

Intended for  
**South Cambridgeshire District Council**

Document type  
**Report**

Date  
**14th September 2018**

# **WATERBEACH NEW TOWN SPD SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SCREENING REPORT**

Date **14/09/2018**  
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Description **Waterbeach New Town SPD SA Screening Report**

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 This Report

1.1.1 This final screening report has been prepared to determine the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) called a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) under the English planning system for the proposed Waterbeach New Town Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The screening has been made in accordance with the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

1.1.2 A Draft screening report was published for consultation with the three statutory bodies (Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England) in August 2018. The three statutory bodies have responded to the consultation and these responses are referenced in Table 1 of this report. Please note that, for the reasons set out below, consideration of the consultation responses has not changed the conclusion of the draft screening report such that it is not considered necessary to undertake a separate SA / SEA for the Waterbeach SPD.

1.1.3 South Cambridgeshire District Council intends to adopt a Supplementary Planning Document following the emergence of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

The Council submitted their Local Plan for Examination in March 2014, along with accompanying Draft Final Sustainability Appraisal Report. On 3 September 2018, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council published the Inspectors' Reports on their respective Local Plans. The Inspectors have concluded that both Local Plans are 'sound' subject to a number of modifications being made. The Local Plan has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) at each stage of its preparation.

1.1.4 The Main Modifications have also been subject to an updated joint (South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge) Sustainability Appraisal of the Main Modifications (November 2017) and it is considered that none of the Further Proposed Main Modifications would change the conclusions of the SA due to the fact that the majority of modifications are minor in nature. The Main Modifications included a revised site boundary for Waterbeach New Town (SC-MM056 to SC-MM076, SC-MM261 Policy SS/5 Waterbeach New Town). The revised site boundary, which sets development further back from Denny Abbey, is preferred by Historic England.

1.1.5 A separate Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening letter has also been produced for the SPD (Produced by Ramboll, Report Ref: L1700002037/EG). This concluded that the draft SPD for Waterbeach New Town is unlikely to have any significant impacts on the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites identified. As such, it is considered that it is not necessary to proceed to the next stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process, i.e. Stage 2 and the requirement for an Appropriate Assessment.

## 1.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment

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

1.2.2 Under the requirements of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), certain types of plans that set the

framework for the consent of future development projects, must be subject to an environmental assessment.

1.2.3 The objective of Strategic Environmental Assessment 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.

1.2.4 The 2008 Planning Act requires plan making bodies to comply with the SEA Directive by screening the plan's potential effects on the environment.

## 2. WATERBEACH NEW TOWN SPD

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority has been working in partnership with local stakeholders and site promoters to prepare a SPD for Waterbeach New Town to guide future development across the site. The SPD provides design guidance to supplement Policy SS/5 of the emerging South Cambridgeshire Local Plan: Waterbeach New Town within the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2014) and Policy S/6: Development Strategy to 2031. However, the allocation of the New Town at Waterbeach, and the principle of development at that location, including development parameters, is established through the Local Plan and not through this SPD.

2.1.2 Paragraph 1 of Policy SS/5 sets out development principles for the Waterbeach New Town with regards capacity, phasing, design and infrastructure. Policy SS/5 states that:

"A new town of approximately 8,000 to 9,000 dwellings and associated uses is proposed on the former Waterbeach Barracks and land to the east and north as shown on the Policies Map. A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will be prepared for the new town as addressed at subsection 17 of this policy. The final number of dwellings will be determined through a design-led approach and spatial framework diagram included in the SPD having regard to:

- The quantum, location and distribution of development in the town; and
- Maintaining an appropriate setting for Denny Abbey listed building and scheduled monument."

2.1.3 Part 17 of Policy SS/5 specifically concerns the proposed Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). It states that the requirements to be fulfilled by the SPD include:

- "An overarching high level vision for the new town;
- Consideration of relevant context including key constraints and opportunities;
- The broad location of the components of the new town which are essential to support comprehensive and seamless development. A spatial framework diagram will be included that ensures the creation of a sustainable, legible and distinctive new settlement;
- The location, nature and extent of any formal open space to be provided outside of the Major Development Area Site;
- Broadly how the development is to be phased, including the delivery of key infrastructure."

