

Background Document BD15 SEA/HRA Screening Report

**Wye Neighbourhood Plan
Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report
And
Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report**

Prepared by Ashford Borough Council on behalf of Wye Parish Council

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1. Non-technical Summary

1.1 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required under European legislation for all plans which may have a significant effect on the environment. Significant effects are more likely where a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development, contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan.

1.2 The purpose of the SEA is to provide a high level of protection to the environment and to integrate environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.

1.3 The SEA process sets out criteria for assessing the significance of the impact of a plan on the environment. For example, if a plan proposes a housing development it may have an impact on the wildlife of the area or have an impact on landscape. If a significant effect is possible, the assessment requires the consideration of options and for the evaluation of the potential effects on the environment.

1.4 To ascertain if a SEA is required, a “screening” exercise must be undertaken which looks at the proposals in a Neighbourhood Plan against any likely significant effect. The criterion for doing this is set out in the SEA Directive.

1.5 A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a process which looks at the potential impact of proposals within a plan on internationally designated wildlife sites. For the purpose of the HRA, internationally designated wildlife sites are Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar wetland sites, also known as Natura 2000 sites.

1.6 The initial stage of the HRA process involves consideration of the reasons for designation and the conservation objectives of each internationally designated wildlife site within a reasonable distance of the Neighbourhood Plan Area and the potential impact of the proposals within the plan on these.

1.7 This report details the assessment of the Wye Neighbourhood Plan against the need for the production of an SEA or HRA to accompany the plan in order for it to meet the requirements of European legislation. It concludes that an SEA is likely to be required and an HRA not likely to be required to accompany the Wye Neighbourhood Plan.

1.8 This report has been sent to the three statutory consultees for environmental planning (the Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England) to elicit their views on its contents. This consultation period is to be carried out over a 5 week period between 29th September and 3rd November 2014. We are currently awaiting responses.

The results of this consultation are included at Appendix 3 and a formal screening opinion has been issued to Wye Parish Council indicating the outcomes of the screening stage including responses to this consultation.

2. The Wye Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 Wye is a village located approximately 4.7 miles north east of Ashford and is located within the Kent Downs AONB. It has a population of 2,282 people, with 1,055 households¹. It is located approximate 1 mile to the east of the main road route (A28) between Ashford and Canterbury. The village has its own railway station that connects directly to Ashford International rail station, only 6 miles away which has high speed services to London and the Continent. Wye facilitated a major agricultural college which closed down in 2009 leaving a large area of historic buildings and former campus buildings vacant.

2.2 In 2011 the Parish Council formed a Neighbourhood Planning Working Group mostly made up of Councillors but also residents and community stakeholders previously involved in planning matters within the Parish. In July 2012 the Working Group undertook a village survey to inform the preparation of their Neighbourhood Plan. The Working Group potentially seeks to allocate development sites and set local policies for Wye through the NP process.

2.3 The Parish Council formerly requested that Ashford Borough Council designate the administrative area of Wye with Hinxhill Parish Council as a Neighbourhood Area on the 26th October 2012. Following a period of 6 weeks public consultation Ashford Borough Council approved the designation of the Wye Neighbourhood Area on the 10th January 2013 (See Figure 1).

¹ 2011 Census, www.ons.gov.uk

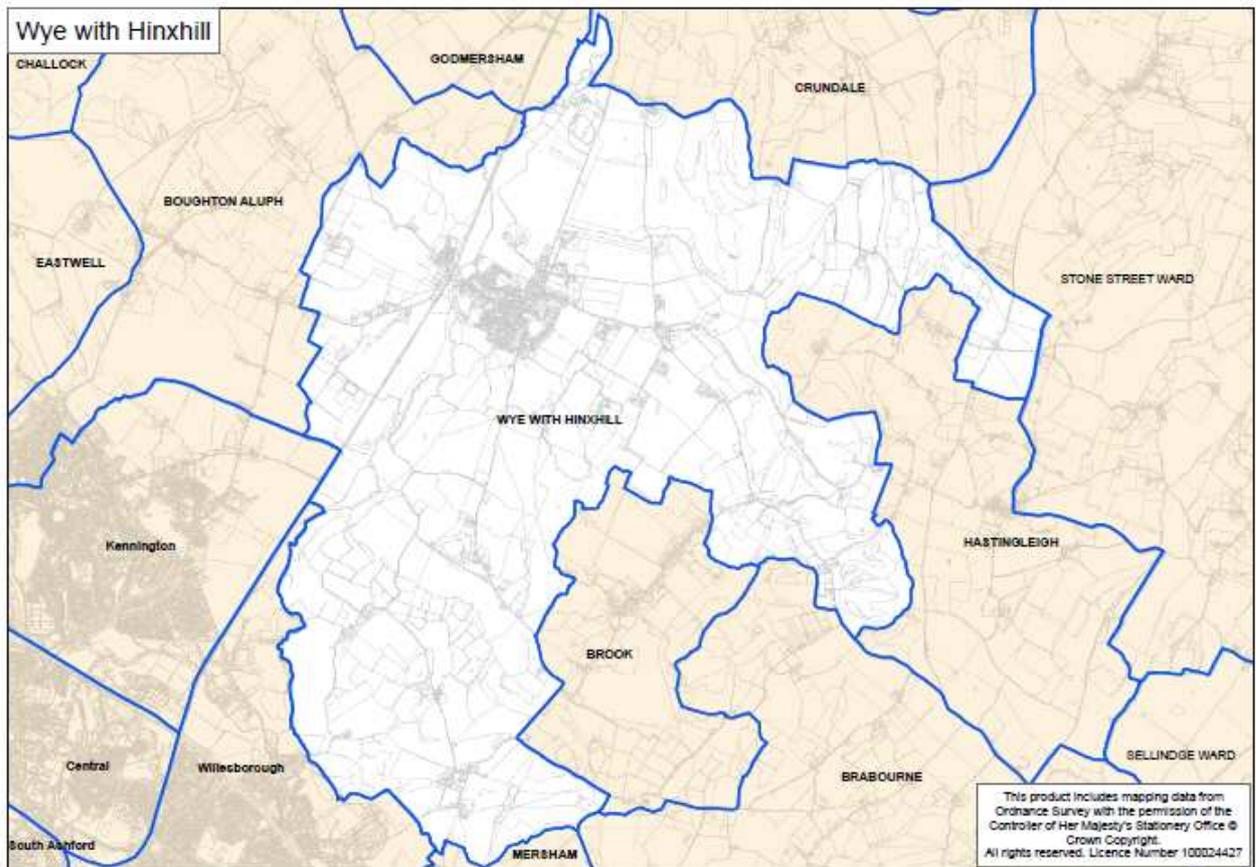


Figure 1: Wye with Hinxhill Neighbourhood Area Boundary

2.4 The Wye NP has the following vision and objectives:

“Wye should remain a distinct settlement with definite boundaries. It should retain a balanced community providing some local employment and should not become purely residential. Any development should respect the rural landscapes around it, so that it retains its rural character. The environment should continue to make the community feel safe. The vibrant community should continue to enjoy many activities. Any changes should respect Wye’s history and its historic buildings, but should enable most of the needed facilities and amenities to be provided in the village”.

