** (Source: Buckinghamshire Council and Hyas)

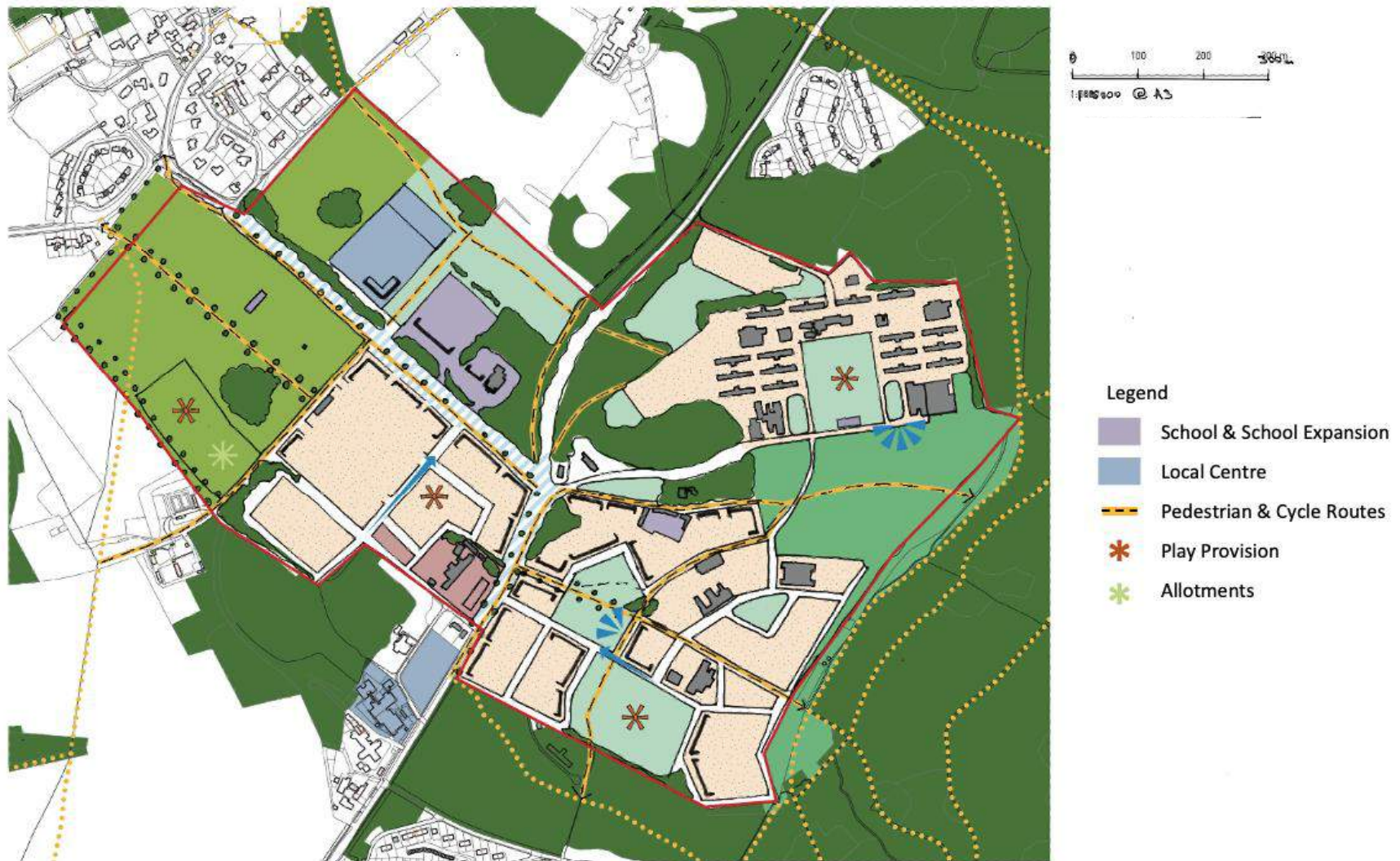


Figure 3.2 Masterplan Layout for Site D-HAL003- **Option 2** (Source: Buckinghamshire Council and Hyas)

