

Screening Statement on the determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and European Directive 2001/42/EC for the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan

October 2017

Introduction

1. This screening report is used to determine whether or not the contents of the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC (hereafter 'the Directive') and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (hereafter 'the Regulations'). These require an SEA to be undertaken on any land use plan or programme 'which sets the framework for future development or for future development consent of projects'.
2. However, there are exceptions to this requirement for plans 'which determine the use of a small area at a local level', or which only propose 'minor modifications to a plan', if it is determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects'.
3. The National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 167, advises that assessments should be proportionate, and should not repeat policy assessments that have already taken place.
4. To assess whether an SEA is required a screening process must be undertaken based on a standard set of criteria. This must be subject to consultation with the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England. The results of the process must be documented in a Screening Statement, available to the public.
5. This report also contains a Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening as required under the Habitats Directive.

Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan

6. The Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan contains policies to guide the development of the Summertown and St Margaret's Area¹. The policies cover five different areas:
 - Health and Community (spatial planning and community policies)
 - Business and Retail (spatial planning and community policies)
 - Transport (spatial planning and community policies)
 - Housing (spatial planning and community policies)
 - Environment (spatial planning and community policies)

¹ The Summertown and St Margaret's Area Map is shown at Appendix 1

7. It is worth noting that it is only the spatial planning policies that are the subject of this assessment.
8. The plan also proposes a series of development guidelines through character assessments. The plan does not allocate any sites for development.

The Screening Process

9. The key to the screening decision is the determination of whether the Plan is likely to have any significant environmental effects on the environment, using the criteria set out in Annex II of the Directive and Schedule 1 of the Regulations. These criteria are set out in the table at Appendix 3.
10. An extract from 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment' (set out at Appendix 2) provides a flow diagram to demonstrate the SEA screening process. This flow diagram sets out the process to be undertaken in order to ascertain whether or not an SEA is required for the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan.
11. Part of the screening process is a requirement to consider whether the Plan requires a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA). An HRA Screening has been undertaken, and can be found at Appendix 4. An assessment of likely significance of effects on the environment has also been undertaken, which can be found at Appendix 5. These two assessments feed into Table 1 and the SEA Screening Assessment.

Statutory Consultees

12. The initial Screening Opinion was sent to the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England for comment on 8th August 2017.
13. The Environment Agency did not provide any comments.
14. Historic England stated:

"As the Plan does not allocate any sites for development or contain any other policies that would be likely to lead to any significant effects on the historic environment, it does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004."

15. Natural England stated:

"There are designated sites within the impacts zones of the Neighbourhood Plan area including Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Hook Meadow and the Trap Grounds Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), however the Plan does not allocate any additional sites for development. As a result we agree with the assessment that the Neighbourhood Plan does not require an SEA."

Conclusion

16. Oxford City Council considers that the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan will not have any significant impacts on the environment and as such does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as required by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