This will be achieved through the following objectives:-

- To protect Wye’s sense of place within its surrounding countryside including the views into and from the village.
- Wye’s conservation area and architectural heritage must be protected.
- Development should not have severe impacts on traffic in Wye and its linked rural roads
- The promotion of sustainable business activity
- Generation of affordable homes integrated into mixed developments

2.5 The Wye Neighbourhood Plan working group has indicated that the approximate parameters of development they are looking to secure through the plan process is; residential development up to

175 dwellings, and support for the reuse of redundant college building for business, community and educational uses.

2.6 This report focuses on the screening of the Wye Neighbourhood Plan against the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulation Assessment. It will be supported by the Appropriate Assessments and screening exercises already carried out for the Ashford Borough Core Strategy 2008 and the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD.

3. SEA Screening Assessment

3.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Detailed Guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication “A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive” (ODPM 2005).

3.2 To establish if a plan needs to be accompanied by a full SEA, a “screening” assessment is required against a series of criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive² sets out in a diagrammatic form the series of criteria (reproduced below at Figure 2).

3.3 By following the step by step guide (See Figure 3) it is possible to identify that the Wye Neighbourhood Plan does require a full SEA. However, if the issues addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan should change then a new screening process will need to be undertaken to determine whether an SEA will be required.

² ODPM September (2005) ‘Practical guidance on applying European Directive 2001/42/EC’

Figure 2 – Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

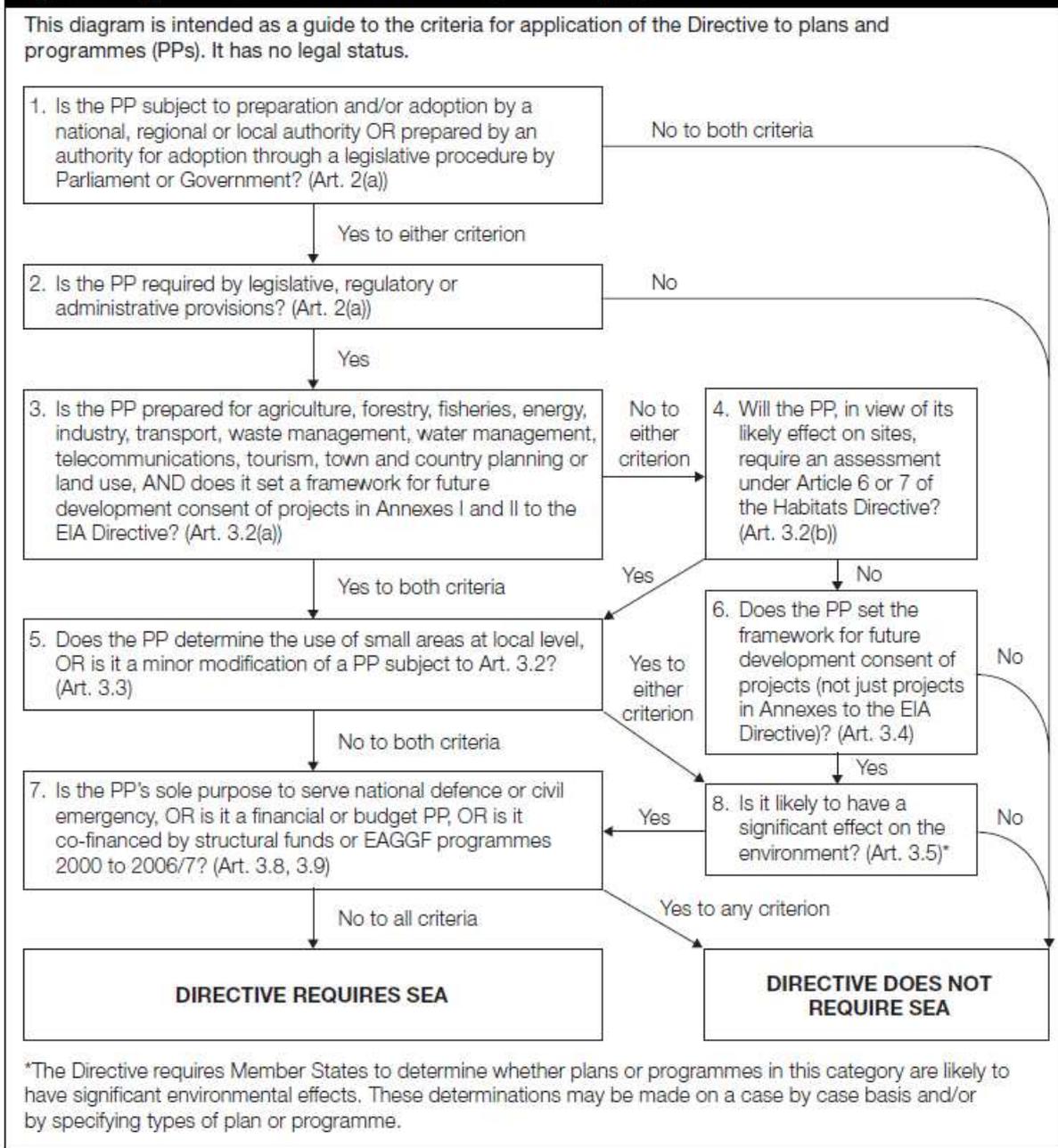


Figure 2: Application of the SEA Directive to plans to programmes, reproduced from ODPM September (2005) 'Practical guidance on applying European Directive 2001/42/EC'

Screening Stages	Answer	Reasons
1. Is the PP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local	Yes	The preparation of and adoption of the NP is allowed under The Town and Country

authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))		<p>Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>The preparation of the NP is subject to the following regulations: The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012</p> <p>Move to question 2.</p>
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	<p>Whilst the provision of a Neighbourhood Plan is optional, it will if 'made', by Ashford Borough Council form part of the Development Plan for the Borough. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive.</p> <p>Move to question 3.</p>
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art. 3.2(a))	Yes	<p>The Wye Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared for town and country planning and land use planning as it proposes to allocate sites for development, e.g. housing. As such, the neighbourhood plan contains a framework for future development consent of urban development projects (listed as 10(b)) in Annex II of the EIA Directive.</p> <p>Move to question 5.</p>
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2(b))		NOT APPLICABLE
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Yes	<p>The neighbourhood plan will be used to determine the use of small areas at a local level.</p> <p>Move to question 8.</p>
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)		NOT APPLICABLE
7. Is the PP's sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art. 3.8, 3.9)	No	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan does not deal with any of these categories of plan.</p> <p>DIRECTIVE REQUIRES SEA</p>
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)*		See Assessment 2: Likely significant effects on the environment.

