



**ASTWOOD
& HARDMEAD**
Please Drive Carefully

Neighbourhood Plan

2020 - 2031



Basic Conditions Statement

March 2021

1 Introduction

1.1 This Basic Conditions Statement has been prepared in support of the Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan (2020 – 2031) to accompany its submission to Milton Keynes Council under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. It should be read in conjunction with the main document and its evidence base.

1.2 The Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 065 Reference ID: 41-065-20140306) explains that only a neighbourhood plan that meets a set of ‘basic conditions’ can be put to referendum and duly made part of the development plan. The basic conditions are set out in paragraph 8(2) of the Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as applied to neighbourhood plans by section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and are as follows:

- having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood plan;
- the making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- the making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority; and
- the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with EU obligations

1.3 This Statement provides evidence to demonstrate the Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan’s compliance with the basic conditions and is structured according to each individual condition.

2 Background

2.1 The preparation of the Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan began in 2018 with the Parish Council creating a Steering Group to lead its development. The plan has been subject to an extensive amount of consultation and engagement with the local community which is detailed in the separate Consultation Statement published as part of the submission documentation.

2.2 The Steering Group has also worked closely with officers of Milton Keynes Council during the preparation of the plan and has appointed its own professional planning advice to assist in the formulation and drafting of policy.

2.3 The Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan confirms that the following Vision has been adopted to inform and direct the policies contained within it:

To sustain and enhance rural village life through sympathetic expansion

2.4 By 2031, the plan seeks to meet the following objectives:

- Small scale housing growth will have taken place which is respectful of the surrounding area and built to a high standard of design;
- Sustainable and appropriate rural employment will have been accommodated;
- Important local green spaces and community facilities will have been protected; and
- The surrounding landscape that is important to the character of the area will have been preserved and maintained

2.5 The neighbourhood plan contains eight policies and a Policies Map which identifies where some of the policies will apply in the Parish. The neighbourhood plan covers the entirety of the Parish, as follows:

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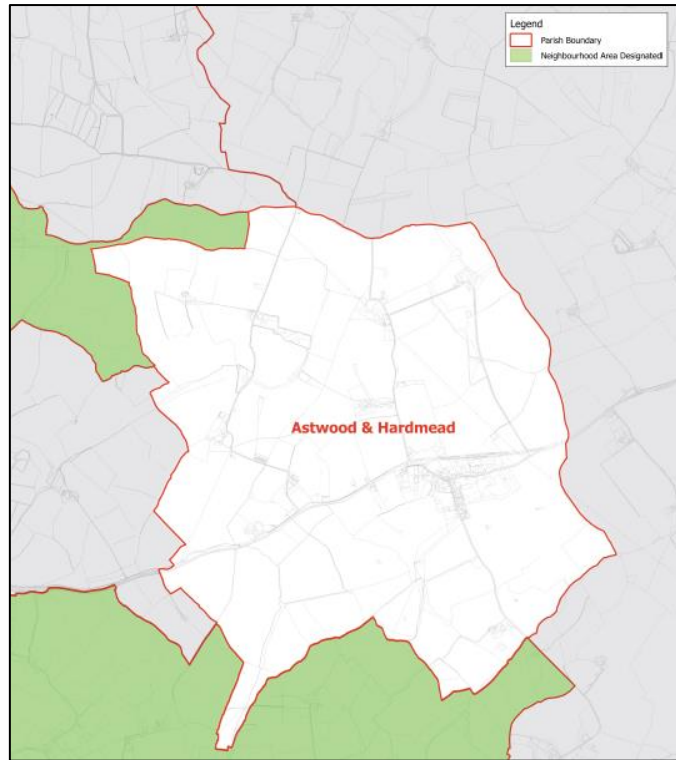


Figure 1: Designated Neighbourhood Plan area

3 Conformity with National Planning Policy

3.1 The Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared with regard to national policies as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in February 2019 and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

3.2 Paragraph 13 of the NPPF sets out requirements for how communities should engage in neighbourhood planning. In accordance with this, the neighbourhood plan supports the delivery of strategic policies set out in the Local Plan, including its policies for housing and economic development and seeks to shape and direct development that is outside these strategic policies.