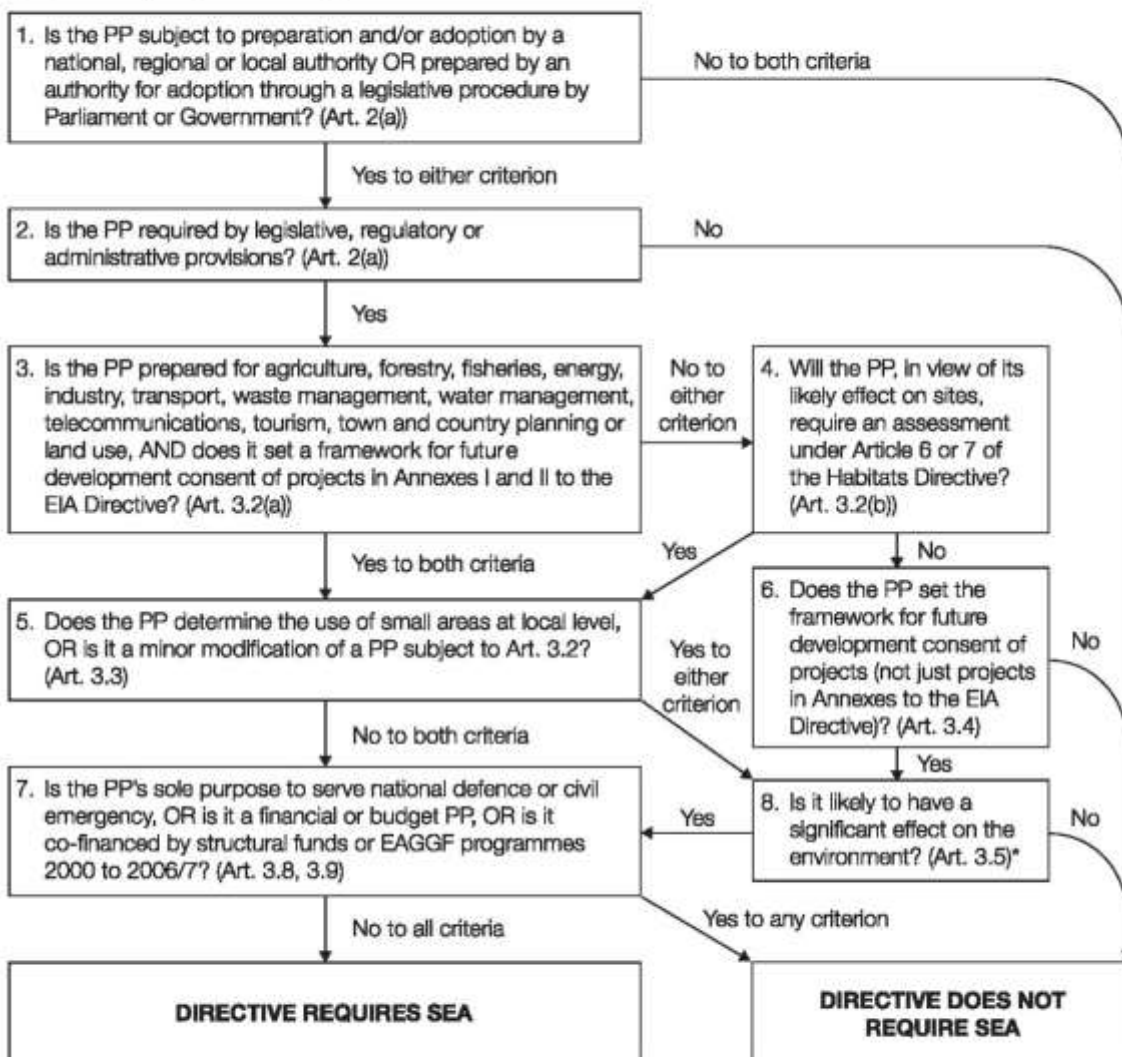
Appendix 1: Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan Area



Appendix 2 – Extract from ‘A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’, DCLG, 2005.

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

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



*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.

Appendix 3: Application of the SEA Directive as shown in Appendix 2.

Stage	Yes/ No	Explanation
1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan 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 the Neighbourhood Plan is allowed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Neighbourhood Plan will be prepared by the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Forum (as the 'relevant body') and be "made" by Oxford City Council as the Local Authority. The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is subject to the following regulations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 • The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2016 • The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
2. Is the Neighbourhood Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	No	Whilst Neighbourhood Planning is not a requirement, it is optional under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. It will, if "made", form part of the Development Plan for the City. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive.
3. Is the Neighbourhood Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecoms, 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 (see Appendix 5) of the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	Yes	The Neighbourhood Plan is prepared for town and country planning and land use. The Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan does not set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II of the EIA Directive.
4. Will the Neighbourhood Plan,	No	See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Summertown and St

in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art 3.2(b))		Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan at Appendix 4. If No, go to Step 6 of the Flow Chart
5. Does the Neighbourhood Plan 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)	N/A	N/A
6. Does the Neighbourhood Plan set the future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.4)	Yes	The Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan will be used to determine future planning applications. If Yes, go to Step 8 of the Flow Chart
7. Is the Neighbourhood Plan's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds by EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	N/A	N/A
8. Is it likely to have significant effects on the environment?	No	See Assessment of Significant Effects on the Environment Likely (Appendix 5)