Assessment 2: Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment

Criteria for determining the likely	Likely to have	Summary of significant effects by Ashford Borough
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significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	significant Environmental effects	Council
The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular to:		
1(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	Y	The NP, if made, will form part of the statutory Development Plan and therefore does contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects. It is expected to determine the location, nature (land use), size of development by allocating various sites within the Parish. The NP will sit within the wider framework of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Core Strategy (2008) and the 'saved' Local Plan 2000 policies, therefore the policies for which the NP relate are localised in nature and have limiting resource implications.
1(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	N	The NP will be prepared in general conformity with the NPPF as well as strategic policies set out within the adopted Core Strategy (2008). The NP will have limited influence on strategic policies within the emerging Local Plan 2030, but may influence the masterplanning for any sites that it allocates. It will not influence other plans.
1(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	N	The NP will have regard to the principles of sustainable development, given its location within the AONB, allocations must be sustainably located close to local services and amenities with topic policies to have a strong emphasis on the protection and enhancement of the environment.
1(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programmes; and	Y	The environmental impact of the proposals within the Wye Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be minimal, however they are proposing to allocate the former Wye College site and the form and scale of the proposal will be key to determining the magnitude of the environmental impact. Existing environmental issues will be mitigated through the implementation of the NP plan.
1(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	N	The NP is not directly relevant to the implementation of European legislation, but it will need to take the impacts of the Water Framework Directive into account.
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:		
2(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	Y	New development is proposed within the Neighbourhood Plan and therefore some element of environmental change will take place. There maybe short-term negative affects resulting from the allocated sites being developed. Over the medium to long term effects are likely to be more positive as policies provide environmental protection.
2(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	N	The NP is expected to allocated sites, some of which may not have been quantified within the adopted Core Strategy (2008), however they will need to be in

		general conformity with the strategic policies in the adopted Core Strategy (2008). Therefore the cumulative effects of the proposals are unlikely to contribute to a significant negative impact on the environment within the Parish.
2(c) the transboundary nature of the effects;	N	Wye village is within the Parish boundary and as such proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to have an impact on neighbouring areas.
2(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	N	The NP is proposing to allocate sites for housing, employment and educational and community uses, which will have a limited risk on human health or the environment.
2(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	Y	The NP is proposing to allocate the former Wye College, this is a significant proposal within a rural context and for the village of Wye and as such there are likely to be significant effects on the environment.
2(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use; and 2(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	Y	<p>The NP has the potential to enhance the natural environment and heritage assets of the Parish through the proposals being considered.</p> <p>In relation to the natural environment, the NP area has some environmental features of both local and national importance, the Wye and Crundale Down SAC is located approximately 1km from an identified site that is to be allocated (former Wye College, Withesdane).</p> <p>In relation to historic and cultural heritage of the area, the village of Wye has a rich historic heritage with many listed buildings within a conservation area, and a locally designed historic park and garden at Withersdane.</p> <p>The whole of Wye village lies within the Kent Downs AONB so any development is likely to have impacts on this designated area.</p> <p>Wye is situated on the River Stour that flows from Ashford to Canterbury, there is risk of flooding associated with the watercourse and the environmental effects associated with this.</p>

3.4 This assessment which screens the potential contents of the Wye Neighbourhood Plan concludes that there is likely to be effects on the environment from development, the magnitude of these effects is unknown and will depend upon the detailed content of the Plan. However the NP is allocating sites and there are internationally designated sites within the NP area boundary, for these reasons it is considered an SEA will be required.

4. HRA Screening Assessment

4.1 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) refers to the appropriate assessment required for any plan or project to assess the potential implications for European wildlife sites. The HRA therefore looks at whether the implementation of the plan or project would harm the habitats or species for which European wildlife sites are designated. European wildlife sites are often known as Natura 2000 sites and include:

- Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)

4.2 In addition to SPAs and SACs sites Ramsar sites are designated under the Ramsar Convention (Iran 1971 as amended by the Paris Protocol 1992). Although they are not covered by the Habitats regulations, as a matter of Government policy, Ramsar sites should be treated in the same way as European wildlife sites. European wildlife site and Ramsar sites are collectively known as internationally designated wildlife sites. These are offered the highest level of protection under European legislation.

4.3 In the SEA Screening Assessment it was concluded that the Wye Neighbourhood Plan may have an impact on internationally designated wildlife sites. This section of the ‘screening’ report considers the potential impact of proposals within the Wye Neighbourhood Plan on sites within reasonable distance of the Neighbourhood Area Boundary.

4.4 The following Natura 2000 sites are located within 20km of the Wye Neighbourhood Area boundary (See Figure 3 for mapping).

SACs:	SPAs	Ramsar Sites:
Blean Complex SAC	Dungeness to Pett Level SPA	The Swale Wetland
Stodmarsh SAC	Stodmarsh SPA	Stodmarsh
Parkgate Down SAC	The Swale Wetland SPA	
Folkstone to Etchinghill Escarpment SAC		
Wye and Crundale Downs SAC		
Dungeness SAC		

4.5 The Core Strategy (2008) was subject to HRA during its production. An Appropriate Assessment was carried out for the Core Strategy, in combination with other plans and concluded that there was likely to be significant effects on the integrity of the Wye and Crundale Downs SAC, Stodmarsh SAC and Stodmarsh SPA.

4.6 The potential significant effects identified were:

- Risks of effects from increased recreational pressure;
- Risk of effects from region-wide air pollution;
- Risk of effects from Waste Water Treatment Works and landfill discharges.

4.7 The Appropriate Assessment then made an assessment of the significant effects and considered whether appropriate avoidance or mitigation measures were in place. Mitigation measures were

extracted from the Appropriate Assessment of the draft South East Plan, the Sustainability Appraisal for the Core Strategy as well as the plan preparation process.

4.8 The Appropriate Assessment concluded that *'the plan preparation process, influenced by the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has ensured that options are chosen which have sufficiently reduced the impacts of these significant effects that the Core Strategy impacts on the integrity have been nullified'*.

4.9 As part of this HRA Screening process, desk based analysis has been undertaken to determine which Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites may be affected by the Wye Neighbourhood Plan. The information has been obtained from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee www.jncc.gov.uk and Natural England. The assessment is based on assumptions made within the Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment as well as proximity of the internationally designated wildlife sites, which have been measured in a linear form and by distance travelled by vehicle. The following tables give details of the Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites relevant to the Wye NP.

