

Blaby Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment - Screening Opinion Report

Provided by Blaby District Council on behalf of Blaby Parish Council

September 2015

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Localism Act (2011) introduced new powers to enable local communities to guide and shape development through the production of Neighbourhood Plans, with further accompanying detail on how to do this set out in The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
- 1.2 This screening report is designed to determine whether or not the contents of the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 1.3 It also determines whether or not the contents of the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan require a Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment in accordance with European Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, ie, the 'Habitats Directive' and the associated Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (otherwise known as the 'Habitats Regulations').
- 1.4 European Directives have been transposed into national law through UK legislative statutory instruments (further details of which will be provided in section 2 below) to determine whether they would have significant environmental effects (SEA) or have an impact on any internationally designated wildlife sites (HRA). This has resulted in the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan needing to be screened in relation to whether it needs to be supported by a Strategic Environmental Assessment and / or a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), ie, an 'appropriate assessment'.
- 1.5 It should be noted that the adopted Blaby District Local Plan (Feb 2013) (with which the Neighbourhood Plan must be in accordance) has been subject to a full Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal in accordance with the legislation, as well as an appropriate assessment scoping report in relation to the Habitats Regulations (which concluded that a full Appropriate Assessment of it would not be required). These will be taken into account in providing this screening opinion.
- 1.6 This report details whether there is a need for the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan to be accompanied by an SEA or HRA. It has concluded that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required to accompany the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan, but a Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment is not required. Details of the reasoning behind these conclusions are provided later in the report.

1.7 This report has been sent to the three statutory consultees (Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency) to seek their views on its contents. Their responses are attached in Appendix 1.

2 Legislation

2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

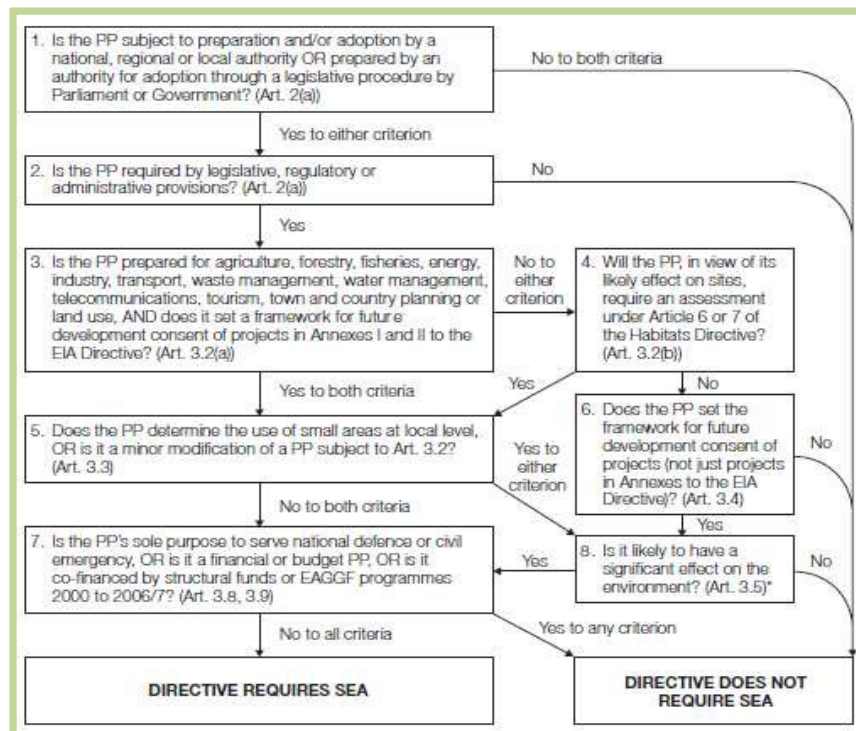
2.1.1 The basis for requiring Strategic Environmental Assessment is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English Law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Detailed guidance of these Regulations can be found in the Government publication, 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM 2005). Further information on SEA (and SEA in relation to Neighbourhood Plans) is contained within the Government's National Planning Practice Guidance online tool.