Appendix 4 – Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion for the Summertown and St Margaret’s Neighbourhood Plan

Introduction

1. Oxford City Council has undertaken this Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) “in-house”. This report discusses Stage 1 – Screening.
2. This Screening Assessment relates to a Neighbourhood Development Plan (Summertown and St Margaret’s Neighbourhood Plan) that will be in general conformity with the higher level strategic plan (Oxford’s Local Plan). This Screening Assessment uses the Oxford Core Strategy HRA as its basis for assessment. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Summertown and St Margaret’s Neighbourhood Plan is likely to result in significant impacts on ‘European’ sites and therefore whether an ‘Appropriate Assessment’ is required.

Requirements of the Habitats Directive

3. Appropriate Assessment of plans that could affect Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites (jointly called ‘European sites’) is required by Article 6(3) of the European Habitats Directive², which states:

“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [European] site but likely to have significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions in paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate having obtained the opinion of the general public.”

4. Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive discusses alternative solutions, the test of “imperative reasons of over-riding public interest” (IROPI) and compensatory measures.

“If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of over-riding public interest, including those of social and economic nature, the Member State shall take compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.”

² Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna

5. The Habitats Directive applies the precautionary principle to European sites. Plans and projects can only be permitted if it can be shown that they will have no significant adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, or if there are no alternatives to them and there are imperative reasons of over-riding public interest as to why they should go ahead. In such cases, compensation will be necessary to ensure the overall integrity of the site network.
6. The Habitat Directive was implemented into UK legislation through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended³). This piece of legislation is generally known as the Habitats Regulations.

Methodology used for this assessment

7. Habitat Regulations Assessment can involve up to a four stage process.
 1. **Screening:** Determining whether a plan 'alone, or in combination' is likely to have a significant effect on a European site
 2. **Appropriate Assessment:** Determining whether, in view of the site's conservation objectives, the plan 'alone or in combination' would have an adverse effect (or risk of this) on the integrity of the site. If not, the plan can proceed
 3. **Assessment of Alternative Solutions:** Where a plan is assessed as having an adverse effect (or risk of this) on the integrity of a site, there should be an examination of alternatives.
 4. **Assessment where no alternative solutions remain and where adverse impacts remain**
8. This report covers stage one of the HRA process. This was carried out in August 2017. Broadly, the HRA process involved:
 - Identification of European sites that could possibly be affected by the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan, qualifying features of those sites and, where available, key environmental conditions to support the sites' integrity. This process relied on information used in the Core Strategy HRA, which was updated through the Sites and Housing Plan HRA and most recently through the HRA for the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan;
 - Identification of possible impacts arising from the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan;
 - Identification of impacts and policies that could be screened out, and those that were likely to require more detailed appropriate assessment;
 - Consultation with Natural England to confirm that the proposed approach for the Habitat Regulations Assessment was acceptable, and what additional information (if any) was required to complete the analysis.
9. This report discusses Stage 1 (screening) only.

³ The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 as amended by The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2012.

