Histon & Impington Village Design Statement

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report – January 2019

Essex County Council

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of this Report

This screening report is an assessment of whether or not the contents of the Histon & Impington Village Design Statement (VDS) require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/ EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations. A SEA is required if the Village Design Statement is deemed to have a likely significant effect on the environment.

1.2 The Histon & Impington Village Design Statement

The Histon & Impington Village Design Statement has been prepared to set out clear design principles to guide future development in the village of Histon & Impington. It represents the priorities of the village community, as explored through the process of community participation and consultation through which the Village Design Statement has been developed.

The Histon & Impington Village Design Statement is intended to be a user-friendly tool and does not seek to replicate existing policy and regulations that will continue to apply to all development. It does not introduce new policy but rather it is intended to elaborate on, and be consistent with, existing and emerging Local Plan policies.

The Histon & Impington Village Design Statement is intended to be read by:

- Developers, property owners and their designers, in considering potential development proposals;-
- Development management officers in assessing the suitability and determination of planning applications; and-
- Statutory and non-statutory consultees, including the parish council and members of the public, in commenting on planning applications.

The Village Design Statement is intended to give confidence to all parties involved with the planning and design process, in order for them to understand the character of the village, community priorities, and how to respond to them appropriately through layout and design. This will lead to better quality, more locally distinctive development that is welcomed by local residents and contributes positively to the sustainability of the village.

1.3 The South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework / Local Plan

The adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework includes a number of Development Plan Documents (DPD) and Area Action Plans. Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment have been carried out for each of these documents as well as a Habitat Regulation Assessment. The Local Plan was adopted in September 2018.

Histon and Impington is identified as Rural Centre (Policy S/8). The Policy states that development and redevelopment without any limit on individual scheme size will be permitted within the development frameworks of Rural Centres provided that adequate services, facilities and infrastructure are available or can be made available as a result of the development. This highlights the importance of locally specific design guidance to protect the character of such villages.

A site for new housing development (H/1:d) has been allocated within the Local Plan to the north of Impington Lane for 25 dwellings and land in the Histon & Impington Station Area has been allocated for mixed use development to comprise commercial and community uses and residential development including live/work units. In addition, land known as Bypass Farm west of Cottenham Road has been allocated in the Local Plan to meet local need for open space.

Policy HQ/1: Design Principles provides the policy context for Village Design Statements and requires that all new development must be of high quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context. Development proposals will be required to preserve or enhance the character of the local area and respond to its context in the wider landscape and be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, density, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area. The VDS develops this guidance for Histon and Impington.

1.3.1 Histon & Impington Neighbourhood Plan

Consultation on the Pre-Submission Histon & Impington Neighbourhood Plan took place between October and November 2018.The Neighbourhood Plan contains a number of policies of relevance to the VSD. Policy HIM01 High Design Quality encourages imaginative new development and redevelopment and sets out design requirements specific to the plan area. Policy HIM02 identifies Interesting Buildings which will be considered as non-designated heritage assets. Policy HIM03 seeks to ensure that new development is supportive of Histon & Impington being a single community with 'village character' and that its size, scale and location are appropriate to the existing built environment.

2. Legislative Background

2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment states that,

> *'Environmental assessment is an important tool for integrating environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.*
>
> *(10) All plans and programmes which are prepared for a number of sectors and which set a framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment(7), and all plans and programmes which have been determined to require assessment pursuant to Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna(8), are likely to have significant effects on the environment, and should as a rule be made subject to systematic environmental assessment. When they determine the use of small areas at local level or are minor modifications to the above plans or programmes, they should be assessed only where Member States determine that they are likely to have significant effects on the environment.*
>
> *(11) Other plans and programmes which set the framework for future development consent of projects may not have significant effects on the environment in all cases and should be assessed only where Member States determine that they are likely to have such effects.'*

The Histon & Impington Village Design Statement could influence frameworks for future development, or become used ancillary to those plans and programmes that do set such a framework, and as such it has been determined that the principle of the Village Design Statement should be screened for the necessary application of the SEA Directive.

The Report from the Commission to The Council, The European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions states, on the application and effectiveness of the Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Directive 2001/42/EC), that

> *'the following P&P, and modifications to them, are covered when prepared and/or adopted by an authority[2] and required pursuant to legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions:*
>
> *- P&P prepared for certain sectors and which set the framework for future development consent in respect of projects under the Environmental Impact Assessment-EIA-Directive.*
>
> *- P&P requiring an assessment under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).*
>
> *- P&P setting the framework for development consent in respect of projects (not limited to those listed in the EIA Directive; see above) and determined by "screening" as being likely to have significant environmental effects.'*

This report represents this screening process in regard to the content and influence of the Histon & Impington Village Design Statement.