2.1.4 Consistent with this, the SPD will set out the local context, principles and provide local design guidance for developers for Waterbeach New Town and a framework to help guide the preparation and assessment of future planning applications and development within the allocation. The SPD does not provide new policy nor does the SPD of itself establish the principle of development. The SPD provides guidance on the implementation of the development, the

principle of which is established through the Local Plan, consistent with parameters set out in the Local Plan.

## 2.2 Site context

2.2.1 The allocation for Waterbeach New Town relates to an area of land covering approximately 577ha, located around 9km north east of Cambridge City Centre.

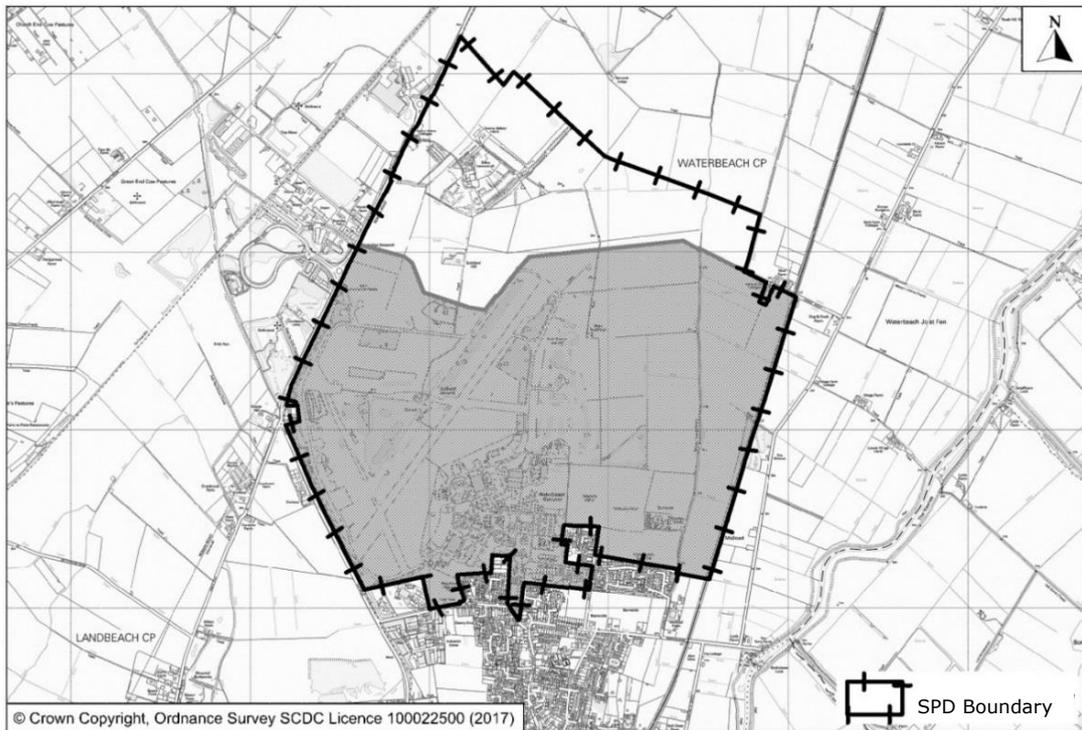
2.2.2 The site currently comprises a former military barracks and airfield in the west (circa two thirds of the site area) and agricultural land in the east. The site has been allocated within the forthcoming Local Plan for approximately 8000 – 9000 homes with associated services, community facilities and necessary infrastructure. The SPD has also carried out an indicative assessment of potential dwellings types and densities that may be provided in the new town consistent with this range. These are still general assumptions based on a broad set of criteria/assumptions in terms of gross and net developable land. Page 66 of the forthcoming SPD states:

*"At the time of preparing the SPD, the Council had received planning applications by both promoters covering the whole site that together would provide in the order of 11,000 homes. The SPD makes no comment on the suitability of this overall level of development but has considered the dwelling type and mix and the infrastructure implications of a range of levels of housing development ... It will be for the planning application process to test specific proposals contained in the planning applications in the context of the Local Plan policy, and this will determine the number of dwellings that can appropriately be accommodated on the site whilst achieving a high quality sustainable new community that makes best use of the land."*

2.2.3 The total site area is approximately 580ha of which some 426ha fall within the Major Development Site. The site can be sub-divided into three distinct areas:

- Denny Abbey and its setting;
- The former barracks and airfield; and
- The fields to the east.