Screening

European Sites

10. Table 1 lists all European sites that area within 20km of the boundary of Oxford City Council.

Name of site	Distance from boundary	Reason for designation ⁴
Oxford Meadows SAC	Within the City Boundary, extending into administrative area for Cherwell District Council and into the administrative boundary of West Oxfordshire District Council.	<p>Annex I habitats that area primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>Oxford Meadows represents lowland meadows in the Thames Valley centre of distribution. The site includes vegetation communities that are perhaps unique in the world reflecting the influence of long-term grazing and hay-cutting on lowland meadows. The site has benefited from the survival of traditional management, which has been undertaken for several centuries, and so exhibits good conservation of structure and function.</p> <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>Oxford Meadows is selected because Port Meadow is the larger of only two known sites in the UK for creeping marshwort <i>Apium repens</i>.</p>
Cothill Fen SAC	Located 7km from the City boundary	<p>Annex I habitats that area primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>This lowland valley mire contains one of the largest surviving examples of alkaline fen vegetation in central England, a region where fen vegetation is rare. The M13 Schoenus nigricans – Juncus subnodulosus vegetation found here occurs under a wide range of hydrological conditions, with frequent bottle sedge <i>Carex rostrata</i>, grass-of-Parnassus <i>Parnassia palustris</i>, common butterwort <i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i> and marsh helleborine <i>Epipactis palustris</i>. The alkaline fen vegetation forms transitions to other vegetation types that are similar to M24 <i>Molinia caerulea</i> – <i>Cirsium dissectum</i> fen-meadow and S25 <i>Phragmites australis</i> – <i>Eupatorium cannabinum</i> tall-herb fen and wet alder <i>Alnus</i> spp. Wood</p>
Little Wittenham SAC	Located 19km from the City Boundary	<p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>One of the best-studied great crested newt sites in the UK, Little Wittenham comprises two main ponds set in a predominantly woodland context (broad-leaved and conifer woodland is present). There are also areas of grassland, with sheep grazing and arable bordering the woodland to the south and west. The River Thames is just to the north of the site, and a hill fort to the south. Large numbers of great crested newts <i>Triturus cristatus</i> have been recorded in the two main ponds, and research has revealed that they range several hundred metres into the woodland blocks.</p>

⁴ Source: www.jncc.gov.uk

Oxford Core Strategy

11. An HRA was carried out for the Oxford Core Strategy. The Oxford Core Strategy sets out the strategic locations for housing and employment developments within Oxford, identifies a hierarchy of centres and sets a number of more general policies on climate change, housing, transport and employment. The Oxford Core Strategy also sets out the amount of housing required up to 2026.
12. The HRA for the Core Strategy examined whether the policies within the Core Strategy would adversely affect the integrity of any European Sites within 20km of the City. Of the three sites that were within 20km of the Oxford, two were screened out, and an Appropriate Assessment was undertaken on the Oxford Meadows SAC.
13. The HRA concluded that none of the policies in the Oxford 2026 Core Strategy were likely to have adverse effects on the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC with regard to the following environmental requirements of the site:
 - Maintenance of traditional hay cut and light aftermath grazing
 - Absence of direct fertilisation
 - Minimal air pollution
 - Absence of nutrient enrichment of waters; good water quality
 - Balanced hydrological regime
 - Recreational pressures

Content of the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan

14. Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan provides a series of policies to:
 - Conserve and enhance public open spaces and biodiversity within Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Area;
 - Create innovatively designed developments that respond positively to the character of the area and positively contributes to the issue of climate change
 - Protect important assets
 - Deliver key-worker and affordable housing
 - Reduce transport impacts in the area

Other Plans and Projects

15. In compliance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, the City Council must consider the implications of the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan for relevant sites 'in combination' with other plans or projects that might have significant impacts for these sites. The HRA for the Core Strategy, and more recently the HRA for the Northern Gateway, considered many of these documents, but since those assessments were made, some projects have progressed. The following list updates those projects set out in the HRA for the Core Strategy and those in the HRA for the Northern Gateway.

Table 2: Other plans and programmes with potential 'in-combination' impacts

Policy, Plan, Strategy/ Initiative	Proposals	Potential 'in-combination' impacts?
Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy	Variety of sites proposed for minerals and waste throughout the County	The HRA concluded that a conclusion of no likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC could not be reached in respect of land in the Eynsham/ Cassington/ Yerton area with respect to hydrological impacts (groundwater flow to the SAC)
Oxford's Local Plan (includes Core Strategy/ Barton AAP/ / Northern Gateway AAP/ West End AAP/ Sites and Housing Plan	8,000 new homes and between 11-13,000 new jobs by 2026	HRA ruled out impact on Oxford Meadows SAC subject to further work, which was carried out as part of the Northern Gateway AAP process.
Cherwell Local Plan Part 1	Local Plan formally adopted in July 2015. 22,840 additional homes and 120 ha of additional employment floorspace.	Revised HRA predicts that Cherwell Local Plan is unlikely to have an impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC.
South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (Adopted 2012)	5,000 new jobs and 11,487 homes by 2027. In process of reviewing Core Strategy to provide for additional homes over and above those allocated.	Current evidence shows unlikely to have an impact on Oxford Meadows SAC. HRA will need to be updated as the Core Strategy review comes forward.
Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (Adopted 2016)	Part 1 of the Local Plan formally adopted in December 2016. The Plan sets out the Spatial Strategy for the location of development across the district and allocates strategic development sites	HRA predicts that the Local Plan is unlikely to have an adverse impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC.
West Oxfordshire Local Plan	Plan submitted for examination. 10,500 homes to be delivered by 2031	Current evidence shows that the Local Plan is unlikely to have an adverse impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC in terms of recreational pressure and air quality
Chiltern Railways	Rail project	Scheme results in the permanent loss of 13m2 from the margins of Oxford Meadows