3.3 In accordance with Paragraph 16 of the NPPF, the Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan:

- Contributes to the objective of achieving sustainable development, as explained in Section 4 of this Statement;
- Has been prepared positively through community engagement and the allocation of land for housing as explained in the Consultation Statement;
- Has been shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement with the community and other consultees, as explained in the Consultation Statement;
- Contains policies that are clearly written and unambiguous;
- Is accessible via the Neighbourhood Plan website to assist public involvement and policy presentation; and
- Serves a clear purpose in the context of the area, complementing rather than duplicating existing national and Local Plan policies

3.4 In overall terms, there are three NPPF Paragraphs (28 - 30) that provide general guidance on neighbourhood planning, to which the Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan has directly responded. The plan contains non-strategic policies to shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development and represents a vision, objectives and policies for the Parish that reflect the desires of the majority of the local community.

3.5 Table 1 below provides a summary of how each policy conforms to the NPPF.

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| Neighbourhood Plan Policy | Commentary |
|--|--|
| <p>Policy H1: Housing Requirement</p> | <p>In accordance with Paragraph 66, Milton Keynes Council has confirmed that the indicative housing figure for the Parish is one dwelling, although, in the interests of positive planning and in line with the views of local residents, the neighbourhood plan seeks to deliver a small amount of housing growth in the Parish through one housing allocation.</p> <p>The policy establishes the key spatial plan for directing future development proposals in the Parish and will guide how development will be delivered under a planned system in accordance with Paragraph 15.</p> <p>The policy will ensure that a sufficient amount of land for housing in the neighbourhood plan area will be provided in accordance with Paragraph 59.</p> |
| <p>Policy H2: Land to the north-west of former St. Peter's Church</p> | <p>In line with Paragraph 69, the neighbourhood plan takes the opportunity to allocate a small site which Paragraph 68 identifies can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area.</p> <p>The policy contains 7 criteria to which development must accord including the requirement for the listed building as a designated heritage asset to be conserved in a manner appropriate to its significance in line with Paragraph 184 and the requirement for a proportionate archaeological desktop based assessment and field evaluation in accordance with Paragraph 189.</p> <p>The policy also seeks to provide a high-quality development in accordance with Paragraph 124.</p> <p>The allocation will promote sustainable development in a rural area and has the ability to bolster existing service provision and improve facilities in line with Paragraph 78 which requires housing to be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.</p> |
| <p>Policy EC1: Commercial Development</p> | <p>The policy accords with Paragraph 83 which states that planning policies should enable the sustainable growth</p> |

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| | and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings and the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. |
| Policy EN1: Renewable Energy | The policy supports renewable energy projects where it can be demonstrated there will be no adverse impacts on amenity and landscape in line with Paragraph 151 and Paragraph 170 . |
| Policy D1: Design | <p>The policy seeks to achieve a high quality of design in new developments. In doing so it refers to a range of matters including materials, scale, spacing, massing, height and boundary treatments so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable having regard to Paragraph 125.</p> <p>The policy also accords with Paragraph 8 which seeks to foster a well-designed and safe built environment and Paragraph 124 which confirms that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.</p> |
| Policy L1: Local Green Space Designation | The policy provides for the designation of Local Green Space in accordance with the provisions of Paragraphs 99 to 101 . |
| Policy L2: Rights of Way | The policy accords with Paragraph 98 which states that planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users. |
| Policy C1: Loss of Community Facilities | <p>The policy accords with Paragraph 92 which states that planning policies should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs.</p> <p>The policy also accords with Paragraph 91 which states that planning policies should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people.</p> |