2.2.4 Figure 1 provides the proposed site boundary for Waterbeach New Town.



**Figure 1 Waterbeach Site Allocation Boundary**

2.2.5 The SPD seeks to provide:

- An overarching, high level vision for the New Town;
- An assessment of approximate development capacity;
- A preferred spatial framework which would form the basis for future masterplanning work. This will set out the broad location of the components of the New Town (key structuring elements) to support comprehensive and seamless development and ensure a sustainable, distinctive and legible new settlement is created
- Guiding principles against which planning applications for the site will need to generally accord and which are intended to support the delivery of a high quality scheme that reflects the distinctive local landscape and context;
- Key strategic infrastructure requirements for the site, and associated mechanisms to secure their delivery;
- Potential general phasing of development areas to ensure a well served and functioning place is established from the start; and
- Approaches to delivery, collaborative working and next steps.

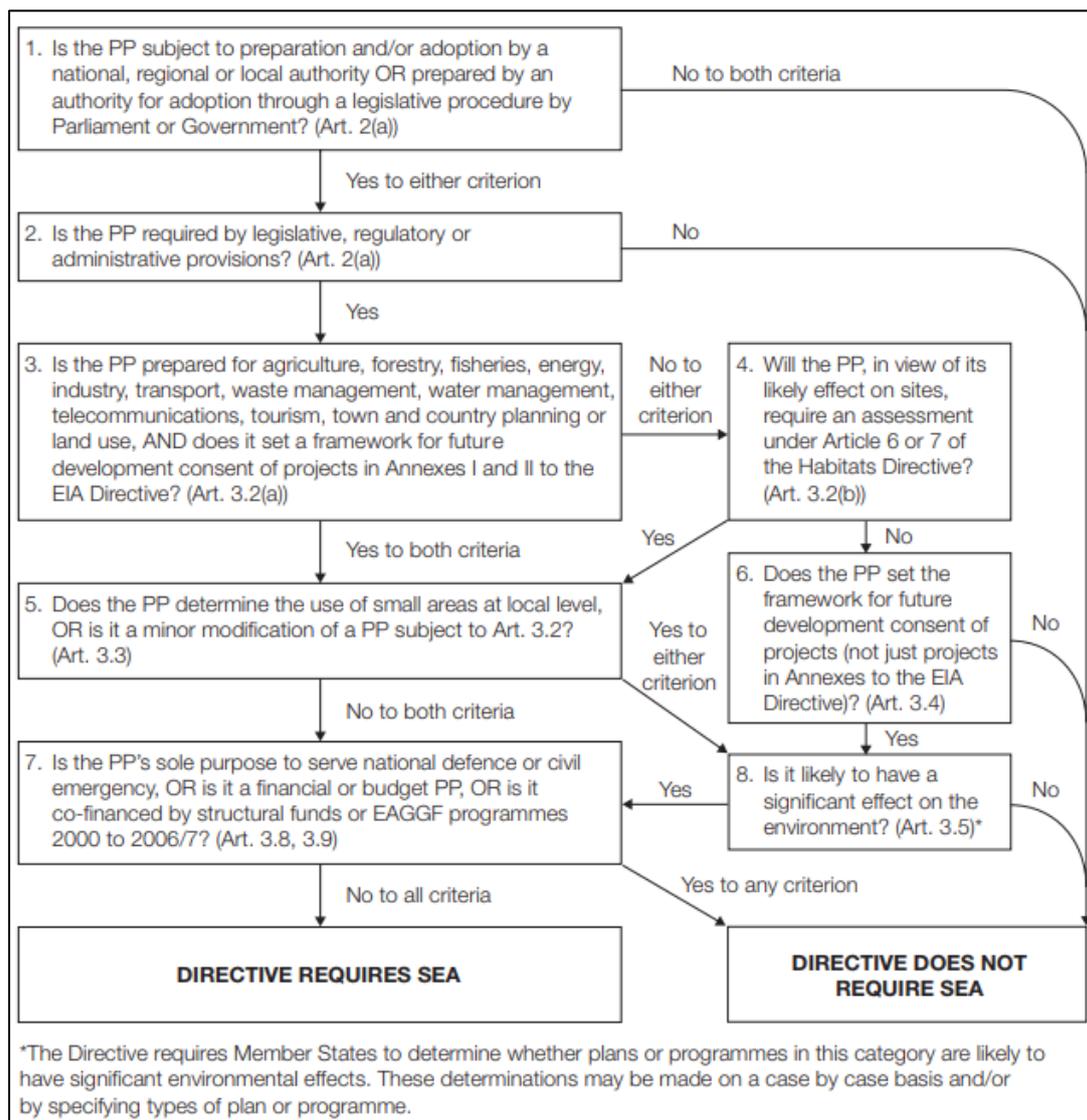
2.2.6 Planning applications must therefore demonstrate a comprehensive approach to development, as required by Local Plan policy and the SPD.