Figure 3: Sites within 20km of Wye Neighbourhood Area

Site Name	Blean Complex SAC (520.62ha)
Distance to Wye Village	Approximate: Direct 9.8 miles; Driving 13 miles
Reason for designation	Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (100%) Sub-Atlantic and medio-European oak or oak-hornbeam forests of the <i>Carpinion betuli</i> for which this is one of only two known outstanding localities in the UK.
Vulnerability	There is a mixture of woodland habitat types at this site. Some require coppicing to maintain their features of interest (such as heath fritillary butterfly), although this is not essential to maintain the <i>Stellario-Carpinetum</i> habitat type. Coppice management continues in areas of the site which are maintained as nature reserves by English Nature, Kent Wildlife Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, but has been difficult to maintain elsewhere.
Impact as a result of the NP	Information on this site has been gathered from Canterbury City Council's screening HRA report for their 'Herne Bay AAP', June 2008. It identifies lack of coppice management and deterioration in air quality as the main vulnerabilities. It can therefore be assumed that the main pressures from the Wye Neighbourhood Plan are also coppice management and air quality.
Significance of risk	It is unlikely, given impacts identified and the distance of the Blean Complex SAC from Wye and the level of development proposed within the NP that any significant impact would result to either air quality or management of this site.
Cumulative impacts of other Plans	Screening for the HRA of the adopted Core Strategy (2008) found that there was likely to be significant effects on the integrity of the Wye and Crundale Downs SAC, Stodmarsh SAC and Stodmarsh SPA. Policies within Wye's Neighbourhood Plan have to be inline with those of the strategic development plan and as such in combination with other plans the NP is unlikely to have any significant effect.

Site Name	Stodmarsh SAC (564.64ha); Stodmarsh SPA and Ramsar (481.3 ha)
Distance to Wye Village	Approximate: Direct 13.4 miles; Driving 16 miles

Reason for designation	<p>The site lies along the flood plain of the Great Stour just to the east of Canterbury. Stodmarsh is a wetland site resulting in part from subsidence under the valley of the Great Stour in Kent and aggregate extraction but lies within the natural floodplain of the river. There are a range of wetland habitats including open water, reedbeds, grazing marsh and alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> carr. The site supports a number of uncommon wetland invertebrates and plants, and provides breeding and wintering habitats for important assemblages of wetland bird species, particularly waterfowl.</p> <p>A sizeable population of Desmoulin's whorl snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> lives beside ditches within pasture on the floodplain of the River Stour, where reed sweet-grass <i>Glyceria maxima</i>, large sedges <i>Carex</i> spp. and sometimes common reed <i>Phragmites australis</i> dominate the vegetation. Stodmarsh is a south-eastern outlier of the main swathe of sites and is important in confirming the role of underlying base-rich rock (chalk) as a factor determining this species' distribution.</p> <p>Regular visitors of populations of European importance of the following migratory species: Bitten, Hen Harrier</p>
Vulnerability	<p>Much of Stodmarsh is a National Nature Reserve, and is therefore relatively secure and well managed. The area of habitat has recently been expanded, improving the situation for wetland birds by acquiring an area of turf fields adjacent to the SPA/ Ramsar site for conversion to reedbed, open water and grazing marsh. Continued maintenance of the reedbeds is essential to control the invasion of scrub.</p>
Impact as a result of the NP	<p>Information obtained from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) states that privately owned parts of the site are affected by disturbance. The western end of the SPA is used by wildfowling and fishermen, both of which cause disturbance to the birds and is being addressed through Site Management Statements. The other significant problem relates to water supply, with the many area of vulnerability considered to be from over abstraction of water supply in drought years from the River Stour. The Desmoulin's whorl snail is highly dependent upon the maintenance of existing hydrological conditions. The deterioration in water quality in the River Stour is also a potential threat.</p>
Significance of risk	<p>The Water Framework Directive sets stringent targets to protect water quality. Policy CS21 of the Core Strategy will not permit development that would likely result in a reduction in the quality or quantity of groundwater. Major proposals must demonstrate that adequate water supply and wastewater treatment facilities are in place to serve the development before permission can be granted. If major sites are allocated within the Wye Neighbourhood Plan they will have to adhere to policy CS10 of the Core Strategy which places a strong emphasis on water efficiency through set environmental standards (Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM). Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy requires all development to include appropriate sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) for the disposal of surface water. The policy aims to manage run-off rates and protect water from pollution and has the potential to enhance water quality, biodiversity through multi-functional land uses.</p> <p>A key objective of the Wye Neighbourhood Plan is to bring a major brownfield development site back into use. Inline with the NPPF any planning application which would result, would need to resolve land contamination issues before</p>

	development can take place on site, remedial works to address potential contamination will improve the environment and may prevent water contamination.
Cumulative impacts of other Plans	Opportunities presented within the Wye Neighbourhood Plan together with mitigation measures adopted within the Borough's strategic policies will reduce any potential adverse effect on water abstraction and water quality at the Stodmarsh designations.

Site Name	Folkstone to Etchinghill Escarpment SAC (181.94 ha)
Distance to Wye Village	Approximate: Direct 13.4 miles; Driving 16 miles
Reason for designation	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (important orchid sites) for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.
Vulnerability	Intensification of livestock grazing by improving the grassland is a threat which is currently managed by entering into management agreements with the owner. Both English Nature and Countryside Stewardship agreements exist on the site.
Impact as a result of the NP	A survey undertaken by White Cliffs Countryside Partnership (2011), preliminary results concluded that visitor numbers to the site were low (30,000 per annum) and focused on small areas of the SAC (Sugarloaf Hill/Castle Hill), with the majority of these visitors being local. Shepways Core Strategy HRA (other than Dungeness Complex), January 2012 indicated that the SAC is not currently (13kgN/ha/yr) subject to nitrogen deposition greater than the critical load (15kgN/ha/yr) and that deposition would need to increase by 143% to exceed the minimum critical load.
Significance of risk	The increase in population resulting from anticipated development within the Wye Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to affect low visitor numbers to the escarpment, also as most of the visitors are local people and the SAC is some distance away. Air pollution is not currently an issue and any new development within Wye will need to meet stringent energy and efficiency targets so is unlikely to have a significant impact on the site.
Cumulative impacts of other Plans	Screening for the HRA of the adopted Core Strategy (2008) found that there was likely to be significant effects on the integrity of the Wye and Crundale Downs SAC, Stodmarsh SAC and Stodmarsh SPA. Policies within Wye's Neighbourhood Plan have to be inline with those of the strategic development plan and as such in combination with other plans the NP is unlikely to have any significant effect.

Site Name	Wye and Crundale Downs SAC (112.24 ha)
Distance to Wye Village	Approximately 1km away from the village of Wye
Reason for designation	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom, which is considered to be the priority sub-type: "important orchid sites" (51.69%). <i>Asperulo-Fagetum</i> beech forests (1.8% cover).
Vulnerability	Continuous grazing management on this site is essential to maintain the interest. Grazing on some parts of the site has been intermittent in recent years, leading to

