

Little Shelford Village Design Guide (VDG)



Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report

July 2021





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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 Little Shelford Village Design Guide (VDG) requires 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 will be required if the Village Design Guide, as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), is deemed to have a likely significant effect on the environment.

This Report will also screen to determine whether the VDG requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). An HRA Screening Report is required when it is deemed that likely adverse significant effects may occur on protected Habitats (European) Sites as a result of the implementation of a plan or project.

1.2 The Little Shelford Village Design Guide

The Little Shelford Village Design Guide supplements the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan's policies on high quality design, distinctive local character and placemaking. The VDG is intended to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document which will hold material weight in the determination of planning applications in Little Shelford. As an SPD, the VDG cannot introduce new planning policy, or allocate sites for development, and must be in conformity with the policies of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

The VDG has been prepared in collaboration with community representatives and sets out how new development can respect local character and the unique qualities of Little Shelford. It has been prepared to set out clear design principles to guide future development in the village. It represents the priorities of the village community, as explored through the process of community participation and consultation through which the VDG has been developed. The VDG identifies unique characteristics found within the village and identifies design guidance on a number of these characteristics, including:

- The village's setting within the wider open chalkland landscape;
- Village character areas;
- Patterns of historic boundaries, building form and proportions, outbuildings, materials, and boundary walls;
- Village contemporary architecture;
- Historic development evolution;
- Appropriate building precedents; and
- Connectivity for people and wildlife incorporating Green Infrastructure.

1.3 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan

The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan sets out the planning policies and land allocations to guide the future development of the District up to 2031. It includes policies on a wide range of topics such as housing, employment, services and facilities, and the natural environment.

1.3.1 Content regarding Little Shelford within the Local Plan

1.3.1.1 The Settlement Hierarchy and Principle of Development

The Local Plan identifies Little Shelford as an 'Infill Village' within Policy S/11. Infill Villages are generally amongst the smallest in South Cambridgeshire. As stated within the Local Plan's supporting text to this policy,

'These villages have a poor range of services and facilities and it is often necessary for local residents to travel outside the village for most of their daily needs. These villages generally lack any food shops, have no primary school and may not have a permanent post office or a village hall or meeting place. Development on any scale would be unsustainable in these villages, as it will generate a disproportionate number of additional journeys outside the village. Development will not be permitted on sites capable of accommodating scheme sizes significantly larger than 2 or exceptionally 8 dwellings in Infill Villages.'

There are no Local Plan allocations for development within the Little Shelford Parish Boundary.

Policy S/7 of the Local Plan covers policy regarding 'Development Frameworks'. Development Frameworks define where policies for the built-up areas of settlements give way to policies for the countryside. The Policy supports development within such frameworks (including one such area in Little Shelford).

1.3.1.2 Design Principles

Local Plan Policy HQ/1: Design Principles includes requirements for good design in new development. The Policy provides the context for the VDG 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 VDG develops this guidance for Little Shelford.

1.3.1.3 Conservation Areas

Much of Little Shelford village is designated as a Conservation Area, policy for which is included in Local Plan Policy NH/14: Heritage Assets. This Policy sets out that development proposals will be supported when they sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their settings, as appropriate to their significance and in accordance with

the National Planning Policy Framework, particularly: (c) Designated heritage assets. Such assets include the Conservation Area at Little Shelford.

1.3.1.4 Protected Village Amenity Areas (PVAAs)

The Local Plan designates sites within village frameworks for the purpose of safeguarding areas of undeveloped land which are important to retain. Some of the PVAAs may have important functions for the village such as allotments, recreation grounds and playing fields whilst others have an important amenity role in providing a setting for buildings or offer tranquil areas where there is minimum activity. Not all PVAAs have public access as some undeveloped areas which are important may be private gardens. They also vary from those which are very open to visual penetration to those which may be enclosed or semi-enclosed.

The Local Plan identifies two PVAAs within the Little Shelford Parish Boundary. Local Plan Policy NH/11 sets out that development would not be permitted within or adjacent to PVAAs if development would have an adverse impact on the character, amenity, tranquillity or function of the village.

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 Little Shelford Village Design Guide may 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 Guide, as a Supplementary Planning Document, 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 Plan & Programme (P&P), and modifications to them, are covered when prepared and/or adopted by an authority 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 Little Shelford Village Design Guide.

2.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

This HRA Screening Report has been undertaken in order to accompany the Little Shelford Village Design Guide.

Under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations (The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended), a competent authority must carry out an assessment of whether a plan or project will significantly affect the integrity of any European Site (also referred to as Habitats Sites in the National Planning Policy Framework), in terms of impacting the site's conservation objectives.