2.2.7 The SPD will be subject to public consultation in accordance with the relevant regulations and the South Cambridgeshire Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

### 3. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: THE SCREENING PROCESS

3.1.1 Under the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) specific types of plans that set out the framework for future development consent of projects must be subject to an environmental assessment (a strategic environmental assessment or SEA) – called a SA under the English planning system.

3.1.2 To establish if a plan needs to be subject to the full SEA process, a “screening” assessment is required against a series of criteria set out in the SEA Regulations. Figure 2 sets out the screening process and Table 1, below provides an assessment of the SPD against these criteria.



**Figure 2: Establishing the need for SEA**

Stage	Assessment	Yes/No
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 or Government? (Art. 2(a))	The SDP is to be adopted by South Cambridgeshire Council.	Yes Proceed to Stage 2.
2. Is the SPD required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Required by administrative provisions.	Yes Proceed to Stage 3.
3. Is the SPD prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste 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? (Article 3.2(a))	<p>The SPD will be for town and county planning purposes. The SPD sets out the detailed framework for the application of Policy SS/5 of the forthcoming Local Plan.</p> <p>The SPD sets the framework for consent of projects and future development that could include development listed in Annex II, Part 10 b) i-iii of the EIA Regs (2017).</p>	Yes Proceed to Stage 3.
5. Does the SPD determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a plan subject to Article 3.2? (Article 3.3)	The allocation of the New Town at Waterbeach, and the principle of development at that location, including development parameters, is established through the Local Plan and not through this SPD. Therefore, it is the Local Plan which determines the principle of development. The SPD provides guidance on the implementation of the Local Plan policy and the parameters set out within that policy.	Yes to the second criterion Proceed to Stage 8.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment (Article 3.5)	See Table 2 for individual screening assessment of the plan.	No.

**Table 1: Assessment of the SPD against the SEA Directive process set out in Figure 1, above.**

3.1.3 Schedule 1 of the Directive sets out the assessment criteria for considering significant environmental effects. The Waterbeach New Town SPD has been assessed against these criteria. The detailed assessment is set out Table 2, below.