	<p>some increase in scrub and rank grasses. Within the part of the site managed as a National Nature Reserve, a programme of scrub clearance and the reintroduction of grazing are addressing this problem. On other parts, discussion with private land managers is being used to encourage traditional management.</p>
Impact as a result of the NP	<p>There is potential for increased visitor numbers to the site from new development being proposed within the Wye NP as the designated site is only 1km from the main village. Increased visitors to the site may interrupt progress towards achieving conservation objectives by disturbing the programme of scrub clearance and having potential conflict with the reintroduction of grazing animals to the site. Increased visitor numbers may cause the paths to deteriorate in condition and increase trampling pressure on the grassland which may disrupt the orchid's habitat.</p>
Significance of risk	<p>Ensuring residents have a choice of recreational facilities within a close distance to their home will help reduce pressure from visitor numbers to the Wye and Crundale Downs. Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy requires developments to make a provision for open space where a need is generated by new development. This is supported by the Public Green Spaces and Water Environment SPD (2012) that promotes greater accessibility to public places, parks and green space.</p> <p>A key objective of the Wye NP is for development to be concentric around the historic centre with residents able to walk to the centre of the village within 5 minutes. The NP aims to allocate a limited number of sites in the most sustainable locations with options being tested through the SA process to assess potential social, economic and environmental effects; this will include the atmospheric integrity and air quality effects of development sites.</p> <p>The Wye NP proposes to limit unsustainable traffic flows requiring traffic modelling for all development to demonstrate no adverse impact. Mitigation measures will help to minimise any increases in air pollution generated through new development. There is also an aspiration for a cycle path to run around the village linking to existing networks to the centre of the village and to encourage non-car modes of travel.</p> <p>Any major sites allocated by the Wye NP will have to adhere to policy CS10 of the Core Strategy which aims to minimise carbon dioxide emissions from new development (both residential and non-residential) through set environmental standards (Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM) and the installation of sustainable energy technologies. Policy CS10 responds to the Governments ambition to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 60% by 2050 against 1990 levels, and requires all new major development to be carbon neutral. Any residual carbon dioxide emissions remaining once energy efficiencies and low carbon/renewable energy measures have been delivered will be met through a financial contribution into a carbon fund to enable emissions to be offset elsewhere in the Borough this will mitigate against any increases in air pollution.</p>
Cumulative impacts of other Plans	<p>Although the Wye and Crundale Downs SAC is in close proximity to the village of Wye, mitigation measures within the Core Strategy together with mitigation proposals within the Wye NP should be sufficient to determine that in combination there will be no adverse effect upon the integrity of the SAC.</p>

Site Name	Dungeness SAC (3223.56 ha)
Distance to Wye Village	Approximate: Direct 18 miles; Driving 24 miles
Reason for designation	<p>Tidal rivers, Estuaries, Mud flats, Sand flats, Lagoons (including saltwork basins) (20%) Salt marshes, Salt pastures, Salt steppes (1%) Coastal sand dunes, Sand beaches, Machair (2%) Shingle, Sea cliffs, Islets (64%) Inland water bodies (Standing water, Running water) (2%) Bogs, Marshes, Water fringed vegetation, Fens (10%) Coniferous woodland (1%)</p> <p>Annual vegetation of drift lines, for which this is one of only four known outstanding localities in the United Kingdom. It is considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 100 hectares. Perennial vegetation of stony banks, considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. One of the best areas in UK for <i>Triturus cristatus</i>.</p>
Vulnerability	<p>The shingle vegetation is very vulnerable to disturbance by vehicles and walkers, although the coastal shingle (drift-line) vegetation has much greater potential for recovery than the perennial vegetation of shingle banks that occurs further inland. Extensive areas of the site are now managed as a Nature Reserve at both Dungeness and Rye Harbour, with emphasis on interpretation of the site's value and on appropriate public access. A ranger helps to enforce local bylaws which aim to prevent damage from trampling, motorbike activity and illicit gravel extraction. The wetlands which support great crested newt were formerly grazed, maintaining open unshaded vegetation. This practice largely ceased in the 1950s, and since then there has been invasion of ponds by willows shading the water. Management by hand has now been undertaken to reduce this problem, and restoration of light grazing is being investigated. Abstraction of water is thought to have damaged some of the shingle wetlands as well as components of the perennial vegetation of the shingle beach. This will be addressed through the relevant review provisions of the Habitats Regulations. The site is close to an active airport which carries a potential risk from air pollution, although current levels of air traffic and motor vehicles are not thought to cause a problem.</p>
Impact as a result of the NP	<p>These vulnerabilities highlight visitor pressure and water quality issues from over abstraction to be the main threats to these habitats.</p>
Significance of risk	<p>Information ascertained from the Rother & Shepway Core Strategy HRA, points to analysis of visitor distance travelled to the Dungeness Point with the greatest number of visitors (66%) coming from a travel zone greater than 50 miles / 80km away. This indicates that the majority of visitors travel from further afield than Wye, and as such the level of proposed development within the NP is likely to have only a limited impact. Much of the public accessible areas are managed by the Nature Reserve which includes sustainable access initiatives and promoting green infrastructure away from the European sites. Ashford's Core Strategy (2008) is pro active in promoting green infrastructure by applying green space standards to all new residential development of more than 15 dwellings. Whilst there is no clear link between proposed development in Wye and abstraction from the Denge gravel aquifer underlying Dungeness, Ashford's Core Strategy sets a minimum water efficiency target of no more than 105 litres per person per day</p>

	through the use of the Code for Sustainable Homes levels 3 and 4. The Core Strategy also requires all development to incorporate appropriate sustainable drainage for the disposal of surface water which must avoid any adverse impact on water quality.
Cumulative impacts of other Plans	Screening for the HRA of the adopted Core Strategy (2008) found that there was likely to be significant effects on the integrity of the Wye and Crundale Downs SAC, Stodmarsh SAC and Stodmarsh SPA. Policies within Wye's Neighbourhood Plan have to be inline with those of the strategic development plan and as such in combination with other plans the NP is unlikely to have any significant effect.

Site Name	Dungeness to Pett Level SPA (1474.04 ha)
Distance to Wye Village	Approximate: Direct 18 miles; Driving 24 miles
Reason for designation	This is a large area containing a wide variety of coastal habitats, ranging from shingle beaches through to various types of wetlands and open water. Dungeness is a shingle beach of international importance as a large cusped shingle foreland with a complex pattern of ridges reflecting its accretion and development over hundreds of years. The Open Pits contain a natural succession of wetlands from species-rich fen through to sallow carr. The nearby gravel pits have developed features of interest along their margins, as well as an open water interest, and, together with the Open Pits, are used by important numbers of wintering wildfowl. Rye Harbour has a smaller shingle beach which, together with the pits at Dungeness, supports breeding terns and gulls. The grazing marshes at Pett Level and Rye Harbour have close-cropped swards grazed by sheep where arable farming has not been introduced and support wintering wildfowl, including Bewick's Swan <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i> . The numerous ditches that intersect these marshes have developed a rich aquatic flora and invertebrate fauna, and provide important habitat for migrating Aquatic Warbler <i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i> . Rye Harbour and Camber Sands, and Rye Saltings, include saltmarsh, sand-flats and mud-flats that provide valuable feeding areas for wintering waterbirds. As a whole, the SPA is important for breeding and wintering waterbirds, passage warblers and breeding terns, which feed outside the SPA in nearby shallow waters. Bewick's Swans also feed on arable fields outside the SPA.
Vulnerability	This site is vulnerable to coastal erosion, particularly the areas of coastal shingle at Dungeness and Rye Harbour, which are likely to erode in the longer term due to natural processes. Breeding bird populations are at serious risk of predation by species such as fox, badger and mink. There is a localised programme of pest control on part of the site. The site is reasonably well protected from visitor disturbance, although the possible disturbance from aircraft using a nearby airfield is being investigated. Recreational and leisure activities are a problem in some areas, particularly at North Point Pit which is used for wind surfing. Much of the shingle is uncultivated and is either nature reserve or open land. The site is vulnerable to changing agricultural practices, particularly ploughing of grassland for arable crops, or changes to turf production on adjacent land, which may influence the site's bird population. These practices could be controlled by management agreements. Most of the grassland within the SPA is heavily grazed and there is a continuing problem of lowering water levels; both problems are being addressed through management agreements and water level management