Table 1: Conformity of the Neighbourhood Plan with the NPPF

4 Achievement of Sustainable Development

4.1 Paragraphs 7 to 11 of the NPPF set out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development which has three overarching objectives - economic, social and environmental. Table 2 below provides an explanation of how the neighbourhood plan contributes to each.

| Sustainable Development (NPPF definition) | Commentary |
|--|--|
| <p>Economic To help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.</p> | <p>The delivery of land for development under Policy H2 will support construction and supply-chain jobs as well as economic growth in the area through new residents bringing consumer expenditure and increasing demand for local goods and services and patronage of local facilities.</p> <p>Policy EC1 supports the enhancement of local employment opportunities in order to help build a sustainable community.</p> |
| <p>Social To support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.</p> | <p>Policies H1 and H2 provide for housing growth that reflects the needs of the village over the plan period within the redefined development boundary of the village. The introduction of a new population will aid the social vitality of the village and ensure that the community is sustained.</p> <p>Policy C1 seeks to protect existing community facilities for the use and enjoyment of the local population which will contribute to ensuring a vibrant community and improved health and well-being.</p> <p>Policies H2 and D1 support the social and cultural well-being of the community by ensuring design of new development is appropriate for its location and enhances and protects the historic environment.</p> <p>Policy L1 seeks to protect identified Local Green Spaces that are highly cherished by local residents and</p> |

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| | <p>supports proposals to enhance recreation and leisure for the social benefit of the village.</p> <p>Policy L2 seeks to ensure Rights of Ways are retained and improved to afford access to the wider countryside for the enjoyment of all.</p> |
| <p>Environmental</p> <p>To contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.</p> | <p>Policies H2 and D1 confirm the importance of development being in keeping with the village’s built and historic environment.</p> <p>Policy L1 recognises areas within the Parish that are of high environmental value and seeks to protect these from development.</p> <p>Policy EN1 contributes to mitigation and adaptation to climate change by supports appropriate proposals for renewable energy projects.</p> |

Table 2: Achievement of Sustainable Development

5 General Conformity with the Strategic Policies of the Development Plan

- 5.1 The Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to ensure that it is in general conformity with the development plan for the area which comprises Plan:MK, formally adopted in March 2019 as demonstrated in Table 3 below.

| Neighbourhood Plan Policy | Commentary |
|--|---|
| <p>Policy H1: Housing Requirement</p> | <p>The policy maintains the principle of a settlement boundary for the village as established by Plan:MK but modifies it to accommodate the allocation proposed by the housing allocation.</p> <p>The policy is consistent with Plan:MK Policy DS1 which states that within the rural area, new development will occur within villages and other rural settlements at locations identified in made Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p>The policy also conforms with Plan:MK Policy DS2 which identifies as part of the housing strategy, the ability for small to medium scale development within rural settlements to be delivered through allocations in Neighbourhood Plans in order to make a local contribution to the District’s housing supply over the plan period.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Policy accords with Plan:MK Policy DS5, ensuring the safeguarding of open countryside from inappropriate development.</p> |
| <p>Policy H2: Land to the north-west of former St. Peter’s Church</p> | <p>As above, the site allocation is in conformity with Plan:MK Policy DS2 which explains that housing proposals will be granted where allocated in neighbourhood plans.</p> <p>The policy contains 7 criteria to which development must accord including the requirement for the significance of the listed building to be maintained and where possible enhanced and for proposals to be accompanied by an appropriate desk-based assessment</p> |