Criteria For Determining The Likely Significance Of Effects On The Environment	Potential effects of the SPD
1(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	<p>Allocation of the Waterbeach New Town site forms part of the process for the emerging South Cambridgeshire Local Plan which has already been subject to SA incorporating the requirements of the SEA Directive. The draft SPD provides a Vision and Key Principles for future development of the site in support of Policy SS/5 of the Local Plan and identifies the constraints and opportunities provided by the development.</p> <p>The draft SPD provides suggested further guidance to form the basis of preparation of and discussion for the submission and determination of planning applications on the site consistent with policies in the draft Local Plans. Final decisions relating to scale and massing and other issues will be determined through the development management process which will be subject to environmental assessment procedures.</p>
1(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	The draft Waterbeach New Town SPD sits at the bottom of the plan hierarchy and as such is influenced by plans higher up the hierarchy (e.g. the draft South Cambridgeshire Local Plan), for which it provides additional guidance. While it will influence the development of planning applications, policies higher up in the plan hierarchy are the key determining factor for the development of the site.
1(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	The draft SPD has relevance to the promotion of sustainable development as part of the development of the Waterbeach Site sitting alongside policies contained in the draft South Cambridgeshire Local Plan but in the context of clear framework for securing sustainable development provided for by the LP. The SPD, once adopted, will help to ensure that any future development safeguards the architectural, urban, historic, cultural and archaeological importance of the site and surrounding area while providing an opportunity for positive change. Development of the site presents the opportunity to support and, where possible, enhance environmental sustainability including energy efficiency, ecology, biodiversity, health and wellbeing for those using and visiting the site. Overall, the SPD therefore contributes positively to the integration of environmental considerations.
1(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and	<p>The Local Plan and the Main Modifications have both previously been subject to the SA process. The assessment identified the following potential beneficial and negative impacts against the SA Objectives for the Waterbeach New Town site allocation SPD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land/Soil <i>The site of the new settlement will use previously developed land as well as lead to the loss of agricultural land. However, unplanned development would have the same (possibly more severe) impact and policies in the plan would ensure that the development is approach in a planned and sensitive way.</i></li> <li>• Pollution <i>Uncertain but potentially minor negative impact as the size of the development inherently will create further air pollution from increased traffic and static emissions, leading to impacts on local air quality, (although it is not adjacent to an AQMA).</i></li> </ul> <p>Impacts would be indirectly mitigated by use of the rapid high quality public transport links available from the site to key</p>