	plans.
Impact as a result of the NP	It can be assumed that the main threat to the Dungeness to Pett Level SPA is from recreational pressure from residents of new development.
Significance of risk	As stated above, the site is reasonably protected from visitor disturbance and with a limited level of development being proposed within the Wye Neighbourhood Plan it is unlikely to result in a significant impact on this SPA.
Cumulative impacts of other Plans	Screening for the HRA of the adopted Core Strategy (2008) found that there was likely to be significant effects on the integrity of the Wye and Crundale Downs SAC, Stodmarsh SAC and Stodmarsh SPA. Policies within Wye's Neighbourhood Plan have to be inline with those of the strategic development plan and as such in combination with other plans the NP is unlikely to have any significant effect.

Site Name	The Swale Wetland Ramsar site (6514.71 ha)
Distance to Wye Village	Approximate: Direct 14.88 miles; Driving 31.2 miles
Reason for designation	The Swale is an estuarine area that separates the Isle of Sheppey from the Kent mainland. To the west it adjoins the Medway Estuary. It is a complex of brackish and freshwater, floodplain grazing marsh with ditches, and intertidal saltmarshes and mud-flats. The intertidal flats are extensive, especially in the east of the site, and support a dense invertebrate fauna. These invertebrates, together with beds of algae and Eelgrass <i>Zostera</i> spp., are important food sources for waterbirds.
Vulnerability	There is evidence of rapid erosion of intertidal habitat within the site due to natural processes and the effects of sea defences and clay extraction. Research on mudflat recharge using dredging spoil is being investigated as a means of countering the erosion. The intertidal area is also vulnerable to disturbance from water borne recreation. This is being addressed as part of an estuary management plan. The terrestrial part of the site depends on appropriate grazing and management of water quality and quantity. The availability of livestock may be affected by policy on BSE and there will be a need to investigate how this may be addressed through management agreements. The effects of abstraction on the availability of water for other land uses and drainage for arable cultivation will be addressed through the consent review process under the Habitats Regulations.
Impact as a result of the NP	None of these risk factors is likely to be increased as a result of proposed development within the Wye NP. The site is some distance from Wye, with recreational activities on the south coast already established and easier to reach by the general public. Ashford Borough Council have received a full planning application for a new country park for recreational and water sports purposes at Conningbrook in Ashford which is located just 4 miles away by road from Wye and there are aspirations for a new cycle route which will connect Wye directly to the Conningbrook Country Park only 2 miles away.
Significance of risk	It is unlikely, given the level of development proposed and the distance to travel to the Swale SPA, that the Wye Neighbourhood Plan would have a significant impact on this site.
Cumulative impacts of other Plans	Screening for the HRA of the adopted Core Strategy (2008) found that there was likely to be significant effects on the integrity of the Wye and Crundale Downs SAC, Stodmarsh SAC and Stodmarsh SPA. Policies within Wye's Neighbourhood Plan have to be inline with those of the strategic development plan and as such in

	combination with other plans the NP is unlikely to have any significant effect.
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Site Name	Parkgate Down SAC (6.94 ha)
Distance to Wye Village	Approximate: Direct 7.77 miles; Driving 10.9 miles
Reason for designation	Dry grassland. Steppes (60%) Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (40%) Parkgate Down is situated on the chalk of the North Downs and consists largely of NVC type CG4 Brachypodium pinnatum grassland. The site contains an outstanding assemblage of orchids including the nationally rare monkey orchid (<i>Orchis simian</i>) and late spider orchid (<i>Ophrys fuciflora</i>) together with the nationally scarce musk orchid (<i>Herminium monorchis</i>) and lady orchid (<i>Orchis purpurea</i>).
Vulnerability	Continuous grazing management on this site is essential to maintain the interest. As the site is managed as a nature reserve it is not under any current threat, but is dependent on secure funding for the voluntary organisation managing it. This is currently achieved through English Nature's Reserve Enhancement Scheme.
Impact as a result of the NP	This is a relatively small isolated site, located between the small settlements of Stelling Minnis and Elham, Canterbury and there is limited amount of parking. Although no visitor data is available, it is likely to include some limited recreational use as well as visits by specialist nature visitors.
Significance of risk	The remoteness of this area is likely to act as a deterrent to many visitors, and as such proposals within the Wye NP are unlikely to have an impact on the integrity of the Parkgate Down SAC.
Cumulative impacts of other Plans	Screening for the HRA of the adopted Core Strategy (2008) found that there was likely to be significant effects on the integrity of the Wye and Crundale Downs SAC, Stodmarsh SAC and Stodmarsh SPA. Policies within Wye's Neighbourhood Plan have to be inline with those of the strategic development plan and as such in combination with other plans the NP is unlikely to have any significant effect.

4.10 The assessment of potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites resulting from the proposals for inclusion in the Wye Neighbourhood Plan has concluded that there is unlikely to be adverse impacts on the integrity of sites. One of the assumptions is that policies within the adopted Core Strategy have already been assessed and concluded that appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures were in place to avoid any significant effects on internationally designated wildlife sites. Therefore, it is concluded that a full Appropriate Assessment is not deemed necessary.