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| | <p>and field evaluation in accordance with Plan:MK Policy H1.</p> <p>The policy also seeks to provide a high-quality development in accordance with Plan:MK Policies D1 – D3.</p> <p>The policy also seeks to ensure appropriate amenity for new residents in line with Plan:MK Policy D5.</p> <p>Car parking is to be provided in accordance with Plan:MK Policy CT10.</p> |
| Policy EC1: Commercial Development | The policy complies with Plan:MK Policy ER8 which states that proposals which sustain and enhance the rural economy by creating or safeguarding jobs and businesses will be supported where they are of an appropriate scale for their location and respect the environmental quality and character of the open countryside. |
| Policy EN1: Renewable Energy | The policy supports renewable energy projects where it can be demonstrated there will be no adverse impacts on amenity and landscape in line with Plan:MK Policy SD2 and NE5 . |
| Policy D1: Design | The policy has regard to Plan:MK Policies D1 – D3 which relate to designing a high quality place. |
| Policy L1: Local Green Space Designation | This policy complements Plan:MK Policy L2 in protecting open space, as that policy makes no reference to Local Green Spaces. |
| Policy L2: Rights of Way | The policy complies with Plan:MK Policy CT3 which states that the existing Right Of Way network should be retained, improved and extended. |
| Policy C1: Loss of Community Facilities | The policy complies with Plan:MK Policy CC3 which seeks to protect community facilities. |

Table 3: Conformity of the Neighbourhood Plan with Plan:MK

6 Compatibility with EU Legislation

6.1 The Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared having regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights and complies with the Human Rights Act. There has been full and adequate opportunity for all interested parties to take part in the preparation of the plan and to make their comments known.

6.2 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening was undertaken by Milton Keynes Council in February 2021 to determine the need for a SEA in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The screening response (**Appendix 1**) confirms that the Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan would not have any significant environmental effects and that an SEA would not be required for the plan to be in accordance with EU Directive 2001/42A the conclusion being:

‘Having screened the Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan and consulted with Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency, it is the view of Milton Keynes Council that the Plan’s effects are unlikely to have any significant impacts beyond the Neighbourhood Area and it is considered that overall the Plan will not have significant effects on the environment. It is, therefore, concluded that the Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan does not need to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment.’

6.3 The screening also addressed the need for Appropriate Assessment, in accordance with European Directive 92/43/EEC. It confirmed that the Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan is not in close proximity to any European designated nature sites and that no Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) is required of the plan under the EU Habitats Regulations concluding:

‘Given the role of Neighbourhood Plans and the nature of the Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan which seeks mainly to maintain the status quo of built development in the parish, it is considered that Appropriate Assessment of the plan is not required.’

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 This Basic Conditions Statement has been prepared to demonstrate that the Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan (2020 – 2031) meets the conditions set out in paragraph 8(2) of the Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as applied to neighbourhood plans by section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 7.2 In summary the plan has taken a positive approach to planning for sustained small scale growth in a manner commensurate with national and strategic policy, with which it is consistent. It will contribute to sustainable development by providing new dwellings to ensure the continued vitality of the village as well as protecting green spaces, community facilities and historic characteristics that are valued within the village. There are no high-level environmental constraints or legal obligations that prevent the Neighbourhood Plan being successfully examined and proceeding to referendum.
- 7.3 The Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan therefore fulfils Section 15(1) paragraph (d) of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

Appendix 1

Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Development Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement

Appropriate Assessment Screening

February 2021

1. Introduction

1.1 What is the screening opinion?

1.2 This report has been produced to determine the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

1.3 This document also addresses the need for Appropriate Assessment, in accordance with European Directive 92/43/EEC, commonly known as the Habitats Directive.

1.4 What is the Neighbourhood Plan trying to achieve?

The Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan covers the entire Astwood and Hardmead parish area (see appendix 1), which is a rural parish.

1.5 The plan allocates a single housing allocation on the edge of the village.

2. Policy context

2.1 Plan:MK was formally adopted in March 2019. Plan:MK provides the statutory land use planning framework for Milton Keynes.

2.2 Although the Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of Plan:MK, it can promote more development, but must not propose less. It will also provide a more local context to the non-strategic policies of the Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to public consultation in accordance with the relevant regulations prior to its adoption.