	<p>destinations such as Cambridge. This builds upon Chapter 10 of the emerging Local Plan which will ensure that current and future transport needs are met, that people can access work and services, and that the character of the area can be preserved, helping to ensure that people in the area continue to enjoy a high quality of life. Design and layout measures such as a placement of sensitive receptors, away from the eastern and western boundaries of the site could also help provide mitigation.</p> <p>Promoting and integrating sustainable transport measures into the design, in accordance with Policy SC/13: Air Quality, of the emerging Local Plan, in order to reduce additional road traffic on the A10 and local network should be considered at the design phase. Policy also requires a Low Emissions Scheme to ensure that the development has no significant adverse impacts on air quality and the development provides the potential for minor benefits through remediation of minor contamination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape</li> </ul> <p><i>The development has the potential for adverse impacts on the landscape.</i></p> <p>The policy requires development to respond to local character and deliver a Landscape Strategy which could lead to positive impacts through landscape enhancements. Although development at Waterbeach could lead to negative impacts on the setting of Denny Abbey the Local Plan policy requires landscape mitigation measures to ensure that it is not adversely affected, and to provide landscape enhancements. Protection and enhancement of other heritage assets such as Car Dyke and the Soldiers Hill Earthworks are also specifically required by the policy is likely to lead to positive impacts. Please note that in their consultation response to the draft SA screening report, Historic England considers that a SEA of the SPD is required because of the scale of the new town development. However, the principle of the new town development and the parameters of the development in terms of quantum and overall scale have been considered through the SA and HRA Assessment of the Local Plan and the role of the SPD is to provide a framework to assist the implementation of the Local Plan. The SPD does not prescribe or change the scale parameters of the development which is set out in the Local Plan policy SS/5 (as proposed to be modified) as approximately 8,000 to 9,000 dwellings. The SPD considers the issue of dwelling capacity and explicitly does not endorse or otherwise comment on the acceptability of the 11,000 dwelling capacity that is provided within the two major planning applications for the development of the site. Consideration of the consultation response has not changed the conclusion of the draft screening report that it is not considered necessary to undertake a separate SA / SEA for the Waterbeach SPD.</p> <p>Following the submission of the Main Modifications (November 2017) report the boundary of the site allocation has given more detailed consideration to the land that should be retained as setting of Denny Abbey than was possible at the time the Local Plan was submitted, in consultation with Historic England, and will ensure that the most sensitive part of the setting is reflected in the boundary of the Major Development Site</p> <p>The SPD aims to ensure relevant development proposals implement appropriate enhancements measures through the planning application process. This should have positive impact. Overall if the mitigation measures are successful the impacts are likely to be beneficial.</p>
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	<p>The vision for the draft SPD includes the providing a strong landscape framework comprising site-wide green and blue infrastructure setting and retention of historical features where appropriate. Support and enhancement of these measures would be necessary to ensure future development proposals are acceptable in planning terms.</p> <p>Given the identification of mitigation through other policy requirements within the Local Plan in this instance, it is concluded that there are no identified problems relevant to the Waterbeach site allocation that would cause significant adverse impacts. This conclusion is also relevant to the SPD for Waterbeach New Town as the SPD will provide further guidance to and reinforce these policies.</p> <p>Please note that consultation responses have also been received from the Environment Agency and Natural England on the draft SA screening report.</p> <p>The Environment Agency has expressed concerns regarding the potential environmental effects of an offsite new Water Recycling Centre (WRC) to be implemented by Anglian Water. However, the form of upgrading the existing foul water network to serve the new town and what form this may take is not prescribed by nor is it within the scope of the Waterbeach SPD. Local Plan policy for the new town policy SS/5, requires appropriate arrangements for foul drainage and sewage disposal but does not prescribe how this should be achieved. It is not the purpose, or within the scope of, the SPD to identify a solution to serving the new town and is a matter for a separate process. It remains envisaged that this will be the subject of continued discussions between the promoters of the site, the Council and Anglian Water through the planning applications process and consideration of the environmental effects of the solution arrived at will be considered, as appropriate, through the planning application process. Consideration of the EA consultation response has not changed the conclusion of the draft screening report that it is not considered necessary to undertake a separate SA / SEA for the Waterbeach SPD.</p> <p>The response from Natural England comments that 'new evidence has emerged since the preparation of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, and associated HRA and SA, regarding potential risk to designated sites, such as Wicken Fen and the Cam Washes, through increased levels of recreational pressures associated with new housing development'. Natural England do not specify the 'new evidence' but it may relate to detailed information contained within and arising from the two major planning applications for the site from U&amp;C and RLW, where comments by Natural England are seeking additional information from the applicants for planning permission and an agreed approach to off-site mitigation measures to address any long-term residual impacts of additional recreational pressure. These are a matter directed and for consideration as part of the planning application process and it is possible as a matter of principle that this more detailed stage in the planning process could include detailed information on the form of development proposed that were not identified at the plan making stage and which do not relate to the principle of development. However, the comments made by Natural England do not, it is considered, relate to the SPD which contains guidance on the implementation of the Local Plan policy and does not therefore establish either the principle of development or set out the detailed form of development, which is the subject of the planning applications.</p> <p>Consideration of the Natural England consultation response has not changed the conclusion of the draft screening report that it is not</p>
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	considered necessary to undertake a separate SA / SEA for the Waterbeach SPD.
1(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	<p>The draft SPD is not relevant to the implementation of Community legislation on the environment. The SPD sets out guidance for future development at the Waterbeach New Town site allocation.</p> <p>Policies contained within the emerging South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (e.g. SC/13) have more relevance in relation to issues such as air quality, and these policies will be taken into consideration as part of any future development proposals for the site.</p>
2(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	The appraisal of the parent policies and site allocation for which the draft Waterbeach New Town SPD provides guidance, considered that any adverse effects could be appropriately mitigated either directly or indirectly.
2(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	The appraisal of the parent site allocations for which the draft SPD for Waterbeach New Town provides guidance, did not consider that there would be any significant cumulative effects as a result of the proposed development.
29(c) the trans-boundary nature of the effects;	The draft SPD for Waterbeach New Town is focussed on a discrete site, located entirely within the administrative boundary of South Cambridgeshire. As such it is unlikely that there will be any transboundary effects as a result of the draft SPD.
2(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	<p>The appraisal of the parent policy and site allocation for which the draft SPD provides guidance noted that development of the site could have an uncertain effect on pollution and health as development on the scale envisaged by the plan will inherently lead to adverse impacts on air quality associated with population growth.</p> <p>The SPD provides opportunities for the promotion of sustainable modes of transport, the location of the site on the edge of Cambridge can promote sustainable modes, and the creation of a low speed environment to give cyclists and pedestrians greater priority. Development of the site also presents the opportunity to enhance environmental sustainability including energy efficiency, increased ecology and biodiversity and enhanced health and wellbeing for those using and visiting the site.</p>
2(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	<p>The draft SPD is applicable to an area of 580 hectares. However, the allocation of that area for development is secured by the LP rather than the draft SPD.</p> <p>The site is located within the wider context of south Cambridge, which has a population of 153,000 within an area of approximately 90,162 hectares. This represents approximately 0.63% of land within South Cambridgeshire.</p>
2(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to— (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or	<p>The SA Results for Local Plan Submission (March 2014), which establishes the principle of development, stated that although development at Waterbeach New Town could lead to negative impacts on the setting of Denny Abby the policy requires landscape mitigation measures to ensure that its not adversely affected, and to provide landscape enhancements. In addition, it stated that Policy SS/5 The Waterbeach New Town Area Action Plan should be subject to sustainability appraisal.</p> <p>However, the South Cambridgeshire Modification SC-MM056 to SC-MM076, SC-MM261 Policy SS/5 Waterbeach New Town brings</p>