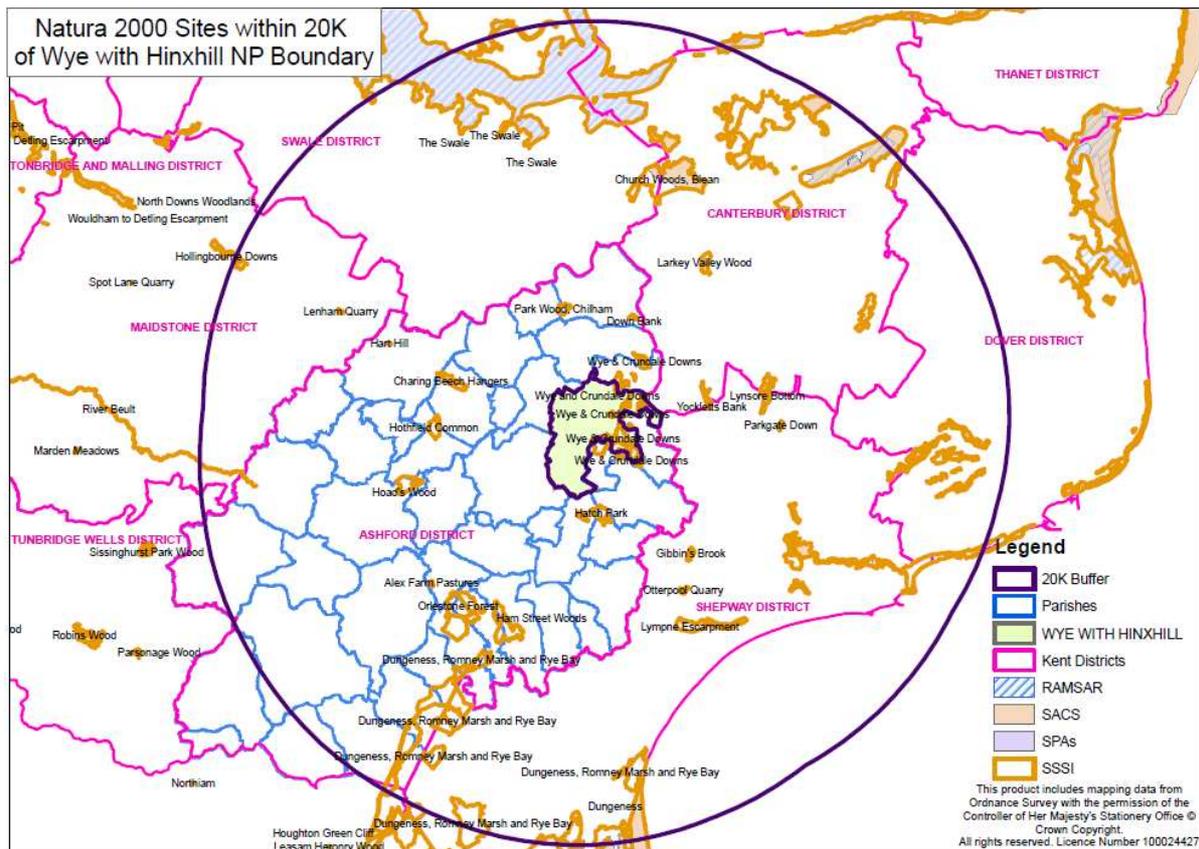


Figure 3: Natura 2000 Sites within 20k of Wye with Hinxhill Neighbourhood Area Boundary

5 Conclusions and Recommendations:

5.1 This report contains details regarding the need for Wye Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment as required by the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and Appropriate Assessment as required by the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

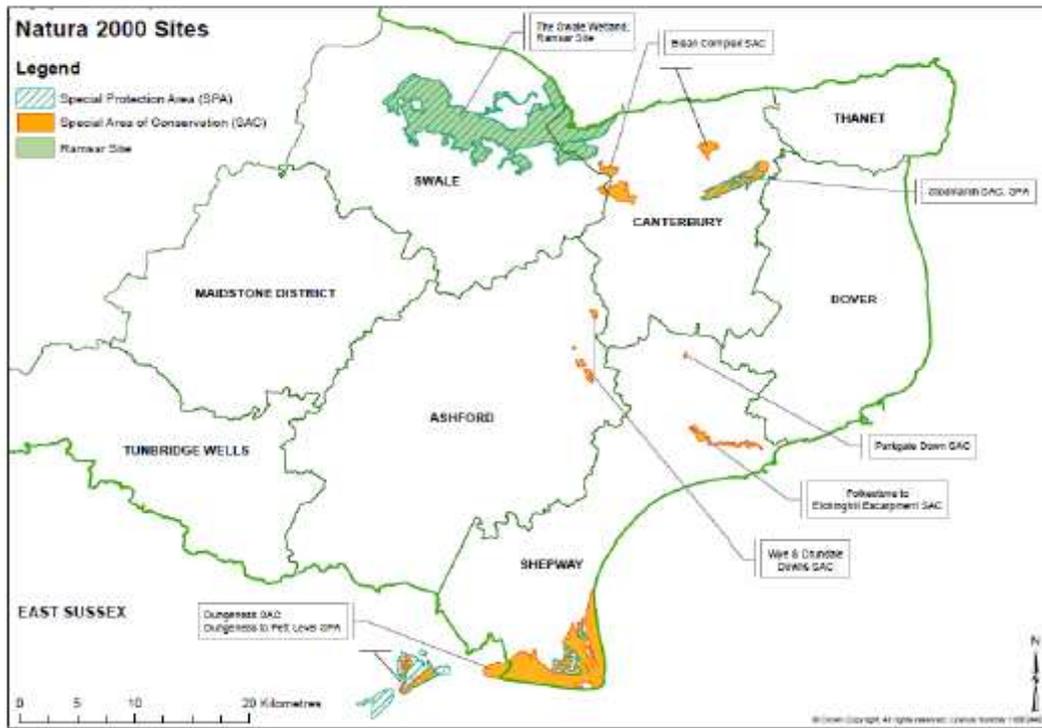
5.2 In relation to the requirement for Wye Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), the plan is looking to allocate the former Wye College site for a mix of uses including a reasonable level of new residential development. The neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural and heritage assets including an internationally designated site, as such an assessment is likely to be required. The development itself will not be reversible and the whole of Wye lies within the Kent Downs AONB. There are many listed buildings and areas affected by floodplain in and around the village and therefore proposals may potentially have an impact on the environment.

5.3 To fulfil the requirements of the SEA Directive, the Neighbourhood Plan must assess options in working towards bring the objectives of the plan forward, notably alternative sites.

5.4 The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) considers potential impacts of the plan on internationally designated wildlife sites within 20km of the Neighbourhood Area. The assessment above has looked in simple terms at the emerging contents of the Wye NP and concludes that its proposals will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of internationally designated sites either

on its own or in combination with other plans, and as such the Wye NP is not subject to a Habitats Regulation Assessment. Should the content of the plan change significantly then this scoping report will need to be revisited.

Appendix 1:



Appendix 2

Reproduction of European Directive 2001/42/EC

Annex I

1. Crude-oil refineries (excluding undertakings manufacturing only lubricants from crude oil) and installations for the gasification and liquefaction of 500 tonnes or more of coal or bituminous shale per day.
2. Thermal power stations and other combustion installations with a heat output of 300 megawatts or more and nuclear power stations and other nuclear reactors (except research installations for the production and conversion of fissionable and fertile materials, whose maximum power does not exceed 1 kilowatt continuous thermal load).
3. Installations solely designed for the permanent storage or final disposal of radioactive waste.
4. Integrated works for the initial melting of cast-iron and steel.
5. Installations for the extraction of asbestos and for the processing and transformation of asbestos and products containing asbestos: for asbestos-cement products, with an annual production of more than 20 000 tonnes of finished products, for friction material, with an annual production of more than 50 tonnes of finished products, and for other uses of asbestos, utilization of more than 200 tonnes per year.
6. Integrated chemical installations.
7. Construction of motorways, express roads (1) and lines for long-distance railway traffic and of airports (2) with a basic runway length of 2 100 m or more.
8. Trading ports and also inland waterways and ports for inland-waterway traffic which permit the passage of vessels of over 1 350 tonnes.
9. Waste-disposal installations for the incineration, chemical treatment or land fill of toxic and dangerous wastes.