HRA screening is the initial assessment of the impacts of a land use proposal against the conservation objectives of Habitats sites. Specifically, it is to ascertain whether or not a proposal (either alone or in combination with other proposals) would potentially damage the internationally designated features of that site.

In line with the Court judgement (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats Site.

3. SEA Screening

3.1 When is SEA Required?

The VDG introduces design guidance which is specific to Little Shelford and is intended to be adopted by the Local Planning Authority as a Supplementary Planning Document. 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 a SEA is required. Table 1 sets out the assessment of whether the principle of the Little Shelford Village Design Guide will require a full SEA.

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

Question 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 - The Village Design Guide has been prepared for adoption through legislative procedure.

Question 2: Is the Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provision? (Typical characteristics of "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.)

Yes - The Village Design Guide would be considered as falling within the category of an ‘administrative provision’.

Question 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 - The Village Design Guide has been prepared for town and country planning and as a Supplementary Planning Document sets a framework for future development consent.

Question 4: Will the Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive?

The Village Design Guide's likely effect on sites and requirement for an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive is explored in Section 4 of this Report.

Question 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 one of the criteria - the Village Design Guide can be considered to carry weight in decision-making, as a Supplementary Planning Document, and therefore influences the determination of the use of small areas at local level commensurate with its status in determining local planning applications.

Question 6: Does the Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in the Annexes of the EIA Directive)?

Yes - the Village Design Guide has been prepared for town and country planning and as a Supplementary Planning Document sets a framework for future development consent.

Question 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 European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) programmes 2000 to 2006/7?

The Village Design Guide does not serve a purpose related to national defence or civil emergency, a financial or budget Plan. The Village Design Guide is not co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7.

Question 8: Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?

Likely significant effects are explored in more detail in Section 3.3 of this Screening Report. The 'conclusions' section of the Report outlines whether the Village Design Guide requires SEA or not due in regard to its effects on the environment.

The following section looks at the criteria for assessing the effects of the Village Design Guide and the identified effects of the Village Design Guide 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 Guide

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),

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

- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - * special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - * exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
 - * intensive land-use,
 - * the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

3.3 Likely Significant Effects resulting from the Village Design Guide

The following assessment will consider the likelihood of the Little Shelford Village Design Guide (at the time of writing) to have significant effects on the environment. The table below will explore the likelihood of effects on the following required themes, as included within Annex I of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC):

- Biodiversity;
- Population;
- Human health;
- Fauna;
- Flora;
- Soil;
- Water;
- Air;
- Climatic factors;
- Material assets;
- Cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage;
- Landscape; and
- The interrelationship between the above factors.

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
<p>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>	<p>The VDG sets out proposed guidance which could be used to influence proposals for development within Little Shelford should it be adopted by the Local Planning Authority as a Supplementary Planning Document, as intended. This could therefore afford a strong degree of weight in determining planning applications in Little Shelford.</p>
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.</p>	<p>The VDG provides guidance for Little Shelford, relevant to a local level only. The content of the VDG is in conformity to that of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (which was adopted in September 2018). The VDG will carry weight in relevant planning decision-making, as an SPD.</p>
<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>	<p>The VDG includes key principles related (directly / indirectly) to ensuring environmental considerations will be integrated into any forthcoming development within Little Shelford.</p>
<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan area</p>	<p>The VDG, relevant only to the Little Shelford Parish Boundary, 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 Little Shelford. The Local Plan 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 sources of potential</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>problems relevant to Little Shelford:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Parish is adjacent to the Whittlesford – Thriplow Hummocky Fields SSSI to the south, which is in a ‘favourable’ condition. • The Parish is within various SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs). Development proposals within IRZs are required to be consulted on with Natural England, should they be of a type or size that could warrant negative effects on the relevant SSSI. • A number of Priority Habitats (from the Priority Habitat Inventory¹) are scattered throughout the Parish, with some adjacent to the existing Little Shelford development framework boundary. These include deciduous woodland, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, and traditional orchard. • The Plan area contains a Scheduled Monument in the north, namely a ‘settlement NW of Little Shelford’. • There are approximately 28 Listed Buildings within the Plan area; the majority of these are associated with the Conservation Area forming the historic core of the village. • Of these Listed Buildings there exists the Grade II* listed Little Shelford Manor and the Grade II* listed Church of All Saints. • The entirety of the rural Parish that is not within the Little Shelford Development Framework area (i.e. the ‘built up area’) is within the Cambridge Green Belt. • Land within Flood Risk Zones 3 and 2 exist within the Parish, including within the village’s development framework. These are associated with the River Cam and its tributaries.