Evergreen 3 Rail project		<p>SAC. This loss is not predicted to affect the integrity of the SAC.</p> <p>Air emissions may affect habitats including those within the Oxford Meadows. An approach involving the monitoring of vegetation has been agreed with Natural England, to identify any habitat changes, and to ensure that timely measures can be taken, if necessary to prevent adverse effects on the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC. ⁵</p>
Oxford Flood Risk Management Strategy	Flooding improvements across Oxford and surrounds.	<p>Report suggests that there may be impacts on Oxford Meadows SAC from flood risk management and water resource plans. There are some uncertainties regarding operation of a flood storage area and potential impacts on Oxford Meadows SAC. To address these uncertainties, the Environment Agency is recommending further research. If this work shows that there would be significant impacts to designated nature conservation sites which could not be mitigated or compensated for, then the flood storage area will not be implemented. However there are no likely significant impacts on the SAC from current water abstraction activities. ⁶</p>

Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan

16. The planning policies in the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan have been assessed in Table 3. The table shows that there are no policies within the Neighbourhood Plan which are likely to have an adverse impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC.

17. Categorisation of the effects of elements of the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan

- A – Policies or proposals cannot have any negative impact
- B – Effects will be addressed in assessments “down the line”, including project assessment under Regulation 48
- C – Could have an effect, but would not be likely to have a significant (negative) effect (alone or in combination with other plans or projects)
- D – Likely to have a significant effect alone and would require an Appropriate Assessment
- E – Likely to have a significant effect in combination with other plans or projects and which require Appropriate Assessment of those combinations

⁵ Chiltern Railways (Bicester to Oxford Improvements) Order Environmental Statement NTS January 2010

⁶ Page 39 of report and confirmed in Supporting Guidance: Habitat Directive: (Appendix 21) Proforma for Stage 3 of Assessment of Adverse Effect on Site Integrity – Review of Consents (EA, 11/07/05)

F – Likely to have a significant effect, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, but which would not adversely affect the integrity of a European site

G – Likely to have a significant effect, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and for which it cannot be ascertained that they would not adversely affect the integrity of a European site

Table 3 showing the likely key environmental considerations that are likely to give rise to significant effects as a result of the policies in the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan

Policy	Categorisation of the effects of elements of the Summertown and St Margaret's NP	If policy has no effect, then reasons why	Key environmental considerations likely to give rise to significant effects
HCS1 Community Facilities	A	Policy seeking to protect community facilities within the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan area.	
HCS2 Allotments	A	Policy seeking to protect and enhance allotments in the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan area.	
Protecting and Enhancing Sports, Leisure, and Community Facilities	A	Policy seeking to sports, leisure, and community facilities as part of development proposals within the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan area.	
RBS1 Parking	A	Policy seeking the protection of short-stay visitor vehicle parking for shops and other businesses in the district centre	
TRS1 Sustainable Transport Design	A	Policy seeking to ensure that any new development within the Plan area prioritises the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, children, residents, and disabled people are put before those of the car and other vehicles	
TRS2 Sustainable Transport	A	Policy seeking to ensure that developments within Summertown and St Margaret's are linked for use by sustainable transport modes namely, walking and cycling. Proposals likely to generate significant levels of traffic will be expected to submit a transport statement and an air-quality assessment.	
HOS1 Local Dwelling Size	A	Policy giving priority to smaller units of 1, 2, and 3 bedrooms in conversions and new builds the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood	