2.1.2 The objective of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) is set out in Article 1 therein, which states:

'The objective of this Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.'

2.1.3 To establish if a Neighbourhood Plan needs to be accompanied by a full SEA, a "screening" assessment is required against a series of criteria set out in the SEA Directive. These are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Criteria against which the requirement for SEA to be screened



2.1.4 Assessing the significance of the environmental effects that a Neighbourhood Plan will have depends on the policies within it. The criteria for assessing significance are referred to in Article 3.5 and set out within Annex II of the SEA Directive, as shown below:

Figure 2: Criteria for assessing significance

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

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

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

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

2.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment

2.2.1 A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required for a plan or project to assess the potential implications for European wildlife sites, ie, 'European sites' or 'Natura 2000 sites'. It explores whether the implementation of a plan or project would harm the habitats or species for which the European sites are designated. The European sites are:

- Special Protection Areas (SPAs) – designated by the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC as amended and 2009/147/EC), and:

- Special Areas of Conservation – designated by the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

2.2.2 In addition to SPAs and SACs, Ramsar sites are designated under the Ramsar convention. The Ramsar convention's mission is to conserve and sustainably utilise wetland habitats. Although Ramsar sites are not covered by the Habitats Regulations, as a matter of Government Policy, they should be treated in the same way as European wildlife sites (ie, SPAs and SACs). European wildlife sites and Ramsar sites are collectively known as internationally designated wildlife sites.

2.2.3 The basis for requiring a Habitats Regulations Assessment stems from the European Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. This has been transposed into UK legislation by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (which has subsequently been amended by Schedule 2 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012).

3 Blaby Neighbourhood Plan

3.1 Blaby Parish Council submitted an application to Blaby District Council in August / September 2013 for the Parish of Blaby, in its entirety, to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area with a view to producing a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish. Blaby District Council approved this application at a Council meeting in February 2014. Since this time, Blaby Parish Council has been working to produce the draft plan.

3.2 The Neighbourhood Plan covers a number of key areas through policy. These are:

- Policy BCE1: Character and Environment – this seeks to ensure that all new development is of an appropriate design that reflects its surroundings by virtue of its scale, layout and materials.
- Policy BCE2: Local Green Space – this seeks to ensure those green spaces around the village of most value to the community are protected from development. This applies to sites BCE2a, BCE2b, BCE2c and BCE2d within the Plan.
- Policy BCE2d: Green Wedge – this seeks to protect the Green Wedge designation in its current general location. (Notwithstanding this, the reserve housing allocations would require the boundaries of the Green Wedge to be amended.)
- Policy BCE3: Implementation of the Blaby Masterplan – this seeks to deliver some of the identified improvement schemes in the Blaby Masterplan (2008) to improve the services on offer and the environmental quality of the town centre as funding is made available, whether through developer contributions or other sources.
- Policy BCE4: To identify reserve housing sites which are considered developable and acceptable to the majority of Blaby residents – this policy identifies two sites that, whilst not required for development in the current context, could potentially be developable over the longer term should the need arise. These sites could potentially yield a total of approximately 86 dwellings between them and are considered to only be acceptable to be brought forward for development should circumstances change and more houses are needed to be released in Blaby.
- Policy BCE5: To introduce local listing of heritage sites in Blaby to protect the heritage for future generations

3.3 The above policies represent the direction and policy aspirations of the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan, and are the basis for the screening assessment for SEA and HRA.

4 Blaby Neighbourhood Plan SEA screening assessment

- 4.3 The policies set out in the draft Blaby Neighbourhood Plan (those listed in Section 3) have been used to undertake this screening exercise against the criteria in Figures 1 and 2 in Section 2 above. Should there be any major changes to the existing policies or introduction of new ones, the revised Plan would be subject to a further screening exercise to explore whether any significant effects would be likely.
- 4.4 An SEA was completed as part of the adopted Blaby District Council Local Plan (Core Strategy) (Feb 2013), and this has been taken into account in this screening assessment.
- 4.5 Table 1 (below) outlines the results of the assessment against the criteria in Figures 1 and 2 in Section 2.