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
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The non-developed areas of the Parish consist of Grade 2 ('very good') and Grade 3 ('good to moderate') soils. The Parish does not contain any Grade 1 ('excellent') soil, which represents the best and most versatile soil within the wider District context and also the country. • The Plan area is located within the East Anglian Chalk National Character Area (NCA). • The East Anglian Chalk NCA is characterised as a visually simple and uninterrupted landscape of smooth, rolling chalkland hills with large regular fields enclosed by low hawthorn hedges. Small scale woodland blocks are associated with the village hinterlands and the river corridor to the east. • Medieval moated sites, park lands and nucleated villages are distinctive features of medieval settlement on the Chalk, many of which are preserved in the grounds of later country estates, and many are also Scheduled Monuments.
<p>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).</p>	<p>The content of the VDG 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.</p>
<p>The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects on the following factors:</p>	<p>The following impacts have been identified within this Screening Assessment:</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity 	<p>The Parish is within the IRZs of numerous SSSIs within or adjacent to its boundary. The implications of this are that qualifying planning applications within the Plan area will require consultation with Natural England. Specifically to the area, new housing developments will require an assessment of recreational pressure on relevant SSSIs and measures to mitigate adverse impacts e.g. alternative open space provision.</p> <p>Design guidance exists within the VDG stating that ‘a strong landscape framework and open spaces, building on the existing landscape features, should be incorporated within all development proposals’; this supports the requirement of open space provision in principle. Further, consultation with Natural England is considered a development management issue (in so far as consultation is required at that stage), and relevant policies exist within the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan.</p> <p>In consideration of all of the above, effects on biodiversity resulting from the VDG can therefore be ruled out.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population 	<p>It is considered that there would be no significant effects on population resulting from the VDG. This is due to the small scale of the Parish.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health 	<p>There are no highlighted significant effects of the VDG regarding human health that would warrant a strategic assessment through SEA. The VDG includes design guidance that includes the protection / retention of recreation areas and the provision of open space in new developments. This can be considered to contribute to healthy lifestyles.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fauna 	<p>There are no direct impacts resulting from the VDG on fauna that are considered significant. The VDG seeks development to strengthen the village network of green spaces and wildlife corridors, and to incorporate enhancement opportunities for biodiversity and wildlife. It is possible that any number of</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>speculative developments could be forthcoming within the Parish that could have negative impacts on protected species, however these cannot be considered strategically significant to the extent that Strategic Environmental Assessment would be warranted. 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.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flora 	<p>Areas of Priority Habitat woodland exist within Little Shelford Parish, however these are not likely to be lost or otherwise harmed as a result of guidance within the VDG. There will be no likely significant effects on flora as a result.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil 	<p>The non-developed areas of the Parish area consist of Grade 2 (‘very good’) and Grade 3 (‘good to moderate’) soils. The VDG does not propose or seek to direct any future development within this or any greenfield land within the Parish, which also lies within the Cambridge Green Belt outside of the development framework boundary. There are no identified negative implications surrounding soil quality as a result of the VDG.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water 	<p>The Parish is not within any Groundwater Source Protection Zone. Pollution control policies at the LPA level apply within the Parish area to ensure that no negative effects on water quality should be experienced within Little Shelford.</p> <p>The HRA element of this Report concludes that the VDG does not contain any policies or proposals that would give rise to any deterioration of water quality.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air 	<p>There are no identified air quality issues within the Parish. Although consultation with Natural England is required for any development that could cause air pollution (regarding industrial/agricultural development) in association with the</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>IRZs of SSSIs in parts of the Plan area, consultation would be required at the planning application stage and is not considered a matter would warrant SEA, as a strategic process, to be undertaken. Furthermore, policy related to air quality exists within the Local Plan.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climatic factors 	<p>Little Shelford contains significant areas of Flood Risk Zones 3 and 2. No guidance exists within the VDG that addresses flood risk issues. It should be acknowledged however that Local Plan policies regarding flood risk apply in the Parish and any speculative development coming forward within the Parish can be considered at the planning application stage. There will be no significant negative effects regarding flood risk resulting from the scope and content of the VDG. It is therefore considered that SEA would not be required.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material assets 	<p>Little Shelford Parish contains land designated as within a Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) within the County Council's adopted Minerals Local Plan (2011). The land which surrounds the built area of Little Shelford, which is also within the Cambridge Green Belt, is designated as a MSA for sand and gravel. The VDG does not include any content that conflicts with the presence and purpose of the MSA.</p> <p>Regarding other material assets, the content of the VDG is not considered to have any significant effects due to the extent / size of the Parish. 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.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural heritage 	<p>The Plan area contains a Scheduled Monument and numerous Listed Buildings, as well as a Conservation Area associated with the Little Shelford built up area. The scope and content of the VDG will have positive implications for the conservation (and where possible enhancement) of such</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>assets.</p> <p>Irrespective of the robustness of the VDG in ensuring the protection and enhancement of heritage assets, policy also exists at the LPA level which applies to the Parish. The effects on heritage are, as a result, considered a development management issue in the context of the Plan and its content. There are not considered to be any elements of the VDG that would give rise to significant effects on the historic environment at the strategic level that would require the full application of the SEA Directive.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape 	<p>The Parish is within a sensitive landscape, in regard to the protection objectives of the East Anglian Chalk National Character Area (NCA). The Parish contains numerous features synonymous with this NCA. Nevertheless, the VDG does not allocate land for development purposes and includes design guidance relevant to landscape character and its preservation.</p> <p>Additionally, outside the development framework area Little Shelford is entirely within the Cambridge Green Belt, which affords additional protection. As a result, there 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.</p>
<p>The cumulative nature of the effects.</p>	<p>In line with the above considerations that explore the possible individual effects of the VDG’s 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.</p>
<p>The trans boundary nature of the effects.</p>	<p>The adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan can be seen to support the protection and improvement of conditions relevant to those sustainability factors listed within the SEA Directive. The VDG is not in conflict with these wider thematic policies. The HRA Screening element of this Report, which</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	explores in-combination effects with other relevant plans and projects, also identifies no in-combination effects regarding Habitats (European) Sites.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	It is considered that there is no risk to human health or the environment as a result of the VDG. This is in consideration of the above screening requirements related to sustainability themes. The VDG is unlikely to give rise to any accidents that can be considered to have a significant risk to human health or the environment.
The magnitude spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The VDG relates to the local level only. No effects are identified within this Screening Report.
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special natural characteristics or cultural heritage • exceeded environmental quality standards • intensive land use 	As highlighted above in the screening of the VDG per sustainability theme, the VDG has not been assessed as having any possible negative effect associated with environmental themes.
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national,	As highlighted above in the screening of the VDG per sustainability theme, the VDG has not been assessed as having any significant effects on areas or landscapes which



Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
community or international protection status.	have a recognised national, community or international protection status.

4. HRA Screening

4.1 Habitat Regulations Assessment of Development Plans (including Supplementary Planning Documents)

This section forms a plan level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) as required by Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations (The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)), a competent authority must carry out an assessment of whether a plan or project will significantly affect the integrity of any Habitats Site, in terms of impacting the site's conservation objectives.

The first stage of HRA is the screening assessment of the impacts of a land use proposal against the conservation objectives of Habitats (European) sites. Specifically, it is to ascertain whether or not a proposal (either alone or in combination with other proposals) would potentially damage the internationally designated features of that site. Habitats (European) sites are also known as Natura 2000 sites and Habitats sites in the NPPF.

This HRA Screening Report has been undertaken in order to support the Little Shelford Village Design Guide. The area covered by the guide (the Parish Boundary) is shown in Appendix 1.

This section of this Report aims to:

- Identify the Habitats sites within 20km of the Little Shelford Parish boundary.
- Summarise the reasons for designation and Conservation Objectives for each Habitats site to be considered in this assessment.
- Screen the Village Design Guide for its potential to impact upon a Habitats site.
- Assess the potential for effects in-combination with other projects and plans.
- Identify if there are any outstanding issues that need further investigation.

On 23 June 2016, the United Kingdom (UK) held a referendum and voted to leave the European Union (EU). On 29 March 2017 the Prime Minister triggered Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, which commenced a period of negotiations regarding the UK's exit from the EU. On 26 June 2018 The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 received Royal Assent and the UK has now left the EU with the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 making sure that UK laws continue to operate following the UK's exit. There is no immediate change to legislation or policy affecting national infrastructure. Relevant EU Directives have been transposed into UK law and those are unchanged until amended by Parliament. Therefore the requirements for HRA under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain in place.

4.2 Court Judgements and their consideration in this Report

4.2.1 CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17

As previously mentioned, in line with the Court judgement (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats Site.

This HRA Screening Report does not therefore consider mitigation measures within the assessment of Likely Significant Effects resulting from the Little Shelford Village Design Guide.