Policy	Categorisation of the effects of elements of the Summertown and St Margaret's NP	If policy has no effect, then reasons why	Key environmental considerations likely to give rise to significant effects
		Plan area.	
HOS2 Key-Worker and Affordable Housing	A	Policy seeking to secure 50% provision of affordable homes from large housing schemes, including key worker housing as part of the affordable housing element.	
HOS4 Specialist Housing	A	Policy offering support to specialist housing and including criteria on when this type of housing is acceptable	
HOS5 Protecting Family Dwellings	A	Policy seeking to preclude conversions of existing C3 dwellings into student accommodation	
HOS6 Character Assessments	A	Policy seeking new development to protect and enhance the distinctive local character where it is described in the Character Assessments.	
HOS7 Density, Building-design Standards, and Energy Efficiency	A	Policy seeking to ensure that new development meets specific design criteria	
HOS8 Back-land Development	A	Policy seeking to ensure that any intensification of existing residential areas responds positively to the surrounding environment. This policy also includes criteria for development in rear gardens.	
ENS1 Green Spaces	A	Policy seeking to ensure that development proposals maintain, and have regard to, and are appropriate in terms of the impact on the conservation of the natural environment, green spaces, and areas of significant amenity value.	
ENS2 Biodiversity	A	Policy seeking protection and enhancement of land which has significant wildlife or ecology value.	
ENS3 Renewable	A	Policy seeking to encourage renewable energy	

Policy	Categorisation of the effects of elements of the Summertown and St Margaret's NP	If policy has no effect, then reasons why	Key environmental considerations likely to give rise to significant effects
Energy		generation subject to meeting criteria on siting and scale, impact on the amenities of local residents and the natural environment	
ENS4 Rain-Water Infiltration	A	Policy seeking to ensure that new developments do not reduce rainwater infiltration.	
ENS5 Pollution	A	Policy seeking to ensure that new development has no significant direct or cumulative adverse impacts from pollution on the environment, public health, communities, quality of life, or amenities	
ENS6 Sustainable Construction	A	Policy seeking new development to demonstrate how they will incorporate sustainable methods of construction	

Environmental Requirements for European Sites

Oxford Meadows SAC

18. The citation for the Oxford Meadows SAC states that:

Oxford Meadows includes vegetation communities that are perhaps unique in reflecting the influence of long-term grazing and hay-cutting on lowland hay meadows. The site has benefited from the survival of traditional management, which has been undertaken for several centuries, and so exhibits good conservation structure and function. Port Meadow is the largest of only two known sites in the UK for creeping marshwort *Apium repens*.

Qualifying habitats: The site is designated under article 4(4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- Lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*)

Qualifying species: The site is designated under article 4(4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following species listed in Annex II:

- Creeping marshwort *Apium Repens*

19. Natural England's report on the condition of Oxford Meadows notes that the most recent surveys took place in 2010 and 2011. These report that the Oxford Meadows SAC is in a favourable condition.

20. The following key environmental requirements to support the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC were agreed at a screening workshop for the South East Plan and are as follows:

1. Minimal air pollution;
2. Absence of nutrient enrichment of waters; good water quality;
3. Balanced hydrological regime – alteration to adjacent rivers may alter flooding regime and reduce botanical diversity;
4. Maintenance of traditional hay cut and light aftermath grazing;
5. Absence of direct fertilisation.

21. A further workshop on HRA for the Core Strategy raised the additional issue of ensuring that recreational pressures are maintained at a reasonable level.

Screening Conclusions

22. It is worth noting that the HRA for the Core Strategy screened out the two other European sites within 20km of Oxford. These sites are Cothill Fen SAC and Little Wittenham SAC. The screening conclusions from the Core Strategy HRA have been summarised below for completeness

Cothill Fen SAC

23. It is considered that the Oxford Core Strategy could not have an adverse impact on Cothill Fen SAC. Cothill Fen is an alkaline fen dependent on a high

water table and calcareous, base rich water supply. As Cothill Fen is in the catchment of the River Ock, which is a different river catchment, the Oxford Core Strategy could not have an adverse impact on this Designated Site. Cothill Fen SAC is in a relatively remote location and can only be accessed by private car, or by local residents travelling on foot. Recreational pressure is therefore likely to be slight as a result of the proposed new development in the Oxford Core Strategy. Development within Oxford is likely to feature new green spaces which will ease recreational pressure on the Cothill Fen.