Table 1: Assessment of likely significant effects of the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan

Stage	Yes / No	Reason
1. Is the NP 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 or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	The preparation and adoption of Neighbourhood Plans is enabled by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and must be prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012. The NP will be prepared by Blaby Parish Council as the 'relevant body' and will be subject to examination and referendum. It must receive 50% or more yes votes at referendum before being 'made' by Blaby District Council as the local authority.
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	No	The preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan is optional. However, once 'made' by Blaby District Council, it will form part of the statutory Development Plan for the area and will be used in the consideration and determination of planning applications. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether the NP is likely to have a significant effect and hence whether an SEA is required.
3. Is the NP 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 Blaby Neighbourhood Plan addresses town and country planning matters, and does have policies in relation to land use, specifically the allocation of reserve housing sites to be brought forward in the event that circumstances change and further housing is required in the Parish. However, developments that fall within Annex I are 'excluded development' in relation to Neighbourhood Plans, and therefore cannot be planned for through the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan. In terms of EIA Directive Annex II development, neither of the potential site allocations meet the

		threshold to be considered EIA development.
4. Will the NP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	No	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have an effect on the Natura 2000 network of protected sites and therefore will not require a full appropriate assessment as per the Habitats Directive.</p> <p>A full Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was carried out as part of the Core Strategy preparation process in 2012. It concluded that the Blaby District Core Strategy alone or in combination with other plans is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on any of the Natura 2000 sites within approximately 25kms of the District boundary.</p> <p>The three Natura 2000 sites considered are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rutland Water Special Protection Area (Rutland) • River Mease Special Area of Conservation (Leicestershire and Derbyshire) • Ensor's Pool Special Area of Conservation (Nuneaton, Warwickshire) <p>The Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was endorsed by Natural England.</p> <p>It is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan will not affect the three identified Natura 2000 sites over and above the impact identified in the Core Strategy Habitats Regulations appropriate assessment screening report. Therefore, it is considered that a full Appropriate Assessment is not required (please see the Habitats Regulations Assessment screening exercise in Section 5 below).</p>
5. Does the NP 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	The Blaby Neighbourhood Plan does seek to determine the use of small sites at a local level through the allocation of 'reserve' housing sites and the identification of a Local Green Space.
6. Does the NP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)	Yes	The Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the Development Plan once 'made' by Blaby District Council, and will be used in the determination of planning applications. It, therefore, sets the framework for future developments at a local level.
7. Is the NP'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	A Neighbourhood Plan does not deal with these issues.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Annex II of the European	Yes, potentially	The Blaby Neighbourhood Plan (NP) does set a policy framework for future development within the Neighbourhood Area. This includes 'reserve' residential development allocations, which are only