3. SEA Screening

3.1 When is SEA Required?

The Village Design Statement creates design policy and guidance which is specific to Histon and Impington and may be adopted by the Local Planning Authority as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Planning Practice Guidance – Strategic environmental assessment requirements states that SEA,

> *'implement*[s] *the requirements of the European Directive 2001/42/EC (the 'Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive') on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment..*
>
> *Strategic environmental assessment alone can be required in some limited situations where sustainability appraisal is not needed. This is usually only where either neighbourhood plans or supplementary planning documents could have significant environmental effects.'*

Articles 2 and 3 of the SEA Directive set out the circumstances in which an SEA is required. Table 1 sets out the assessment of whether the principle of the Histon & Impington Village Design Statement will require a full SEA.

Table 1: Exploring whether the Principle of the Plan would warrant SEA

Q	Criteria	Response	Outcome	Commentary
1	Is the Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative procedure by Parliament or Government	Yes	Go to question 2	The VDS has been prepared for adoption by a local authority through legislative procedure.
2	Is the Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provision Typical characteristics of	Yes	Go to question 3	The VDS would be considered as falling within the category of an 'administrative provision'.

Q	Criteria	Response	Outcome	Commentary
	"administrative provisions" are that they are publicly available, prepared in a formal way, probably involving consultation with interested parties. The administrative provision must have sufficient formality such that it counts as a "provision" and it must also use language that plainly requires rather than just encourages a Plan to be prepared.	No	DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA	
3	Is the Plan 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?	Yes to both criteria	Go to question 5	The VDS has been prepared for town and country planning and sets a framework for future development consent.
		No to either criteria	Go to question 4	
4	Will the Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive?	Yes	Go to question 5	N/A
		No	Go to question 6	
5	Does the Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a Plan likely to require assessment under the Habitats Directive?	Yes to either criteria	Go to question 8	The key principles and aims of the VDS can be considered to influence the use of small areas at local level commensurate with their status in determining local planning applications.
		No to both criteria	Go to question 7	
6	Does the Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in the Annexes of the EIA Directive)?	Yes	Go to question 8	N/A
		No	DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA	
7	Is the Plans sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget Plan, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7	Yes to any criteria	DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA	N/A
		No to all criteria	REQUIRES SEA	

Q	Criteria	Response	Outcome	Commentary
8	Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?	Yes	REQUIRES SEA	Likely significant effects are explored in more detail elsewhere in this Screening Report.
		No	DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA	

The following section looks at the criteria for assessing the effects of the Village Design Statement and the identified effects of the Village Design Statement in line with the criteria. Crucially, it will determine whether there are any likely significant effects on the environment.

3.2 Criteria for Assessing the Effects of the Village Design Statement

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects on the environment, referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below.

Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC – Significant Effects

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 regard to the 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 (e.g. 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 (e.g. 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,

Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC – Significant Effects
• intensive land-use, • the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

3.3 Likely Significant Effects on the Environment resulting from the Village Design Statement

The following assessment will consider the likelihood of the Village Design Statement (at the time of writing) to have significant effects on the environment.

Table 2: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects on the Environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The VDS sets out relevant key design principles which could be used to influence proposals for development within Histon & Impington should it be adopted by the Local Planning Authority as a Supplementary Planning Document. This could therefore afford a strong degree of weight in determining planning applications in Histon & Impington.
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The VDS provides guidance for Histon & Impington, relevant to a local level only. The content of the Village Design Statement is in conformity to that of the emerging South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and is intended to be adopted alongside that Plan as a SPD. The VDS will have weight in relevant planning decisions within Histon & Impington due to its eventual intended SPD status.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	The Village Design Statement key principles seek to promote sustainable development as well as ensure environmental considerations are taken into account. The Village Design Statement includes key principles related (directly / indirectly) to ensuring environmental considerations will be integrated into any forthcoming development within Histon & Impington.
Environmental problems relevant to the plan.	The VDS reflects a small area and seeks to address some current environmental issues. The policy content of the adopted Local Plan will additionally apply to any proposals within Histon & Impington.. These policies have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal within the context of the Local Plan. This Screening Report identifies the following potential (direct / indirect) environmental problems or