(iii) intensive land-use;	<p>forward a revised site pro-forma to reflect the modified site boundary, which sets development further back from Denny Abbey, and the earthwork causeway oriented towards soldier’s hill. The boundary has given more detailed consideration to the land that should be retained as setting of Denny Abbey than was possible at the time the Local Plan was submitted, in consultation with Historic England, and will ensure that the most sensitive part of the setting is reflected in the boundary of the Major Development Site.</p> <p>Development of the site will need to take full account of the sites location and the SPD identifies the need for Archaeology strategies to be contained within outline and full planning Applications. Associated programme of works, in accordance with the agreed strategy will need prior approval by the local planning authority. This is supplemented by policies (e.g. NH/14) contained within the emerging South Cambridgeshire Local Plan which will be taken into consideration as part of any future development proposals for the site.</p>
2(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	<p>The appraisal of the parent site allocations for which the draft SPD for Waterbeach New Town provides guidance is given in Section (d) above. Given the identification of mitigation through other policy requirements within the Local Plan in this instance, it is concluded that there are no identified problems relevant to the Waterbeach New Town site allocation that would cause significant adverse impacts. This conclusion is also relevant to the SPD for Waterbeach New Town as the SPD will provide further guidance on the implementation of these policies.</p>

**Table 2: Assessment of the SPD against Schedule 1 of the SEA directive.**

- 3.1.4 A separate Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening letter report has also been produced for the SPD (Produced by Ramboll, Report Ref: L17000002037 version 3). This concluded that the draft SPD for Waterbeach New Town is unlikely to have any significant impacts on the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites identified. As such, it is considered that it is not necessary to proceed to the next stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process, i.e. Stage 2 and the requirement for an Appropriate Assessment.
- 3.1.5 Given this HRA Screening conclusion, it is considered that no further HRA work is necessary to support the SPD.
- 3.1.6 The conclusions of previous sustainability appraisal work for South Cambridgeshire have been reviewed and it is not considered that the draft Waterbeach New Town SPD would have significantly different sustainability effects than the assessment of Policy SS/5.

## 4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1.1 The allocation of land at Waterbeach New Town site, took place as part of the process of developing the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2014, and as such has been subject to SA as part of the Local Plan process. The conclusion of this screening process is that as the draft SPD for the Waterbeach New Town site does not make any changes to this allocation, it will not give rise to significant environmental, social or economic effects beyond those already identified as part of the appraisal of the parent policy and site allocation contained within the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. As such it is not considered necessary to undertake a separate SA for this SPD.