4.2.2 CJEU Holohan C- 461/17

This Court judgement now imposes more detailed requirements on the competent authority at Appropriate Assessment stage:

1. [...] an 'Appropriate Assessment' must, on the one hand, catalogue the entirety of habitat types and species for which a site is protected, and, on the other, identify and examine both the implications of the proposed project for the species present on that site, and for which that site has not been listed, and the implications for habitat types and species to be found outside the boundaries of that site, provided that those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site.
2. [...] the competent authority is permitted to grant to a plan or project consent which leaves the developer free to determine subsequently certain parameters relating to the construction phase, such as the location of the construction compound and haul routes, only if that authority is certain that the development consent granted establishes conditions that are strict enough to guarantee that those parameters will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.
3. [...] where the competent authority rejects the findings in a scientific expert opinion recommending that additional information be obtained, the 'Appropriate Assessment' must include an explicit and detailed statement of reasons capable of dispelling all reasonable scientific doubt concerning the effects of the work envisaged on the site concerned.

Within this HRA Screening report, the assessment determines the requirement whether an Appropriate Assessment is needed for the Little Shelford Village Design Guide.

4.2.3 R (Foster and Langton) v Forest of Dean DC and Homes and Communities Agency (2015) EWHC 2648 (Admin) Cranston J

This court ruling states that there is no basis to carry out an assessment of in-combination effects when there are no effects from the subject proposal to take account of.

4.3 Habitats (European) Sites

Habitats Sites is the term used in the NPPF (2021) to describe any site which would be included within the definition at Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) for the purpose of those regulations. These now form part of the UK national network of sites for nature protection. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of UK's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

All Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are comprised of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and all Ramsar sites in England are SSSIs. Together, SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites are considered as Habitats Sites in England (NPPF, 2021).

4.3.1 Explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

SPAs are areas which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within EU countries. Example: Ouse Washes is internationally important for wintering waterfowl. Legislation: Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

SACs are areas designated to protect habitat types that are in danger of disappearance, have a small natural range, or are highly characteristic of the region; and to protect species that are endangered, vulnerable, rare, or endemic. Example: woodland habitat of Eversden and Wimpole Woods for the population of Barbastelle bats. Legislation: Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)

Ramsar Sites are designated to protect the biological and physical features of wetlands, especially for waterfowl habitats. For example, Wicken Fen is an outstanding remnant of East Anglian peat fens and supports one species of British Red Data Book plant fen violet *Viola persicifolia* which survives at only two other sites in Britain. Ramsar sites often overlap with SACs and SPAs and UK planning policy determines that they should be accorded the same importance when developments are proposed. Legislation: Ramsar Convention (1971) – Wetlands of International Importance and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

4.3.2 Habitats Sites to be considered

There are four Habitats sites which lie within 20 km of the Little Shelford Parish Boundary. These are listed in Table 3 and shown on the map in Appendix 1.