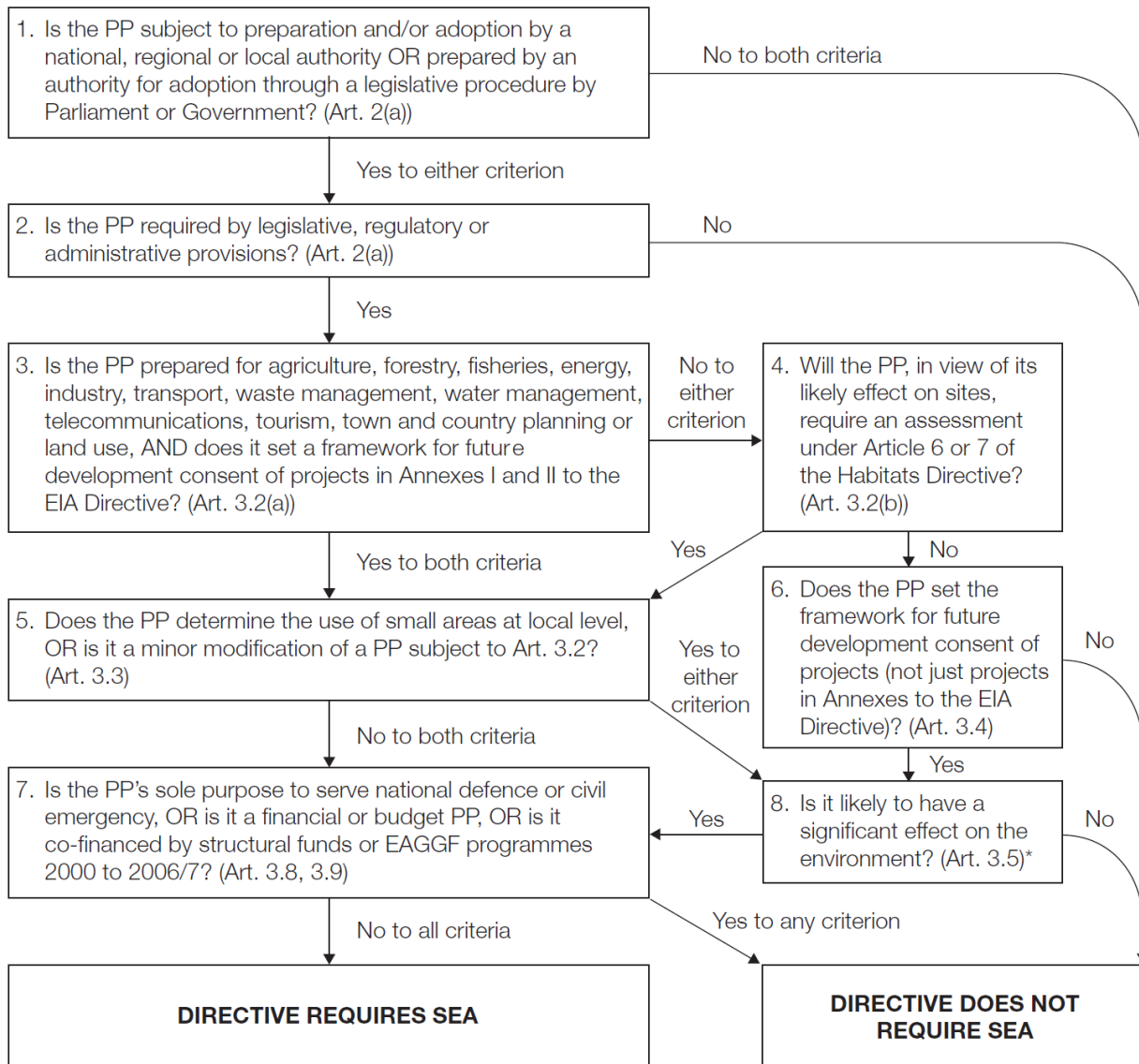
3. SEA Screening

3.1 The requirement for a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) is set out in the “Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004”. There is also practical guidance on applying European Directive 2001/42/EC produced by the ODPM (now DCLG)¹. These documents have been used as the basis for this screening report.