<p>Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of certain plans and programmes on the environment sets out the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment. This section will assess the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan against these criteria)</p>	<p>to be brought forward in very specific circumstances (as the minimum development requirement for the Neighbourhood Area, ie, Blaby Parish, has already been met) as well as the protection of locally valued green spaces, including the identification of a Local Green Space.</p> <p>The NP seeks to protect the most valuable assets in the Parish within the context of the policies of the Local Plan Core Strategy, including the most valued green spaces and local heritage assets.</p> <p>The Blaby Neighbourhood Plan must conform to the Blaby District Local Plan Core Strategy. The NP supports the implementation of higher tier policies at the Neighbourhood Area level. It is therefore not considered to have significant influence on other plans or programmes or their effects on the environment.</p> <p>The NP contributes, as required, to the achievement of sustainable development at the Neighbourhood Area level. The policies within the NP are designed to protect the local environmental assets and places valued by people in Blaby Parish. The Neighbourhood Plan also seeks to allocate reserve housing sites, and therefore the Plan seeks to take account of environmental considerations and promote sustainable development where there is a need to accommodate further development.</p> <p>Whilst it is considered that the environmental impact of / problems associated with the NP is likely to be minimal due to the relatively limited scale of development proposed, and the specific circumstances under which it should be released, it would be advisable to explore in further detail any potential environmental problems in association with the reserve housing sites. Existing environmental problems (ie, any areas at flood risk) could be tackled through the implementation of the Plan, but this should be explored through a Strategic Environmental Assessment.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan has to be in conformity with the Local Plan, which has already had regard to European Community Legislation on the environment. Therefore, this is not relevant to the NP.</p> <p>In terms of probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects, the NP allocates two reserve sites for residential development (although these are expected to be released only in very special circumstances due to the current development requirements for Blaby in the Core Strategy already having been met). The effect of</p>
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	<p>the site allocations (should they come forward) would be to provide additional dwellings and this would be irreversible. Consequently, there could be some environmental impact due to this additional residential development / town centre improvements. Otherwise, the environmental impacts are considered to be minimal with policies designed to protect the most valuable assets.</p> <p>The cumulative effects of the NP (specifically the two reserve sites) are currently unknown, but as they are within the Green Wedge, it may be worthwhile exploring this.</p> <p>The transboundary impacts of the NP are considered likely to be limited as any impacts would be very local in nature (ie, within the Neighbourhood Area). Notwithstanding this, there is the potential for a degree of impact by the development of either of the 'reserve' development sites beyond the Neighbourhood Area boundary (albeit not far beyond).</p> <p>No risks to human health or the environment have been identified.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan is concerned with development within the Neighbourhood Area, so the magnitude and spatial extent of any environmental effects is likely to be limited to within Blaby Parish (or not far beyond the boundary of it).</p> <p>Whilst there are a number of listed buildings, a designated Conservation Area and potential areas of cultural heritage (ie, Bouskell Park) within the Neighbourhood Area, it is considered that the policies within the NP will help in protecting such assets through the protection it seeks to provide and its design of new development requirements etc. There are no nationally or internationally designated wildlife sites in or near the Neighbourhood Area. It is not considered that the NP or the policies within it will affect the value or vulnerability of the area in any way in relation to exceeding environmental quality standards or limit values or through intensive land use. However, there are some limited areas of flood risk within the Neighbourhood Area, and it may be worthwhile exploring this through an SEA.</p> <p>There are no national, European or internationally protected landscapes or areas within the Neighbourhood Area or within close proximity of its boundary. Therefore, it is not considered the NP will have any significant effect on these types of sites. An appropriate assessment screening</p>
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		exercise is included within this report in terms of fulfilling the requirements of the European Habitats Directive, and this has shown there is no need for a full Habitats Regulations appropriate assessment in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan.
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- 4.6 On the basis of the SEA screening exercise in Table 1 above, it is considered that the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan has the potential to have significant effects in relation to the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations, and therefore should be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to explore this further. The main reason for this conclusion is that whilst the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan supports the Blaby District Local Plan (Core Strategy) and generally conforms to the policies set out within it (which have already been subject to SEA), it is seeking to allocate reserve housing sites, and the potential effects of these specific housing site allocations have not been assessed in terms of their environmental impacts. Moreover, the reserve housing site allocations identified are beyond the current settlement boundary, on greenfield land that is currently designated as Green Wedge. On this basis, it is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan should be assessed in detail to ensure it is acceptable in terms of its potential environmental effects.

5 Blaby Neighbourhood Plan HRA appropriate assessment screening

5.1 The legislation sets out a process to assess the potential implications of a plan on any internationally designated wildlife sites. The first stage of this is a screening exercise where the details of nearby internationally designated sites within a reasonable distance of the Plan area are considered (including the reasons for their designation and the conservation objectives of each of them) and assessed to see if there is the potential for implementation of the Plan to have an impact on the site.

5.2 For the purpose of this screening assessment, the potential impacts of the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan on internationally designated sites within approximately 25km of the Neighbourhood Plan area are assessed. This accords with the distance used to assess the Blaby District Local Plan (Core Strategy) (2013) when the appropriate assessment screening exercise was carried out on this document.