3.3 Assessment of alternatives

- 3.3.1 The impact matrices for each reasonable alternative assessed in this report have been brought together in **Tables 3.1 - 3.4**. These impacts should be read in conjunction with the assessment text narratives in **sections 3.4 – 3.7**, as well as the topic-specific methodologies and assumptions presented in **Chapter 2**.
- 3.3.2 Whilst the assessment findings have drawn on the assumptions in **Table 2.4**, all assessment information excludes consideration of detailed mitigation i.e. additional detail or modification to the reasonable alternative that has been, or will be, introduced specifically to reduce identified environmental effects of that site. Presenting assessment findings in this way facilitates transparency to the decision makers.

3.4 SEA Objective 1 – Biodiversity

- 3.4.1 The closest Habitats site to the RAF Halton Site D-HAL003 (both Options 1 and 2) is Chilterns Beechwoods SAC. The closest component of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC is located approximately 2.8km east from the site at Tring Woodlands.
- 3.4.2 Owing to the site's location within the 12.6km Zone of Influence (ZOI) for the Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI component of the SAC, and the strategic solution to mitigate recreational effects on the SAC since the adoption of the VALP²³, the HRA Screening exercise for the RAF Halton SPD²⁴ identified likely significant effects associated with Site D-HAL003. Consequently, an Appropriate Assessment of the SPD will be prepared, taking into consideration mitigation requirements as set out in the strategic solution which will comprise both Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). Given Site D-HAL003 will deliver a net increase in residential units within the ZOI, mitigation must be provided to ensure no adverse impact on site integrity, and this should be secured through the SPD, whichever layout option is pursued.
- 3.4.3 Site D-HAL003 does not coincide with any known sites of national or local importance for biodiversity, however the site is located within IRZs which indicates that the proposed development (residential development with net gain in residential units) should be consulted on with Natural England, owing to potential negative effects on nearby SSSIs. Besides the several stands of ancient woodland within approximately 1km, site D-HAL003 is also adjacent to 'Hale Wood'. Both layout options could potentially increase the risk of disturbance to the adjacent ancient woodland.

²³ Dacorum Borough Council, Buckinghamshire Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and St. Albans City and District Council. 15 November 2022. Available at: [https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/new-single-local-plan/chilterns-beechwoods-special-area-of-conservation/chilterns-beechwoods-special-area-of-conservation-\(sac\)---mitigation-strategy](https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/new-single-local-plan/chilterns-beechwoods-special-area-of-conservation/chilterns-beechwoods-special-area-of-conservation-(sac)---mitigation-strategy) [Date accessed: 19/04/23]

²⁴ Buckinghamshire Council (2022) Site D-HAL003, RAF Halton SPD, Aylesbury Vale Area- Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening. Last updated: 05 December 2022 Version: 1.2 [Date accessed: 06/03/23]

- 3.4.4 Priority habitats found within and around the site boundary include several stands of deciduous woodland, and a small area of traditional orchard. Both layout options (as shown in **Figure 3.1** and **3.2**) show these areas being conserved alongside the proposed development.
- 3.4.5 The proposed development at Site D-HAL003 must be in accordance with VALP policies including Policies NE1 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) and I1 (Green Infrastructure) which seek to protect and enhance designated sites, protected habitats/species and GI, and deliver biodiversity net gain. This could lead to longer term positive effects on biodiversity if net gains are successful.
- 3.4.6 The details proposed within the two options regarding the layout of Site D-HAL003 are likely to perform similarly at the strategic scale in relation to biodiversity, where prior to mitigation considerations, and in line with the precautionary principle, a minor negative impact could be attributed to the potential recreational impacts on Chilterns Beechwoods SAC, nearby SSSIs and ancient woodland.