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	sources of potential problems relevant to Histon & Impington: • A number of Priority Habitats (from the Priority Habitat Inventory[1]) are scattered throughout Histon & Impington, with many adjacent to the existing settlement boundary. These include Broadleaved Woodland, Deciduous Woodland and Traditional Orchard. Young Trees Woodland is also present within the Greenbelt. • A relatively large area to the north west of the built up area of Histon & Impington is within a High Spatial Priority Area for Woodland Flood Risk. • Histon & Impington contains a Scheduled Monument (a medieval moated site 140m south west of Histon Manor). This Scheduled Monument includes an island that remains largely undisturbed and will retain buried evidence for structures and other features relating to the period of occupation. • There are 38 Listed Buildings within Histon & Impington the majority of these are within the Histon Conservation Area, • Of these Listed Buildings, three are Grade I listed (Parish Church of St Andrew, Village College, and Church of St Andrew) and two are Grade II* listed (The Olde House, and Impington Mill). • A SSSI (Histon Road SSSI) lies outside but in close proximity to the settlement boundary to the south (south of the A14). Histon & Impington is within various Impact Risk Zones of the SSSI, the closest of these to the SSSI within the boundary requires consultation with Natural England for residential development of 100 units or more / any residential development of 50 or more houses outside existing settlements/urban areas. • Closer to the centre of the built up area of Histon, large infrastructure such as warehousing / industry where total net additional gross internal floorspace following development is 1,000m² or more would require consultation with Natural England due to being within a Histon Road SSSI Impact Risk Zone. • Histon & Impington includes an AQMA at its southern most point associated with the A14 (AQMA 503 - area along the A14 between Bar Hill and Milton). • There is also noise quality implications associated with the A14 to the south within Histon & Impington. This includes areas of land within average noise levels of 55-65 dB in the day (Lden) and 50-54.9 at night (Lnight).