Little Wittenham SAC

24. Little Wittenham has been designated because it contains two ponds with large populations of great crested newts. These areas have restricted access which is designed to prevent conflicts between the visiting public, the newts and their habitat. As development in Oxford will not affect the habitat in the ponds or the newts foraging habitat around them, the Oxford Core Strategy could not have an adverse impact on this site. The site has therefore been excluded from further assessment.

Oxford Meadows SAC

25. In the case of the HRA for the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan it has been possible to screen out all of the impacts on the Oxford Meadows SAC.

- Air Pollution;
- Water Quality;
- Balanced Hydrological Regime;
- Increased Recreational Pressure;
- Maintenance of traditional hay cut and light aftermath grazing*
- Absence of direct fertilisation*

* These conservation objectives have been screened out as they are related to activities directly at the site which the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan will not affect

Air Pollution

26. The HRA for the Core Strategy referred to EA Interim advice note 61/05 "Guidance for Undertaking Environmental Assessment of Air Quality for Sensitive Ecosystems in Internationally Designated Nature Conservation Sites and SSSIs", which states:

"If there are no Designated Sites within 200m of an affected road, there is no need to proceed any further with [the] air quality assessment. If there is a Designated Site within 2km of a scheme but there is no significant change in emissions from roads within 200m of the site, then the scheme will not result in a significant change in air quality and the effects of change in air quality can be assumed to be negligible"

27. The closest boundary of the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan area is less than 200m away from the Oxford Meadows SAC. However,

the Plan does not include any additional development that was not assessed as part of the HRA for the Core Strategy. The Plan will not result in a significant change in air quality and the effects of change in air quality on the Oxford Meadow SAC can be assumed to be negligible.

28. Given this, the air quality objective has been screened out of the assessment.

Balanced Hydrological Regime

29. The HRA for the Core Strategy states that “Oxford Meadows SAC straddles the north western boundary of Oxford. Most of it is therefore upstream of the large urban areas of Oxford”. The Summertown and St Margaret’s Neighbourhood Plan area abuts the eastern boundary of the Oxford Meadows SAC. The HRA for the Core Strategy continues, “... a study of ‘The Hydrology of the Oxford Meadows’ states that ‘[t]he Second Terrace Gravels (Summertown Radley Terrace) on which much of Oxford is built appears to be a source of groundwater recharge (Eyles, 1986) with groundwater/ surface water flowing south and west across Port Meadow to the Seacourt Stream.”
30. The geology present under the area of the Summertown and St Margaret’s Neighbourhood Plan area is of the same or similar type associated with groundwater recharge for the Oxford Meadows SAC. The Plan’s area is part of the North Oxford gravel terrace and development within it could potentially have an impact on the groundwater flow, as well as the recharge of groundwater to the Oxford Meadows SAC.
31. However, the Summertown and St Margaret’s Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate any development sites. Currently, within the Neighbourhood Area, there are two large sites (SP14 and SP53) that have been allocated in the Sites and Housing Plan (2013) for a residential and a retail-led mixed use development.
32. The HRA for the Sites and Housing Plan included these sites and considered any potential impacts their development would have on the Oxford Meadows SAC. The HRA concluded that, subject to appropriate policy requirements and mitigation measures allocating these sites would not have an adverse impact on the balanced hydrological regime or water quality at the Oxford Meadows SAC. The Adopted Local Plan 2001-2016 contains policies designed to protect groundwater flow and water quality and the Sites and Housing Plan includes site specific policy requirements designed to mitigate potential impacts of developments on the groundwater flow.
33. Given the above, these sites have been screened out of the assessment for Balanced Hydrological Regime.