Table 3.1: Impact matrix for Site D-HAL003 (Biodiversity)

Reasonable alternative for Site D-HAL003	Habitats Site	Site of Special Scientific Interest (IRZ)	Ancient Woodland	Local Nature Reserve	Priority Habitat	Biodiversity Net Gain	Overall score
Option 1	-	-	-	0	0	+	-
Option 2	-	-	-	0	0	+	-

3.5 SEA Objective 2 – Climate change

- 3.5.1 The addition of new dwellings (at least 1,000) as proposed in the SPD could potentially lead to an increase in air pollution, energy consumption and traffic during both the construction and occupancy stages, to some extent. This could also contribute towards potential cumulative and trans-boundary effects when considered in-combination with other nearby developments and in the neighbouring areas. Both options propose the same overall level of housing growth and so similar effects would be likely.
- 3.5.2 Although both Option 1 and 2 for the layout of Site D-HAL003 would locate site end users wholly within Flood Zone 1 and therefore away from areas of fluvial flood risk, small areas of the site are susceptible to surface water flooding (1 in 30; high risk in some patches). It is likely that flood risk will become more prevalent in future years due to higher flood plain levels and climate change introducing more extreme weather events including higher volumes of rainfall. Such effects would be experienced by both Option 1 and 2.
- 3.5.3 The emerging RAF Halton SPD requires development of Site D-HAL003 to implement 50% GI throughout its design; this may include parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural green spaces and green corridors and buffers. In order to meet the 50% GI requirements, the GI needs to be publicly accessible natural green space to subsequently meet the Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt), as outlined within VALP paragraphs 3.38 and 11.1. It is expected that these requirements would be met under either of the proposed layout options.

- 3.5.4 VALP Policy D1 states that “*new garden communities should be designed to be resilient places that allow for changing demographics, future growth and the impacts of climate change by anticipating opportunities for technological change including renewable energy measures*”. Although not part of the AGT itself, the development at Site D-HAL003 is proposed to accord with the AGT principles. In line with VALP Policy C3, development would be expected to utilise sustainable design and construction measures and seek to use decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources for energy where feasible.
- 3.5.5 Both Option 1 and Option 2 display GI provision within the Masterplan area in line with VALP policies. Option 1 could potentially result in a greater benefit for GI when compared to Option 2, owing to the greater extent of GI links through the proposed “*east-west tree-lined avenue*”. Improved extent and connectivity of GI, when carefully planned, could potentially help to provide multi-functional benefits including incorporation of sustainable drainage techniques, flood mitigation and adaptation measures, providing shade and natural cooling, protection from extreme weather events, and helping to alleviate the ‘urban heat island’ effect. Although Option 1 could perform slightly better than Option 2, both would be likely to result in a minor positive effect on GI provision.
- 3.5.6 The emerging SPD should also set out guidance with regards to sustainable energy, water consumption and how the proposed development will be adaptable to climate change. It is unlikely that the slight differences in site layout proposed through Option 1 and 2 would lead to significantly different effects in this regard.

Table 3.2: Impact matrix for Site D-HAL003 (Climate change)

Reasonable alternative for Site D-HAL003	Green Infrastructure	Increased energy consumption related GHG emissions	Flood Zone	Overall score
Option 1	+	-	+	-
Option 2	+	-	+	-