5.3 The Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment screening assessment (April 2012) found three internationally designated sites within approximately 25km of the Blaby District boundary (as the crow flies). It is considered appropriate to consider these three sites in this appropriate assessment screening assessment for the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan. The three sites identified are:

- Rutland Water Special Protection Area and Ramsar site (Rutland) (about 33km from the eastern boundary of the District of Blaby)
- River Mease Special Area of Conservation (Leicestershire and Derbyshire) (about 19km from the northwestern boundary of the District of Blaby)
- Ensor's Pool Special Area of Conservation (Nuneaton, Warwickshire) (about 10km from the southern boundary of the District of Blaby).

5.4 The Local Plan (Core Strategy) appropriate assessment screening exercise sets out the details for the three internationally designated sites (as listed above), including why they are designated and their conservation objectives etc. The tables below are taken from the Core Strategy HRA appropriate assessment screening report:

Name and location	Rutland Water SPA (SK928070) 1,556.9 ha Lying between Oakham and Stamford (approximately 1.4km west and 5.8km east respectively).
Reasons for designation	Wintering populations of the following species: Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> Teal <i>Anas crecca</i> Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i> Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i> Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i> Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i> Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i> Coot <i>Fulica alra</i> Goosander <i>Mergus merganser</i> Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> A wintering bird assemblage regularly supporting 25,037 waterfowl, including Great Crested Grebe, Wigeon, Gadwell, Teal, Shoveler, Tufted Duck,

	Goldeneye, Goosander and Coot.
Conservation Objectives	To maintain the designated interest features in favourable condition
Key factors affecting site integrity	<p>Maintenance of the current extent, connectivity and quality of feeding habitats with areas of open water of varying sizes and depths, suitable levels of benthic, aquatic and surface invertebrates, a fish presence which does not impact on the dominant macrophyte assemblages, and open habitats incorporating suitable feeding pastures with 50m of the water.</p> <p>Maintenance of characteristic water quality and quantity is important with seasonal changes in levels occurring slowly.</p> <p>Maintenance and extent of roosting habitat including mature trees and areas of scrub.</p> <p>Levels of disturbance should be maintained within necessary noise levels.</p>
Existing trends and pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree regeneration ability has been reduced through deer browsing although this is now being managed • Inappropriate weed control • High phosphate levels • Overgrazing • Low levels of water abstraction

Name and location	<p>River Mease SAC (SK260114) 21.86 ha Crossed by the A42 and aligned beside the A513 to the west. The closest significant settlement is Ashby - de - la - Zouch. The river feeds into the Tame and ultimately the Trent.</p>
Reasons for designation	To maintain the designated interest features in favourable condition.
Conservation Objectives	To maintain the designated interest features in favourable condition
Key factors affecting site integrity	<p>General requirements: maintenance of water quality and availability requires management to minimise pollution inputs and inappropriate water abstraction. The river's natural structure and form should be maintained to support a natural flow regime, including the avoidance of constriction of the river or blockage of its floodplain.</p> <p>Watercourse (Ranunculus) habitat: a natural flow regime is required for maintenance of natural erosion and sedimentation processes and hence the channel morphology. Riparian areas and the wider catchment need to be managed to avoid excessive run-off of soil particles and nutrients into the river. The structure and composition of bankside and aquatic vegetation should be maintained.</p> <p>All species: maintenance of suitable habitat and appropriate management helps to ensure the provision of habitat suitable for spawning and shelter, including gravel -dominated substrate with areas of sand and silt, patchy vegetation cover provided by submerged and marginal macrophyte assemblages, slack water resting pools for fish, a presence of submerged woody debris, and presence of artificial barriers. Any exploitation of fish population or other native animals or plants should be at a sustainable level, without manipulation of the river's natural capacity to support them or augmentation by excessive stocking. The absence of introduced/ alien species is important. Otter; maintenance of terrestrial habitat with cover and holt sites provided by dense scrub mature trees along river banks. Maintenance of suitably low levels of disturbance.</p>
Vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality and quantity are vital to the European interests, whilst competition for water resources is high. • Diffuse pollution and excessive sedimentation are catchment-wide issues which have the potential to affect the site.