3.2 Neighbourhood Plans must be screened to establish whether or not they will require Strategic Environmental Assessment. The ODPM practical guidance provides a checklist approach based on the SEA regulations to help determine whether SEA is required. This guide has been used as the basis on which to assess the need for SEA as set out below.

¹ A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2005) (ODPM)

Figure 1: Establishing the need for SEA



*The Directive requires Member States to determine whether plans or programmes in this category are likely to have significant environmental effects. These determinations may be made on a case by case basis and/or by specifying types of plan or programme.

Figure 2: Establishing the need for SEA of the Neighbourhood Plan

| Stage | Answer | Reason |
|---|---|--|
| 1. Is the SPD subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament of Government? (Article 2(a)) | Yes | It will be prepared by Astwood and Hardmead Parish Council and will be adopted by Milton Keynes Council under the 2012 Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. |
| 2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Article 2(a)) | Yes | Although there is no requirement to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, when Plans are produced they are subject to formal procedures and regulations laid down by national government. In light of the European Court of Justice ruling in the Case C-567/10 it is considered that this means the NP is 'required'. |
| 3. Is the SPD prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art. 3.2(a)) | No | The NP is prepared for town and country planning purposes but does not explicitly set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I or II of the EIA Directive. |
| 4. Will the plan in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats directive? | No | An Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken for Plan:MK and that has also concluded that the local plan will not require assessment under the Habitats Directive. The relatively small level of additional development likely to arise from the Neighbourhood Plan means that it is unlikely to require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive. |
| 6. Does the plan set the framework for future development consent of projects? | Yes | The Neighbourhood Plan will provide a framework for future development consent of projects in the area. |
| 8. Is the Neighbourhood Plan likely to have a significant effect on the environment? | See results of Figure 3: Determining the likely significance of effects | |

Figure 3: Determining the likely significance of effects

| SEA Directive Annex II: Criteria for determining likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) | | |
|---|------------|---|
| Criteria | ✓/✗ | MKC Comment |
| <i>The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</i> | | |
| 1a) 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 NP will set a policy framework for the determination of planning applications for future development projects, in terms of location, nature and scale. However, the plan will need to be in general conformity with higher level plans so the scope of the plan to fully influence projects and activities is somewhat limited. |
| 1b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy | ✓ | The NP will form part of the statutory development plan for MK with the same status in decision making as development plan documents. |
| 1c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development | ✓ | The achievement of sustainable development is one of the basic conditions that a Neighbourhood Plan must meet. The Neighbourhood Plan aims to improve the quality of the area whilst not delaying sustainable development and will promote a limited amount of new development in Astwood and Hardmead village through a site allocation. |
| 1d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme | ✗ | It is not considered that there are any particular environmental problems relevant to the plan. |
| 1e) 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). | ✗ | The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to be directly relevant in regard to this criterion. |
| <i>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</i> | | |
| 2a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects | ✗ | Overall the effects of the plan on SEA topics are considered to be neutral. Where new development might have a negative effect this will be reasonably long term, although the effect is potentially reversible as redevelopment can occur. |
| 2b) The cumulative nature of the effects | ✗ | The cumulative impacts of the effects of the plan on the environment are not expected |

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|--|---|---|
| | | to be any greater than the individual parts. |
| 2c) The trans-boundary nature of the effects | x | The Plan is not considered to have any significant effects beyond the Milton Keynes Council boundary. |
| 2d) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents) | x | The Plan's impact on human health is considered to be limited and it is not likely to have a significant impact on the environment due to accidents. |
| 2e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected) | x | The effects of the plan are unlikely to be felt in a spatial area wider than the plan area. The plan is also unlikely to affect any population outside the plan area. |
| 2f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: I. special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, II. exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values III. intensive land-use | x | The NP is essentially seeking to protect the existing environment whilst allowing appropriate sustainable development. The Plan allocates a small housing site within the setting of St Peter's Church, a Grade II* listed building. The church can be glimpsed over the site upon entering the village and therefore development of the site is likely to result in some degree of harm to the setting of the listed building. Depending on design this harm could be less than substantial and outweighed by the benefits of a small housing development. |
| 2g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status | x | There are no areas or landscapes with these designations in Milton Keynes. |

4. SEA Conclusion

4.1 The Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan will provide a planning policy framework to be used when considering planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area.