(1) For the purposes of the Directive, 'express road' means a road which complies with the definition in the European Agreement on main international traffic arteries of 15 November 1975.

(2) For the purposes of this Directive, 'airport' means airports which comply with the definition in the 1944 Chicago Convention setting up the International Civil Aviation Organization (Annex 14).

Annex II

1. Agriculture

- (a) Projects for the restructuring of rural land holdings.
- (b) Projects for the use of uncultivated land or semi-natural areas for intensive agricultural purposes.
- (c) Water-management projects for agriculture.
- (d) Initial afforestation where this may lead to adverse ecological changes and land reclamation for the purposes of conversion to another type of land use.
- (e) Poultry-rearing installations.

- (f) Pig-rearing installations.
- (g) Salmon breeding.
- (h) Reclamation of land from the sea.

2. Extractive industry

- (a) Extraction of peat.
- (b) Deep drillings with the exception of drillings for investigating the stability of the soil and in particular:
 - geothermal drilling,
 - drilling for the storage of nuclear waste material,
 - drilling for water supplies.
- (c) Extraction of minerals other than metalliferous and energy-producing minerals, such as marble, sand, gravel, shale, salt, phosphates and potash.
- (d) Extraction of coal and lignite by underground mining. (e) Extraction of coal and lignite by open-cast mining.
- (f) Extraction of petroleum.
- (g) Extraction of natural gas.
- (h) Extraction of ores.
- (i) Extraction of bituminous shale.
- (j) Extraction of minerals other than metalliferous and energy-producing minerals by open-cast mining.
- (k) Surface industrial installations for the extraction of coal, petroleum, natural gas and ores, as well as bituminous shale.
- (l) Coke ovens (dry coal distillation).
- (m) Installations for the manufacture of cement.

3. Energy industry

- (a) Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (unless included in Annex I).
- (b) Industrial installations for carrying gas, steam and hot water; transmission of electrical energy by overhead cables.
- (c) Surface storage of natural gas.
- (d) Underground storage of combustible gases.
- (e) Surface storage of fossil fuels.
- (f) Industrial briquetting of coal and lignite.
- (g) Installations for the production or enrichment of nuclear fuels.
- (h) Installations for the reprocessing of irradiated nuclear fuels.
- (i) Installations for the collection and processing of radioactive waste (unless included in Annex I).
- (j) Installations for hydroelectric energy production.

4. Processing of metals

- (a) Iron and steelworks, including foundries, forges, drawing plants and rolling mills (unless included in Annex I).

- (b) Installations for the production, including smelting, refining, drawing and rolling, of nonferrous metals, excluding precious metals.
- (c) Pressing, drawing and stamping of large castings.
- (d) Surface treatment and coating of metals.
- (e) Boilermaking, manufacture of reservoirs, tanks and other sheet-metal containers.
- (f) Manufacture and assembly of motor vehicles and manufacture of motor-vehicle engines.
- (g) Shipyards.
- (h) Installations for the construction and repair of aircraft.
- (i) Manufacture of railway equipment.
- (j) Swaging by explosives.
- (k) Installations for the roasting and sintering of metallic ores.

5. Manufacture of glass

6. Chemical industry

- (a) Treatment of intermediate products and production of chemicals (unless included in Annex I).
- (b) Production of pesticides and pharmaceutical products, paint and varnishes, elastomers and peroxides.
- (c) Storage facilities for petroleum, petrochemical and chemical products.

7. Food industry

- (a) Manufacture of vegetable and animal oils and fats.
- (b) Packing and canning of animal and vegetable products.
- (c) Manufacture of dairy products.
- (d) Brewing and malting.
- (e) Confectionery and syrup manufacture.
- (f) Installations for the slaughter of animals.
- (g) Industrial starch manufacturing installations.
- (h) Fish-meal and fish-oil factories.
- (i) Sugar factories.

8. Textile, leather, wood and paper industries

- (a) Wool scouring, degreasing and bleaching factories.
- (b) Manufacture of fibre board, particle board and plywood.
- (c) Manufacture of pulp, paper and board.
- (d) Fibre-dyeing factories.
- (e) Cellulose-processing and production installations.
- (f) Tannery and leather-dressing factories.

9. Rubber industry

- (a) Manufacture and treatment of elastomer-based products.

10. Infrastructure projects

- (a) Industrial-estate development projects.
- (b) Urban-development projects.
- (c) Ski-lifts and cable-cars.
- (d) Construction of roads, harbours, including fishing harbours, and airfields (projects not listed in Annex I).
- (e) Canalization and flood-relief works.
- (f) Dams and other installations designed to hold water or store it on a long-term basis.
- (g) Tramways, elevated and underground railways, suspended lines or similar lines of a particular type, used exclusively or mainly for passenger transport.
- (h) Oil and gas pipeline installations.
- (i) Installation of long-distance aqueducts.
- (j) Yacht marinas.

11. Other projects

- (a) Holiday villages, hotel complexes.
- (b) Permanent racing and test tracks for cars and motor cycles.
- (c) Installations for the disposal of industrial and domestic waste (unless included in Annex I).
- (d) Waste water treatment plants.
- (e) Sludge-deposition sites.
- (f) Storage of scrap iron.
- (g) Test benches for engines, turbines or reactors.
- (h) Manufacture of artificial mineral fibres.
- (i) Manufacture, packing, loading or placing in cartridges of gunpowder and explosives.
- (j) Knackers' yards.

12. Modifications to development projects included in Annex I and projects in Annex I undertaken exclusively or mainly for the development and testing of new methods or products and not used for more than one year.

Appendix 3:

Responses from Statutory Consultees following consultation on this screening report.

Environment Agency *(Received 3/11/2014)*

Thank you for consulting us on the above SEA/SA Screening Report. We agree with the conclusions of the report.

Natural England *(Received 3/11/2014)*

Thank you for consulting Natural England on your SEA/HRA Screening Report. My comments are as follows:

- We accept your conclusions in paragraph 3.4, that there are likely to be effects on the environment from development (albeit that the scale of effects will depend upon the content of the Plan), and that an SEA may be required.
- The proper planning of the neighbourhood should be informed by an understanding of these sorts of issues, and - subject to the location, nature, scale and design of development and mitigation - a full, formal SEA may not be needed.
- We also accept your conclusions in paragraph 4.10 that the assessment of potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites resulting from the proposals in the Wye Neighbourhood Plan has concluded that there is unlikely to be adverse impacts on the integrity of sites, and that a full Appropriate Assessment is not deemed necessary.
- We note that this conclusion draws on the assessment of the adopted Core Strategy, and the assumption that appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures are in place; and that should the content of the plan change significantly the scoping report will need to be revisited.

English Heritage *(Received 30/09/2014)*

Acknowledged receipt.