3.6 SEA Objective 3 – Cultural heritage

- 3.6.1 Seven Grade II Listed Buildings, known as the Groves and Henderson Barracks, a group of RAF barracks designed in 1919 are located within Site D-HAL003. The first phase of development at Site D-HAL003 is proposed to be on the existing brownfield site and utilise these listed buildings/ barrack blocks. In the technical note for RAF Halton (Historic Environment) prepared by WSP to support the preparation of masterplan, Historic England agreed to the proposed conversion of the barracks for residential development²⁵. The Council should seek to sensitively redevelop these buildings to maintain their external appearance and their character/wider setting in line with Historic England's advice. Considering that both Option 1 and 2 would include "*retention of Groves and Henderson [Barracks] with parade ground park*" and redevelop for residential use, at this stage, a minor negative impact on these Listed Buildings is identified, in line with the precautionary principle, although it is acknowledged that there may be opportunities to conserve and enhance their heritage value and setting depending on the specific proposals.
- 3.6.2 The site intersects with Halton House Registered Park and Garden (RPG). The RPG is also listed in Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register, which notes that "*The open parkland has been fragmented and lost to development of the camp with the historic fabric of the ornamental features of the garden in poor condition*"²⁶. The surviving woodland structures in the RPG are now managed by the Forestry Commission. Halton House, a Grade II* listed building is located within Halton House RPG and is 0.3km away from the site boundary. Both options could potentially lead to alteration of the setting of this RPG and Listed Building.
- 3.6.3 To the east of the SPD area, the site D-HAL003 coincides with a Scheduled Monument (SM) called 'long barrow 200m east of parade ground'. Both options propose to redevelop the existing buildings in this area of the site (north eastern corner), and as such both could potentially alter the setting of this SM.
- 3.6.4 Site D-HAL003 does not coincide with any conservation areas, although Halton (0.1km away), Wendover (1.2km away) and Weston Turville (1.3km away) lie in proximity. Besides several designated features, the site also features several locally listed buildings such as railway buildings, workshops, former guard rooms, military camps and barracks etc which could be affected by either development option. Several locally listed and non-designated heritage features are located within and around Maitland Barracks and parade ground. Option 1 features a consolidated corridor along with development on the parade ground, whereas Option 2 features a park, as indicated in **Figure 3.1** and **Figure 3.2** respectively. Therefore, it is assumed that Option 2 could perform better in terms of retention of the existing character and setting of the non-designated heritage assets, including maintaining the openness of the parade ground.

²⁵ WSP (2022) Technical note: RAF Halton – Historic Environment

²⁶ Historic England (no date) Halton House, Halton / Aston Clinton - Buckinghamshire (UA) (2023). Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/list-entry/26108> [Date accessed: 16/0/23]

- 3.6.5 The proposed development under either of the layout options could potentially impact the setting of both designated and non-designated features within and around the site. The details proposed within the two masterplan options regarding the development of Site D-HAL003 are likely to perform similarly at the strategic scale, in relation to cultural heritage, where potential minor negative impacts are associated with Site D-AGT1's coincidence with and close proximity to heritage assets. There may be opportunities for incorporating sensitive redevelopment of the existing buildings on site which respects and improves the setting of cultural heritage assets, or proposals which better reveal areas of historic interest and increase the understanding and appreciation of the historic environment; however, at this stage of assessment and in line with the precautionary principle a minor negative impact on the historic environment cannot be ruled out.
- 3.6.6 Historic England advocate the seeking of opportunities alongside development for delivering heritage-led regeneration²⁷, creating a strong sense of place and local distinctiveness, encouraging the use of traditional building skills, and promoting climate change resilience and innovative reuse of historic buildings where appropriate²⁸.

Table 3.3: Impact matrix for Site D-HAL003 (Cultural heritage)

Reasonable alternative for Site D-HAL003	Listed Buildings	Conservation Area	Scheduled Monument	Registered Parks and Gardens	Non-designated Heritage Assets	Overall score
Option 1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Option 2	-	-	-	-	-	-

3.7 SEA Objective 4 – Landscape

- 3.7.1 The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is located adjacent to the site, to the east. The proposed development in the SPD for Site D-HAL003 under either of the proposed layout options could potentially have adverse impact on the setting of the AONB owing to its proximity.