Name and location	<p>Ensor's Pool SAC (SP348903) 3.8 ha</p>
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	Lies on the outskirts of Nuneaton.
Reasons for designation	Annex II species: Crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>
Conservation Objectives	Protection of habitat for native crayfish.
Key factors affecting site integrity	The crayfish population has developed in a flooded brick-pit that has been abandoned for fifty years. The area was unmanaged and was used as de facto public open space. The crayfish would be vulnerable to pollution and introduction of non-native crayfish, through uncontrolled access. To address this, since 1995 the area has been leased by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and is managed as a Local Nature Reserve. Increased visitor pressure may increase the management effort undertaken by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.
Vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollution • Introduction of non-native crayfish

5.5 The key sensitivities of the three designated sites which the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan could have an impact on are:

- Housing growth could result in increased visitor numbers for recreation / tourism reasons. This is particularly relevant to Rutland Water SPA.
- Increased surface water run off can affect water quality.
- Increased air pollution can impact upon the species and habitats that the sites support.

5.6 In terms of assessing the policies within the Neighbourhood Plan for the potential effects they may have on the internationally designated sites, the below are the considerations of the HRA screening assessment:

Policy	Consideration of effects on the designated sites
Policy BCE1 – Character and environment	This policy seeks to influence the design of new development through issues such as scale, layout and materials to ensure any new development reflects the principles of the existing development. Given that this policy seeks only to influence the design of development that comes forward, it is considered to have a very localised effect, and is therefore unlikely to have any effect on the internationally designated sites (referred to in para5.3)
Policy BCE2 – Local Green Space	This policy seeks to protect and maintain the most valuable areas of green space in the Neighbourhood Plan area, ie the Parish of Blaby. This will ensure access to green spaces for the current and future population of Blaby Parish, thereby reducing the need for local people to have to travel further afield to access green spaces, resulting in people not needing to potentially travel to the designated sites for these kinds of opportunities. As this policy is about maintaining the most valuable local green spaces in the area, it is not considered likely that it will have any effect on the designated sites (apart from

	<p>the potential to reduce the number of tourists visiting the sites as there will be opportunities to enjoy green spaces more locally, but this is not considered to be a significant effect).</p>
<p>Policy BCE3 – Implementation of the Blaby Masterplan</p>	<p>This Policy seeks to enhance the environmental qualities and improve the facilities in Blaby Town Centre through implementing some of the identified schemes in the Blaby Town Centre Masterplan. Improvement of the centre may result in an increase of visitors to it. However, this policy is considered at most to result in only very limited indirect impacts (or more likely, no impacts) on the designated sites given that retail facilities are an attractor (rather than a disperser) of activity.</p>
<p>Policy BCE4 – To identify reserve housing sites which are considered developable and acceptable to the majority of Blaby residents</p>	<p>This Policy seeks to allocate two reserve sites for housing (which will provide about 86 dwellings in total). The policy makes clear that these sites will only be considered appropriate to be brought forward should circumstances change and more houses need to be delivered within the Parish. Due to its appeal as a regional tourist attraction, additional houses on these reserve sites (should they be brought forward over the plan period) will bring an additional population into the area, who might wish to visit Rutland Water. Therefore, out of the three internationally designated sites, impact is likely to be greatest on the Rutland Water SPA. Notwithstanding this, the number of people that would be generated by such a level of development as that proposed would be modest, and would be unlikely to cause any significant effects on the site. In addition, there are a number of other valued parks, gardens and recreational sites in the District of Blaby, such as the Grand Union Canal and Fosse Meadows etc, which can fulfil a number of recreational activities more locally, potentially reducing the need to travel to Rutland Water SPA. Anglian Water and Natural England have worked in Partnership to ensure the most sensitive parts of Rutland Water are protected from the impacts of tourism and have a management plan in place to address the impacts of increased tourism. So whilst it might be difficult to quantify the potential number of new visitors to Rutland Water that may be generated by the reserve housing sites and the likely impact this will have, it is probable that the mitigation already in place is adequate to guard against the increase in new visitors to the site arising from the reserve housing sites in the Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore considered that the policies in the Plan will not have a significant effect.</p>