Recreational Pressure

34. The Core Strategy HRA assessed the impacts of recreational pressure from 8,000 new homes on the Oxford Meadows SAC. The HRA for the Core Strategy stated that “[p]ublic consultation carried out by Scott Wilson as part of their “Oxford City Green Space Study” revealed that people are willing to walk approximately 1,900m to important green spaces such as Oxford Meadows SAC, which includes Port Meadow.” The majority of the Summertown and St Margaret’s Neighbourhood Plan area is less than 1900m away from the Oxford Meadows SAC. However, there are other large green spaces, such Summertown and St Margaret’s Hill Park or Sunnymead

Recreation Ground or Cutteslowe Park which are within or adjoin the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan area. Given this range of alternative recreational green spaces within and adjacent to the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan area this conservation objective has been screened out of the assessment.

Conclusion

35. The Oxford Meadows SAC is currently judged by Natural England to be in favourable condition. This Habitat Regulations Assessment has concluded that none of the policies within the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan are likely to have adverse effects on the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC either 'alone or in combination' with other plans, projects or programmes.

Appendix 5: Assessment of the likely significance of effects on the environment

1. Characteristics of the plan, having regard to:	
(a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan would, if adopted, form part of the Statutory Development Plan and as such does contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects. However, the Plan sits within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework, Oxford's Local Plan (including the saved policies within the Adopted Local Plan 2001-2016, the Core Strategy, Sites and Housing Plan and Area Action Plans). The projects for which the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan helps to set a framework are local in nature and have limited resource implications.
(b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan will be in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework. The policies within the document will conform with the Council's strategic policies and compliment Oxford's Local Plan. The Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to influence other plans or programmes within the within the Statutory Development Plan.
(c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	The Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan contains policies relating to environmental considerations such as biodiversity, renewable energy, housing and sustainable transport. The Neighbourhood Plan will have to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development to be approved at examination and "made" by the City Council. Development would also be subject to the policies in Oxford's Local Plan and therefore all environmental considerations would be covered by policy.
(d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	The Neighbourhood Plan area contains one conservation area – North Oxford Victorian Suburb. It also contains a number of Listed Buildings. While the majority of the Neighbourhood Plan area is within Flood Zone 1, within the western flank of the Plan's area some residential properties are liable to flooding. The Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan area contains one complete SSSI: Hook Meadow and the Trap Grounds. This SSSI is in "unfavourable – recovering" condition according to the most recent assessment undertaken by Natural England in 2010. The Plan's area also adjoins two SSSIs (Port Meadow with Wolvercote Common & Green and New Marston Meadows, both are in

	<p>"favourable" condition according to the most recent assessment undertaken by Natural England in 2010).</p> <p>As Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites it is unlikely that the policies in it will have a negative impact on any of the nature sites, in fact, the plan contains a policy on improving biodiversity so it is likely that there will be small-scale positive local impacts as a result.</p>
(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.	The Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan is not directly relevant to any of these.
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular to:	
a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	The Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have some modest but enduring positive environmental effects, especially given its focus on green spaces, trees and biodiversity. Any negative effects of the plan are not likely to be reversible however they will all be of a local scale.
b) The cumulative nature of the effects	Any cumulative impacts will result from the application of policies with the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan and Oxford's Local Plan, as well projects being delivered through Oxford's Local Transport Plan. It is likely that any cumulative effects will not be magnified in a negative manner given the positive and protective nature of the policies with Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan.
c) The transboundary nature of the effects	It is unlikely that the plan will have any transboundary impacts the plan does not allocate sites over and above those allocated through Oxford's Local Plan. Policies within the plan relate to the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan area only.
d) The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	There are no significant risks to human health or the environment. The plan is likely to improve human health through sustainable transport policies and its ambitions to improve the public access green space network within the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan area.

e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan relates to the area as shown in the map at Appendix 1. The magnitude and spatial extent of any effects of the plan are likely to be small. As the plan does not allocate sites, it is not likely to attract additional development to the Summertown and St Margaret's area beyond that set out in Oxford's Local Plan.
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	The Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites it is unlikely that any of the policies in the plan will impact in a negative manner, special natural characteristics or cultural heritage in the area; cause environmental quality standards or limit values to be exceeded or intensify land-use. The majority of the policies are protection orientated and as such are likely to of benefit to such areas.
g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status	There are no areas or landscapes with recognised national, Community or international protection status.