Table 3: Habitats Sites within 20km to be considered in this assessment

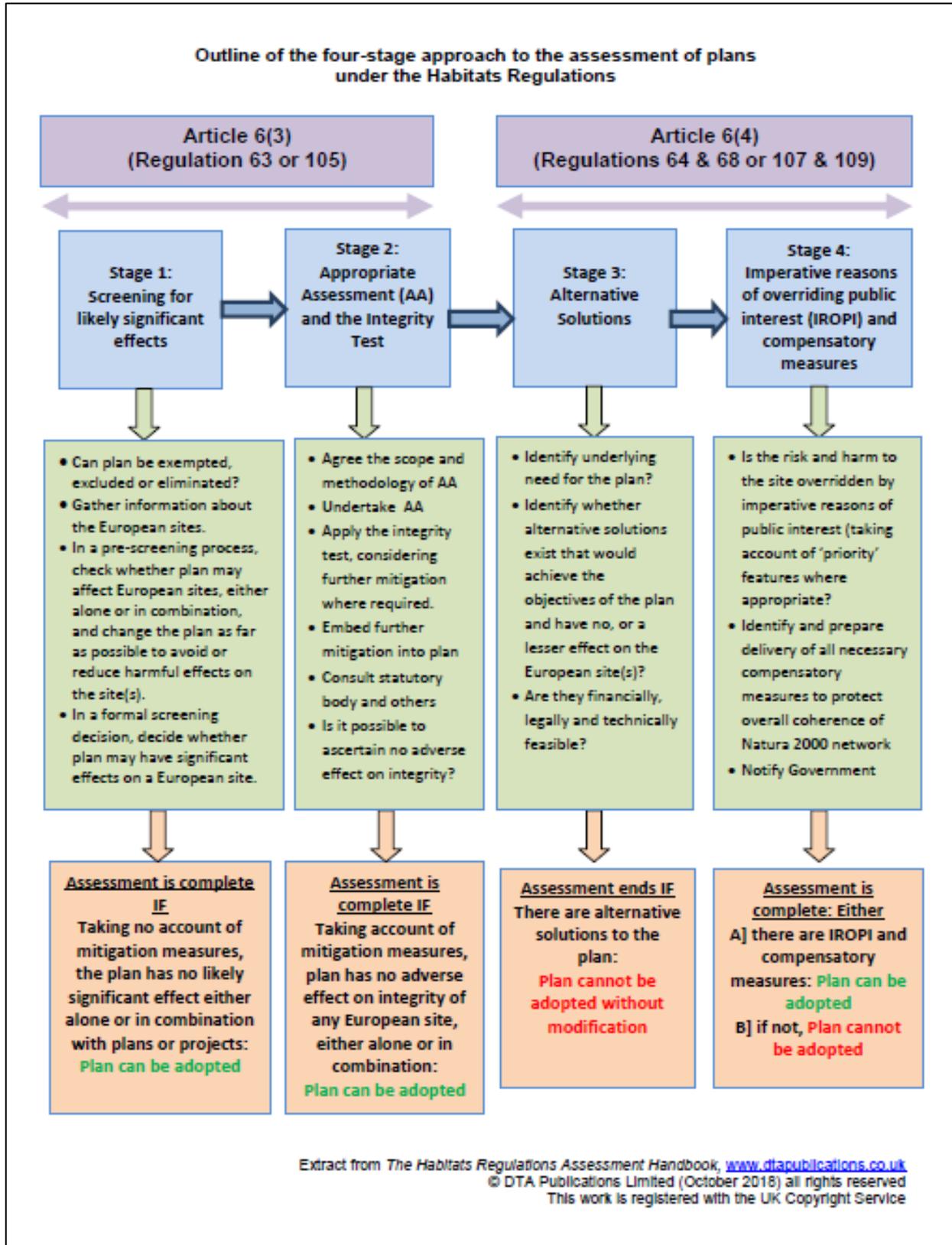
SPA
N/A
SAC
Fenland, Eversden and Wimpole Woods, Devils Dyke
Ramsar
Wicken Fen

Fenland SAC is comprised of three fenlands and overlaps with Wicken Fen Ramsar. The Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) for the underpinning SSSIs for the aforementioned Habitats sites were interrogated on MAGIC map. The Little Shelford Village Design Guide area lies outside the 5km IRZs for Wicken Fen Ramsar site and Fenland SAC. The Parish does however lie within the 10km IRZ for Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC.

4.4 Method and Approach

This document relates only to Stage 1 of the HRA process as set out in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Outline of the Four Stage Approach to the Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Regulations (taken from the DTA handbook).



4.4.1 Stage 1: HRA Screening

The screening stage identifies if any significant effects are likely because any policies or projects will have an impact on a Habitats Site. Table 4 identifies the different categories assigned to each element of the VDG: Category A identifies those policies or projects that are considered to have No Negative Effect. Category B identifies those policies or projects that will have No Likely Significant Effect. Category C identifies those policies or projects that might have Likely Significant Effect upon a Habitats site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Section 4.5 considers each policy or projects and the results of the screening exercise recorded.

Table 4: Screening categorisation

<p>Category A: No negative effect</p> <p>Policies or projects that will not be likely to have any negative effect on a Habitats site.</p>
<p>Category B: No Likely Significant Effect</p> <p>Policies or projects that could have an effect but would not be likely to have a <i>significant</i> negative effect on a Habitats site alone or in combination. This conclusion could only be reached if the effects, even in combination and taking the precautionary principle into account, are considered trivial.</p>
<p>Category C: Likely Significant Effect</p> <p>Policies or projects which are predicted to have a likely significant effect on a Habitats Site either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.</p>

4.4.2 Potential impacts of the Village Design Guide on Habitats Sites

There are a wide range of potential impacts on Habitats Sites that could arise from development plans or Supplementary Planning Documents. These can be summarised as -

- Land take by development;
- Impact on protected species found within but which travel outside the protected sites may be relevant where development could result in effects on qualifying interest species within the Habitats site, for example through the loss of feeding grounds for an identified species.
- Increased disturbance, for example from recreational use resulting from new housing development and / or improved access due to transport infrastructure projects;

- Changes in water availability, or water quality as a result of development and increased demands for waste water treatment, and changes in groundwater regimes due to increased impermeable areas;
- Changes in atmospheric pollution levels due to increased traffic, waste management facilities etc. Pollution discharges from developments such as industrial developments, quarries and waste management facilities.

In line with the SA Scoping Report for South Cambridgeshire’s Local Plan, each policy will be assessed against the criteria in the table below.