	With regard to Ensor's Pool, the impacts of increased visitor pressures are addressed through the site management undertaken by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council. Therefore, it is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan will not result in any significant effects on internationally designated sites.
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- 5.7 The above tables outline the effects that the policies of the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan are considered to have on the designated sites, however regard should also be had to the cumulative effects of plans also. The Blaby Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Blaby District Local Plan (Core Strategy), which was subject to an appropriate assessment screening opinion that concluded that the Core Strategy, either alone or in combination with other plans, is unlikely to have a significant effect on any of the designated sites within approximately 25km of the boundary of Blaby District, so a full appropriate assessment was not required. As the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the Core Strategy and, as per para 5.6 above, is not considered to have any significant effects on the integrity of the identified internationally designated wildlife sites either alone or in combination with other plans, a full appropriate assessment of the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan is not required.
- 5.8 The River Mease and Ensor's Pool are in the West Midlands. The River Mease is separate to any water courses in Blaby District and Ensor's Pool is considered to have a self-contained eco-system. Therefore, development within the Parish of Blaby will not have any significant effects on these sites.

6.0 Conclusions

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- 6.1 The Blaby Neighbourhood Plan allocates two reserve housing sites. Notwithstanding that these sites are only considered appropriate to be brought forward should circumstances change as Blaby has currently met its minimum requirement as set out in the Blaby District Local Plan (Core Strategy), they are still allocating potential development sites on a Parish wide basis (beyond the existing settlement boundary on land currently designated as Green Wedge). Therefore it is considered necessary that the potential environmental effects of this are considered in more detail through a Strategic Environmental Assessment to accompany the plan.
- 6.2 In accordance with the above, it is considered that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required in support of the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

- 6.3 The HRA screening exercise has shown that the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan alone, or in combination with other plans, is unlikely to have a significant effect on any of the designated sites within approximately 25km of the Parish boundary for the following reasons:
- There are no internationally designated wildlife sites (ie, SACs or SPAs) within the Parish of Blaby.
 - Mitigation and management plans already in place at these sites, particularly at Rutland Water, appear adequate to accommodate any increased in visitors potentially generated from housing growth.
 - The Neighbourhood Plan accords with the strategic policies of the Core Strategy that seeks to locate development in the most sustainable locations and promote the use of more sustainable forms of transport and preserve the most valuable green spaces around the village, therefore helping to improve air quality.
- 6.4 Therefore it is concluded that a full Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment of the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan is not required.

Appendix 1

Responses from statutory consultees

Ms Lucy O'Doherty
Blaby District Council
Council Offices Desford Road
Narborough
Leicester
LE19 2EP

Our ref: LT/2006/000216/OR-
05/PO1-L01
Your ref:

Date: 26 June 2015

Dear MsO'Doherty

Blaby Neighborhood Plan SEA/HRA Screening Report

Thank you for consulting us on the above document and I confirm that having read both documents I agree with the conclusions in section 6 of the Screening Opinion.

Yours sincerely

MR GEOFF PLATTS
Planning Specialist Sustainable Places

Direct dial 0115 8463622
Direct e-mail geoff.platts@environment-agency.gov.uk



Historic England

BY EMAIL:
Lucy.O'Doherty@blaby.gov.uk

Our ref: HD/P/5300/01
Your ref:

Telephone: 01604 735460

9 July 2015

Dear Lucy O'Doherty,

Blaby Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Request

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above SEA Screening request.

We have reviewed the draft plan and the accompanying screening opinion and agree that SEA is required for the plan, in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss any of these comments.

Yours sincerely

Claire Searson (Mrs)
Historic Environment Planning Adviser
E-mail: claire.searson@HistoricEngland.org.uk



Historic England, 2nd Floor, Windsor House, Cliftonville, Northampton NN1 5BE
Telephone 01604 73 5460 HistoricEngland.org.uk

Please note that Historic England operates an access to information policy.
Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available.



Date: 29 June 2015
Our ref: 156468
Your ref: None



Lucy O'Doherty
Principal Planning Policy Officer
Blaby District Council

Lucy.ODoherty@blaby.gov.uk

Customer Services
Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Lucy

Planning consultation: Blaby Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA Screening

Thank you for your consultation on the above document which was received by Natural England on 11 June 2015

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

Natural England welcomes the Screening Report which assesses the requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment HRA for the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan.