4.2 The Plan's effects are unlikely to have any significant impacts beyond the Neighbourhood Area beyond the plan boundary and it is considered that overall the plan will not have significant effects on the environment. It is, therefore, concluded that the Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan does not need to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment.

5. Consultation on SEA Screening Opinion

5.1 The three statutory bodies for the purposes of SEA Screening are Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England. These three bodies were consulted on the draft Screening Opinion and the following comments were received:

Historic England: No response.

Environment Agency: We agree with the conclusions that have been reached.

Natural England: Based on the plan submitted, Natural England agree with the assessment that the Neighbourhood Plan does not require a SEA or HRA.

SEA Screening Conclusion

Having screened the Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan and consulted with Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency, it is the view of Milton Keynes Council that the Plan's effects are unlikely to have any significant impacts beyond the Neighbourhood Area and it is considered that overall the Plan will not have significant effects on the environment. It is, therefore, concluded that the Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan does not need to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment.

6. Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening

6.1 Legal protection is afforded to habitats and species of European importance through Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna - known as the 'Habitats Directive'. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive require AA of plans to be undertaken. This involves assessing the contents of plans to ensure that their policies and proposals maintain the integrity of Natura 2000 sites. The assessment must determine whether the plan would adversely affect the nature conservation objectives of each site. Where negative effects can be identified, other options should be examined to avoid any potential damaging effects.

6.2 The application of the precautionary principle through the Habitats Directive means that plans can only be permitted once it is shown that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites. In the rare case of there being no alternatives available or over-riding reasons of public interest why a plan needs to be implemented, plans that do have negative impacts may still be approved.

7. Screening for Appropriate Assessment

7.1 The first stage in carrying out an Appropriate Assessment for the Habitats Directive is screening, by determining whether the plan is likely to have any significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

7.2 The Neighbourhood Plan will be in general conformity with Plan:MK which itself was screened for Appropriate Assessment. The screening process for Plan:MK demonstrated that Milton Keynes lies in an area void of any Natura 2000 sites. The nearest European site is the Chiltern Beechwoods to the south of the Borough although it was determined that the site would not be affected by Milton

Keynes planning policy due to the distance of the site from Milton Keynes and there being no obvious impact pathways.

- 7.3 An Appropriate Assessment has been published for Plan:MK (http://miltonkeynes.objective.co.uk/portal/planmk/plan_mk_submission/planmk_sa_hra?pointId=1510067377589) which covers the period to 2031. This considers the impact of the Local Plan on the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA and concludes that “development in the Milton Keynes Local Plan will not have a likely significant effect on any internationally important wildlife sites either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. These conclusions are based on the findings of the AA screening which concludes that no Natura 2000 sites are located within the district and no impact pathways have been identified linking Natura 2000 sites outside of the district e.g. Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar to development within Milton Keynes Borough. Therefore an Appropriate Assessment is not required.”

8. Appropriate Assessment Conclusion

- 8.1 Given the role of Neighbourhood Plans and the nature of the Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan which seeks mainly to maintain the status quo of built development in the parish, it is considered that Appropriate Assessment of the plan is not required.

9. Contact

Further information can be obtained from:

UDLA
Planning, Strategic Transport and Placemaking
Civic Offices
1 Saxon Gate East
Central Milton Keynes
MK9 3EJ

W: www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-policy

T: 01908 691691

E: neighbourhoodplanning@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Map of Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Area