Table 4: Assessment of potential impacts on Habitats Sites

Nature of potential impact	How the Little Shelford Village Design Guide (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) could affect a Habitats site	Why these effects are not considered significant
Land take by development	The Little Shelford Village Design Guide area is outside the boundaries of the Habitats Sites within scope of this HRA.	N/A
Impact on protected species outside the protected sites	<p>The Little Shelford Village Design Guide area lies outside the 5km IRZ for Wicken Fen Ramsar, Fenland SAC and Devils Dyke SAC.</p> <p>The Parish does however lie within the 10km IRZ for Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC.</p>	<p>The Little Shelford Village Design Guide does not allocate any land for development.</p> <p>The SPD proposes the retention and enhancement of all woodland blocks and mature boundary trees.</p> <p>Therefore, impacts on protected species outside of the Habitats sites is screened out.</p>
Recreational pressure and disturbance	<p>The Little Shelford Village Design Guide area lies outside the 5km IRZ for Habitats Sites within scope of this HRA.</p> <p>The Parish does lie within the 10km IRZ for Eversden and Wimpole Woods.</p>	<p>There is currently no formal Zone of Influence identified for Wicken Fen within which recreational impacts are considered. Further investigation is underway.</p> <p>Given the nature of the Qualifying Features for Eversden and Wimpole Woods,</p>

Nature of potential impact	How the Little Shelford Village Design Guide (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) could affect a Habitats site	Why these effects are not considered significant
		<p>recreation is not considered to have a significant effect on the designated features of the SAC.</p> <p>Additionally, as the Little Shelford Village Design Guide does not allocate any land for development, impacts from recreation arising from the NP are screened out.</p>
Water quantity and quality	<p>Although water quality is an issue of concern for Wicken Fen Ramsar site (and thereby Fenland SAC), the Little Shelford Village Design Guide area lies outside the 5km Impact Risk Zone, and it is considered that there is no pathway for water quantity or quality impacts.</p> <p>Additionally, there is no hydrological connection between the Parish and the designated sites within scope.</p>	N/A
Changes in pollution levels	<p>The Little Shelford Village Design Guide area lies outside the 5km IRZ for the Wicken Fen Ramsar, Fenland SAC and Devils Dyke SAC.</p> <p>The Parish does lie within the 10km IRZ for Eversden and Wimpole Woods.</p>	The Little Shelford Village Design Guide does not allocate any land for development.

There are no specific policies identified in the Little Shelford Village Design Guide SPD to screen for impacts on Habitats sites. Table 4 assesses the potential mechanisms by which the

SPD could result in impacts on Habitats sites, given the contents of the SPD and the distance of the Parish from the sites within scope of this assessment.

4.4.3 Recommendations

There are no specific recommendations for changes to the Village Design Guide to avoid any likely significant effects on Habitats sites alone nor any residual insignificant effects. It is therefore considered there is no mechanism through which the SPD could affect any Habitats Sites at all.

4.6 Other Plans and Projects: In-combination Effects

As it is considered that the SPD will not have any effect on Habitats Sites at all, there is no mechanism for the Village Design Guide to result in any effects 'in-combination' with other plans and projects.

There is therefore no need to consider any plans or projects which could be relevant at the time of adoption of this SPD.

This is in line with the Court ruling Foster and Langton (2015) EWHC 2648 (Admin) which states that "There is no basis to carry out an assessment of in-combination effects when there are no effects to take into account."

As the in-combination provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) are not triggered, it is considered unnecessary to undertake an in-combination assessment of Little Shelford Village Design Guide.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The VDG has been prepared for town and country planning purposes and sets a framework for future development consent. The aims and key principles of the VDG 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 VDG 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 VDG, including suitable protection objectives and with no identified development proposals that could give rise to significant effects on the environment.