²⁷ Deloitte (2017) Heritage Works: A toolkit of best practice in heritage regeneration. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/heritage-works/> [Date accessed: 23/04/21]

²⁸ Historic England (2016) Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment – Historic England Advice Note 8. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/> [Date accessed: 20/04/21]

- 3.7.2 According to the Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)²⁹, the majority of Site D-HAL003 is located within Landscape Character Type 'Wendover Foothills (East)', and a small proportion lies within 'Chiltern Scarp (Wendover East)'. Noted key characteristics of the area include gently sloping landform and the transition between open arable fields and wooded landscape. Both Option 1 and 2 could potentially lead to an alteration of the landscape character owing to the introduction of approximately 1,000 new homes and associated infrastructure, especially when considering the site's sensitive location in the foothills of the Chilterns AONB.
- 3.7.3 The LCA however notes that the "*Large scale buildings, hangars and sewage works at RAF Halton*" and "*Loss of field pattern/ structure at site of airfield*" are intrusive elements within these landscape types; as such, there may be opportunities to incorporate sensitive design considerations within either layout option which leads to an improvement in the quality and character of the local landscape.
- 3.7.4 The site coincides with other locally designated landscapes such as Local Landscape Areas (LLA) and Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL), which may be sensitive to development. The site, which lies in the Halton LLA, serves as a setting for the Chilterns AONB and is situated on the lower slopes of the Chilterns escarpment. The distinctive landscape is wide and undulating, with parts of chalk geology, and it has characteristics which are unique to the Chilterns landscape. The western boundary includes significant woodland areas.
- 3.7.5 Site D-HAL003 sits within London Metropolitan Green Belt. Site D-HAL003 is largely previously developed but contains some undeveloped / open areas particularly to the west and northeast. Options 1 and 2 set out a very similar overall footprint for the built development on site. Although it is expected that the emerging SPD will aim to address the scale and massing of buildings on the site through the development proposal, there is potential for the openness of the Green Belt to be impacted.
- 3.7.6 As stated in the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan³⁰, completed in 2018, a main concern was the potential impacts on the AONB from the expansion of Aylesbury to the south and southeast. The SA examined the 'cumulative effects' of growth at Aylesbury and paragraph 10.9.2 (page 95) of the SA report concludes:

²⁹ Jacobs (2008) Aylesbury Vale District Council & Buckinghamshire County Council: Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment. May 2008. Available at: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/landscape-character-assessments/> [Date accessed: 20/04/23]

³⁰ AECOM (2018) Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan. Available at: https://www.aylesburyvaldc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/page_downloads/VALP%20-%20SA%20Report%20170918.pdf [Date accessed: 21/04/23]

"There would be direct visual effects on the AONB as a result of the cumulative development sites. The visual extent of the cumulative development sites, combined with the existing development at Aylesbury and nearby settlements, would be readily apparent. However, development across the sites will be predominantly low-rise and incorporate substantial mitigation planting, reducing the impact on views across the low-lying vale landscape from the elevated viewpoints within the AONB. The key characteristics of views across the wider landscape would be fundamentally unchanged, in that they would remain expansive across the settled vale landscape. It is considered unlikely that there would be significant cumulative residual landscape and visual effects on the AONB".

- 3.7.7 Taking into consideration the recommendations made by the VALP SA, the long-distance views across the site to the Chilterns AONB should be maintained as much as practicable by building low lying dwellings, whichever layout option is pursued. Consideration should also be given to the views experienced from the nearby existing PRoW network although it is unlikely that either option would significantly affect this. Green corridors, cycle and footpaths should be used to reduce traffic flow, noise, sound and air pollution that may affect the surrounding landscape quality and character. A carefully planned and well-managed GI network, as advocated by the VALP, would be expected to minimise intrusion on the nationally important landscape of the Chilterns AONB.
- 3.7.8 It is recommended that further landscape evidence, such as a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), is prepared in order to inform the layout and design of the development, taking into consideration the sensitivity of the landscape and important views.
- 3.7.9 Overall, using the precautionary principle, and prior to mitigation considerations, potential minor negative impacts on the landscape including on the setting of the Chilterns AONB cannot be ruled out at this stage upon development of Site D-HAL003 for Option 1 and 2.