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests are concerned, that there may be environmental effects resulting from the neighbourhood plan because of the proposed reserve housing sites which have not as yet been assessed. We therefore concur with the Council's conclusion that Strategic Environmental Assessment would be required.

Natural England also agrees with the report's conclusions that the Blaby Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European Site either alone or in combination and therefore no further assessment work under the Habitats Regulations would be required.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Roslyn Deeming on 0300 060 1524. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours sincerely



Roslyn Deeming
Lead Adviser
Sustainable Development Team
East Midlands Area

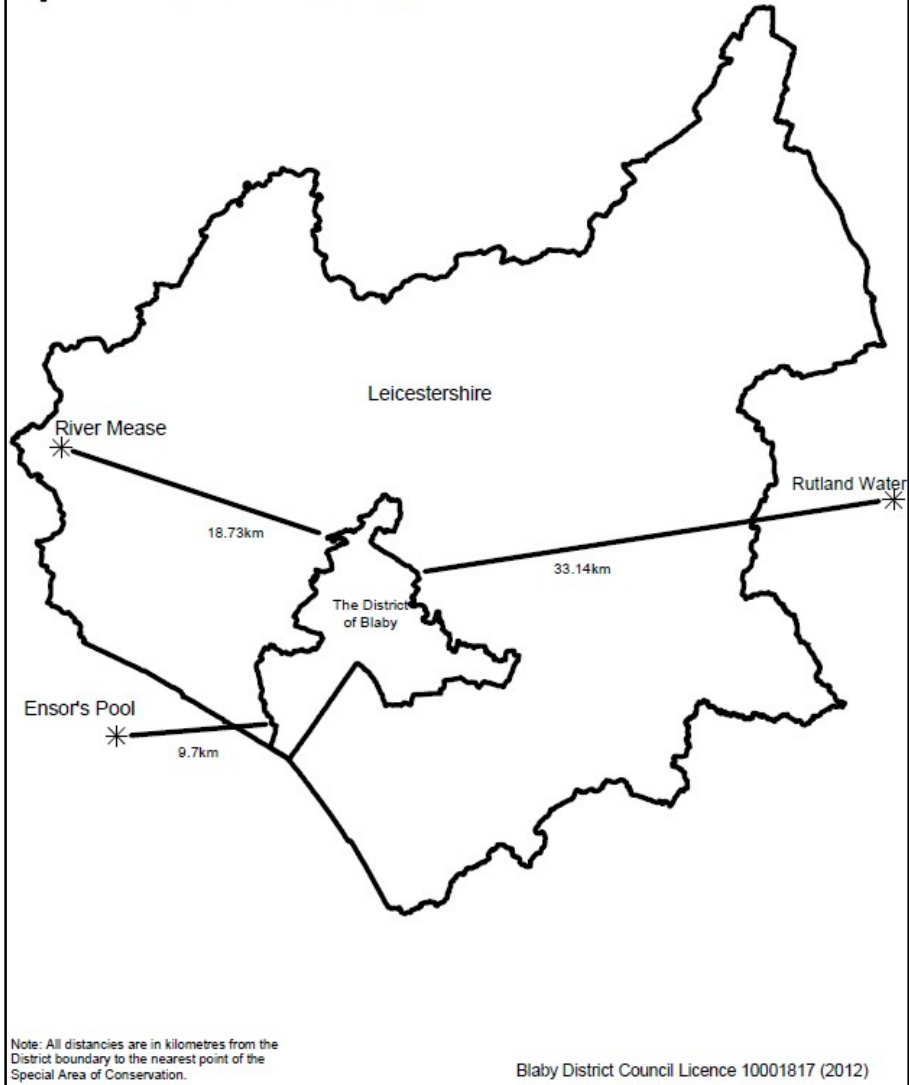


Appendix 2

Map illustrating the internationally designated wildlife sites (ie, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) and their relationship with the District of Blaby



Map illustrating Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Area and their relationship with the District of Blaby



Note: All distances are in kilometres from the District boundary to the nearest point of the Special Area of Conservation.