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

5.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

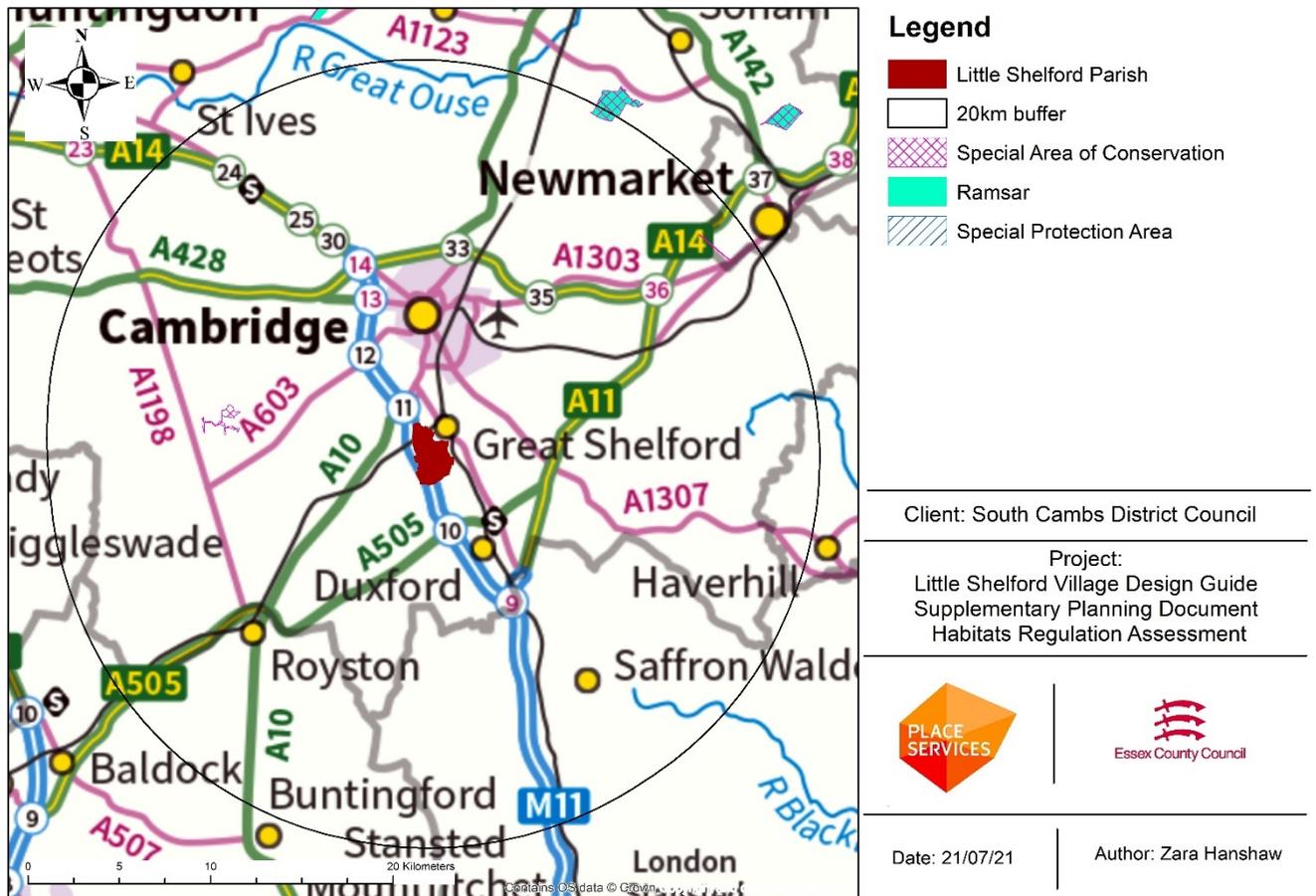
Subject to Natural England's review, this HRA screening report indicates that the Little Shelford Village Design Guide is not predicted to have likely significant effects on any Habitats site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. The requirement for the Plan to undertake further assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Regulations 2017 (as amended) is therefore **screened out**.

References

- Northstowe Area Action Plan HRA (April 2007)
- South Cambridgeshire District Council Cambridge Southern Fringe Area Action Plan HRA (May 2007)
- Cambridge East Area Action Plan HRA (May 2007)
- North West Cambridge Area Action Plan HRA (August 2007)
- South Cambridgeshire District Council Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (adopted July 2009)
- Bourn Airfield New Village SPD SEA / HRA Screening Report (June 2019)
- Waterbeach New Town SPD HRA screening report (2018)
- South Cambridgeshire District Council South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (September 2018)
- Greater Cambridge Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment Issues and Options Scoping Report (Dec 2019)
- North East Cambridge Area Action Plan HRA Report (July 2020)
- Little Shelford Village Design Guide (Pre-Submission Draft, 2021)
- [Natural England Conservation objectives for European Sites: East of England Website](#)
- Tydlesley, D., and Chapman, C., (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, (January 2020) edition UK: DTA Publications Limited

Appendix 1

The Parish Boundary Area and Locations of the Habitats sites within 20 km



Source: Place Services, 2021



Place Services

County Hall, Essex CM1 1QH

T: +44 (0)3330 136 844

E: enquiries@placeservices.co.uk

www.placeservices.co.uk

[@PlaceServices](https://twitter.com/PlaceServices)



Essex County Council