Table 3.4: Impact matrix for Site D-HAL003 (Landscape)

Reasonable alternative for Site D-HAL003	Chilterns AONB	Altered view from PRoW network	Provision of multi-functional greenspace	AAL and LLA	Overall score
Option 1	-	0	+	-	-
Option 2	-	0	+	-	-

3.8 Overview of Assessments

- 3.8.1 Owing to the same boundary and proposed development in both the options for 'RAF Halton' Site D-HAL003, it can be observed that both reasonable alternatives perform similarly across the identified SEA Objectives, prior to mitigation considerations. The overall scores for each objective (taking into account the worst-case approach as set out in **paragraph 2.3.4**) have been brought together in **Table 3.5**.
- 3.8.2 For SEA Objective 1 'Biodiversity, flora and fauna', the details proposed within the two options regarding the layout of Site D-HAL003 are likely to perform similarly at the strategic scale. Both options would need to consider the requirements for SANG in line with the strategic mitigation approach for Chilterns Beechwoods SAC.
- 3.8.3 The difference in overall performance of the reasonable alternatives for SEA Objective 2 'Climate Change' is insignificant as both options propose the same overall level of housing growth and would locate the site end users wholly within Flood Zone 1. The only difference can be observed is in terms of connectivity of GI, where Option 1 could potentially perform slightly better than Option 2.
- 3.8.4 As identified in the assessment for SEA Objective 3 'Cultural Heritage', the proposed development under either of the layout options has the potential to impact the setting of heritage assets within and around the site D-HAL003 in a similar manner at a strategic level, except that Option 2 could perform slightly better owing to its layout that could potentially retain the existing character and setting of the locally listed and non-designated heritage assets to a greater extent than Option 1.
- 3.8.5 Given the proximity of Site D-HAL003 to the Chilterns AONB and local landscape designations within the site, both options would tend to perform similarly and potentially result in minor negative impact for SEA Objective 4 'Landscape'.

Table 3.5: Summary of assessment findings for Reasonable Alternatives

Topic	Overall Scores – Option 1	Overall Scores – Option 2
Biodiversity, flora and fauna	-	-
Climate change	-	-
Cultural heritage	-	-
Landscape	-	-

4 Conclusion

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 This report has assessed the reasonable alternatives of the emerging 'RAF Halton' Site D-HAL003 SPD. Each reasonable alternative has been assessed against the SEA Framework, which itself focuses on biodiversity, climate change, cultural heritage and landscape.
- 4.1.2 Overall, the reasonable alternatives assessed in this report would be expected to result in minor negative impacts relating to the issues outlined in **Chapter 3**, including biodiversity, climate change, cultural heritage and landscape.
- 4.1.3 Both reasonable alternatives perform similarly in the SEA, with no single, best performing option identified owing to the small-scale differences identified between the options.
- 4.1.4 Various policies outlined in VALP would help to ensure that all future development considers the surrounding environment, historic assets and landscape. Several recommendations have been made in this SEA report (see **Chapter 3**) to potentially enhance the sustainability of the proposals within the emerging SPD or to provide further clarity regarding certain issues.

4.2 Next steps

- 4.2.1 The relative sustainability benefits identified for each option and recommendations made in this report should be considered in detail by the Council, alongside other evidence base information, prior to the preparation of the Environmental Report. The Council need to determine which option they believe is the best fit for the SPD.
- 4.2.2 The Environmental Report is a core output of the SEA process, and must identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the SPD, in line with the SEA Regulations. It will also consider mitigation options, in-combination effects and identify likely residual effects of the preferred option.
- 4.2.3 The Environmental Report will accompany the Consultation version of the SPD and will be consulted on with at least the statutory bodies; Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England.