[1] a spatial dataset that describes the geographic extent and location of Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 habitats of principal importance.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)		Likelihood and summary of significant effects
		• Large areas of Flood Risk Zones 3 and 2 exist within the Plan area centrally within the development boundary of Histon, associated with a tributary of the Old West River (itself a tributary of the Ely Ouse). • Grade 2 and 3 Agricultural Land surrounds the built up area. This corresponds to 'very good' and 'good to moderate' soil quality respectively.
The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).		The content of the VDS is supplementary to, and therefore not in conflict with those relevant planning documents within the wider district and county area related to waste management or water protection.
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects on the following factors:		The following impacts have been identified within this Screening Assessment:
Sustainability Theme	- Biodiversity	Histon & Impington is outside the Impact Risk Zone of any SSSIs and no land is identified for development within the Village Design Statement. As a result, there cannot be considered any likely significant effects on nationally designated sites within Histon & Impington. The Village Design Statement includes key principles which aim to promote both biodiversity and habitat creation.
	- Population	It is considered that there would be no effects on population resulting from the Village Design Statement due to the small scale of the VDS area and the fact that the VDS does not identify any land for development purposes or any such schemes.
	- Human health	There are no highlighted significant effects of the Village Design Statement regarding human health that would warrant a strategic level assessment. The Village Design Statement includes key principles for the protection of green and open spaces that contribute to healthy lifestyles; as well as the creation of sustainable transport networks.
	- Fauna	The impacts of the Village Design Statement on fauna are not considered significant. It is possible that any number of developments that could be forthcoming within Histon & Impington could have negative impacts on protected species, however these are neither identified within the VDS due to its nature and remit nor could any such impact be considered strategically significant to the extent that Strategic Environmental Assessment would be warranted.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	Such issues are more appropriate to be considered on a case-by-case 'project level' basis at the development management stage and in accordance with relevant development management policies contained within the LPA's adopted Local Plan.
- Flora	Areas of Priority Habitat woodland exist within Histon & Impington, however these are not likely to be lost or otherwise harmed as a result of guidance within the Village Design Statement. There will be no likely significant effects on flora as a result.
- Soil	The Histon & Impington area contains Grade 2 (very good) Agricultural Land (ALC) / soil quality which represents the best and most versatile agricultural land within the wider District. Histon and Impington is within the Greenbelt, however, no such land or scheme is identified for development purposes within or as a result of the VDS. There will therefore be no negative implications surrounding soil quality.
- Water	Histon & Impington area is within High Priority area for Surface Water Nitrate Issues, however no element of the Village Design Statement could be considered to exacerbate these water quality issues. Source Protection Zones (SPZs) respond to sources such as wells, boreholes and springs used for public drinking water supply. These zones show the risk of contamination from any activities that might cause pollution in the area. Histon & Impington is not within any Source Protection Zone and as such the Village Design Statement will not have any related effect. Furthermore it cannot be considered that the Village Design Statement would cause any related negative water quality effects related to the potential pollution of ground water (e.g. give rise to hazardous substances such as pesticides, oils, petrol and diesel, solvents, arsenic, mercury or chromium VI; or non-hazardous substances such as ammonia or nitrates). Pollution control policies at the LPA level also apply within the Histon & Impington area to ensure that no negative effects on water quality would be experienced.
- Air	An AQMA is located partly within Histon & Impington to the south associated with the A14, with negative existing air quality implications as a result. Restrictions on the suitability of development on land surrounding the A14 exist at the LPA level and nationally due to its location within the Greenbelt. Air quality issues would not be unreasonably exacerbated by any future growth within the specific area of the AQMA and no such scheme would directly come forward as a result of the VDS. Furthermore, policy related to air quality exists within the Local Plan.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
- Climatic factors	Histon & Impington contains significant areas of Flood Risk Zones 3 and 2. No guidance exists within the Village Design Statement that addresses flood risk issues. It should also be acknowledged that Local Plan policies regarding flood risk apply in Histon & Impington. There will be no significant negative effects resulting from the Village Design Statement due to its nature and content as a guidance document.
- Material assets	Histon & Impington contains land designated as within a Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) within the County Council's adopted Minerals Local Plan (Proposals Map C) (2011) between the A14 and the southern edge of the settlement boundary and within the Greenbelt. The Village Design Statement does not include any content that conflicts with the presence and purpose of the MSA. Regarding other material assets, the content of the Village Design Statement is not considered to have any significant effects due to the extent / size of the VDS area. Such issues are more appropriate to be considered on a case-by-case basis at the development management stage and in accordance with relevant development management policies contained within the LPA's adopted Local Plan.
- Cultural heritage	Histon & Impington contains a Scheduled Monument and 38 Listed Buildings including three that are Grade I listed and two that are Grade II* listed. Histon & Impington also includes a Conservation Area. Key principles within the Village Design Statement encourage development to respond to existing heritage and reflect local characteristics. The scope and content of the Village Design Statement will have positive implications for the conservation (and where possible enhancement) of such assets in combination with adopted Local Plan policies.
- Landscape	Histon & Impington contains areas of Greenbelt surrounding the existing settlement boundary. The Village Design Statement does not newly identify any specific development schemes within the VDS area or seek any settlement boundary amendments. As a result, there have are not any significant strategic landscape effects that would warrant the requirement for the application of the SEA Directive and the formulation of a SEA Environmental Report.
The cumulative nature of the effects.	In line with the above considerations that explore the possible individual effects of the VDS' content, no significant cumulative effects are considered to be likely to warrant the requirement for the application of the SEA Directive and the formulation of a SEA Environmental Report.
The trans boundary nature of the	The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, which has recently been

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
effects.	found sound at examination, and the suite of development plan documents adopted at the district level, can be seen to support the protection and improvement of conditions relevant to those sustainability factors listed within the SEA Directive. The VDS is not in conflict with these wider thematic policies.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	There is limited risk to human health or the environment as a result of the VDS. This is in consideration of the above screening requirements related to sustainability themes. The VDS is primarily focused on design including the minimisation of any impacts / accidents relevant to human health or the state of the environment.
The magnitude spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	No effects are identified within this Screening Report.
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage - exceeded environmental quality standards - intensive land use	As highlighted above in the screening of the VDS per sustainability theme, the VDS has been assessed as having no potential for significant effects that would warrant further assessment through SEA.
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	As highlighted above in the screening of the VDS per sustainability theme, the VDS has been assessed as not having any significant effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The VDS has been prepared for town and country planning purposes and sets a framework for future development consent. The aims and key principles of the VDS can be considered to determine the use of small areas at the local level commensurate with their status in determining local planning applications, however the VDS supports existing policy within the Local Plan that has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal. SPDs will only require SEA if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been assessed during the preparation of the Local Plan.

The potential for significant effects can be ruled out in consideration of the content and remit of the VDS, including suitable protection objectives and with no identified development proposals that could give rise to significant effects on the environment.

The Village Design Statement can therefore be **screened out** for its requirement of Strategic Environmental Assessment in line with the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC.

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