Appendix A: SEA Framework

No.	SEA Objective	Decision making criteria	Suggested indicators (not exhaustive)
1	Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna: Protect, enhance and manage the flora, fauna, biodiversity and geodiversity assets of the areas affected by the development of Site D-HAL003.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it result in a net loss or a net gain for biodiversity? Will it protect or enhance wildlife sites or biodiversity? Will it protect sites and habitats designated for nature conservation including protected species? Will it protect and enhance the water environment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new residents which generate adverse impacts on sites of biodiversity importance, such as the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC. Area and condition of sites designated for biodiversity interest. Provision and connectivity of multi-functional green infrastructure. Quality and extent of priority habitats (habitats of principal importance). Amount of biodiversity net gain provided in new developments measured using the DEFRA biodiversity metric.
2	Climate Change: Mitigate and reduce Site D-HAL003's contribution towards climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it reduce emissions from transport and the built environment? Will it help to reduce reliance on private car use? Will it encourage renewable energy generation or use of energy from renewable or low-carbon sources? Will it reduce flood risk? Will it conserve water resources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision and connectivity of green infrastructure. Proximity to, and frequency of, public transport links and cycling and walking provision for new development. Implementation of adaptive techniques, such as passive heating/cooling, SuDS and drainage designed for 'exceedence' events. Carbon emissions from domestic and transport sources.
3	Cultural heritage: Protect, enhance and manage heritage assets, including designated and non-designated, as well as features and areas of and heritage importance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it preserve buildings of historic interest and, where necessary, encourage their conservation? Will it improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings? Will it preserve or enhance archaeological sites and features? Will it preserve or enhance the setting or character of cultural heritage assets or areas? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection of local heritage features including Listed Buildings, such as various Grade II Listed Buildings associated with the 'Groves and Henderson Barracks'. Number and condition of historic assets on the Heritage at Risk register (including Halton House). Statutory and non-statutory sites in the Historic Environment Record (HER) including potential for below ground remains.

No.	SEA Objective	Decision making criteria	Suggested indicators (not exhaustive)
4	Landscape: Conserve, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the landscape, and maintaining and strengthening their distinctiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it protect and enhance the character of the landscape and local distinctiveness? • Will it re-use previously developed land or existing buildings? • Will it protect and enhance visual amenity, including light and noise pollution? • Will it incorporate landscape-led development with consideration of long-distance views of the Chilterns AONB? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of locally sourced materials. • Re-use of brownfield land and/or derelict buildings. • Is development in-keeping with surroundings (e.g. character of Wendover)? • Protection of local PRoWs. • Area of new greenspace created per capita

Habitats Regulations Assessments

Sustainability Appraisals

Strategic Environmental Assessments

Landscape Character Assessments

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments

Green Belt Reviews

Expert Witness

Ecological Impact Assessments

Habitat and Ecology Surveys



© Lepus Consulting Ltd

Eagle Tower

Cheltenham

GL50 1TA

T: 01242 525222

E: enquiries@lepusconsulting.com

www.lepusconsulting.com

CHELTENHAM



Lepus Consulting
Eagle Tower
Montpellier Drive
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL50 1TA

t: 01242 525222
w: www.lepusconsulting.com
e: enquires@lepusconsulting.com

This page is intentionally blank.

Habitats Regulations Assessments

Sustainability Appraisals

Strategic Environmental Assessments

Landscape Character Assessments

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments

Green Belt Reviews

Expert Witness

Ecological Impact Assessments

Habitat and Ecology Surveys



© Lepus Consulting Ltd

Eagle Tower

Cheltenham

GL50 1TA

T: 01242 525222

E: enquiries@lepusconsulting.com

www.lepusconsulting.com

CHEL TENHAM



Lepus Consulting
Eagle Tower
Montpellier Drive
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL50 1TA

t: 01242 525222
w: www.lepusconsulting.com
e: enquires@lepusconsulting.com