

# Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review 2021-2041

Strategic Environmental  
Assessment (SEA) and Habitats  
Regulations Assessment (HRA)  
Screening Opinion



September 2023

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND**

This screening report is designed to determine whether the content of the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Whether a Neighbourhood Development Plan requires a SEA, and if so the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed in the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that a SEA may be required, for example, where:

- the Neighbourhood Development Plan allocates sites for development;
- the Neighbourhood Development Plan Area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan;
- the Neighbourhood Development Plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through the SEA of the Local Plan in the area.

The screening report also examines the potential impact of the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review on internationally designated wildlife sites and determines if the plan requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

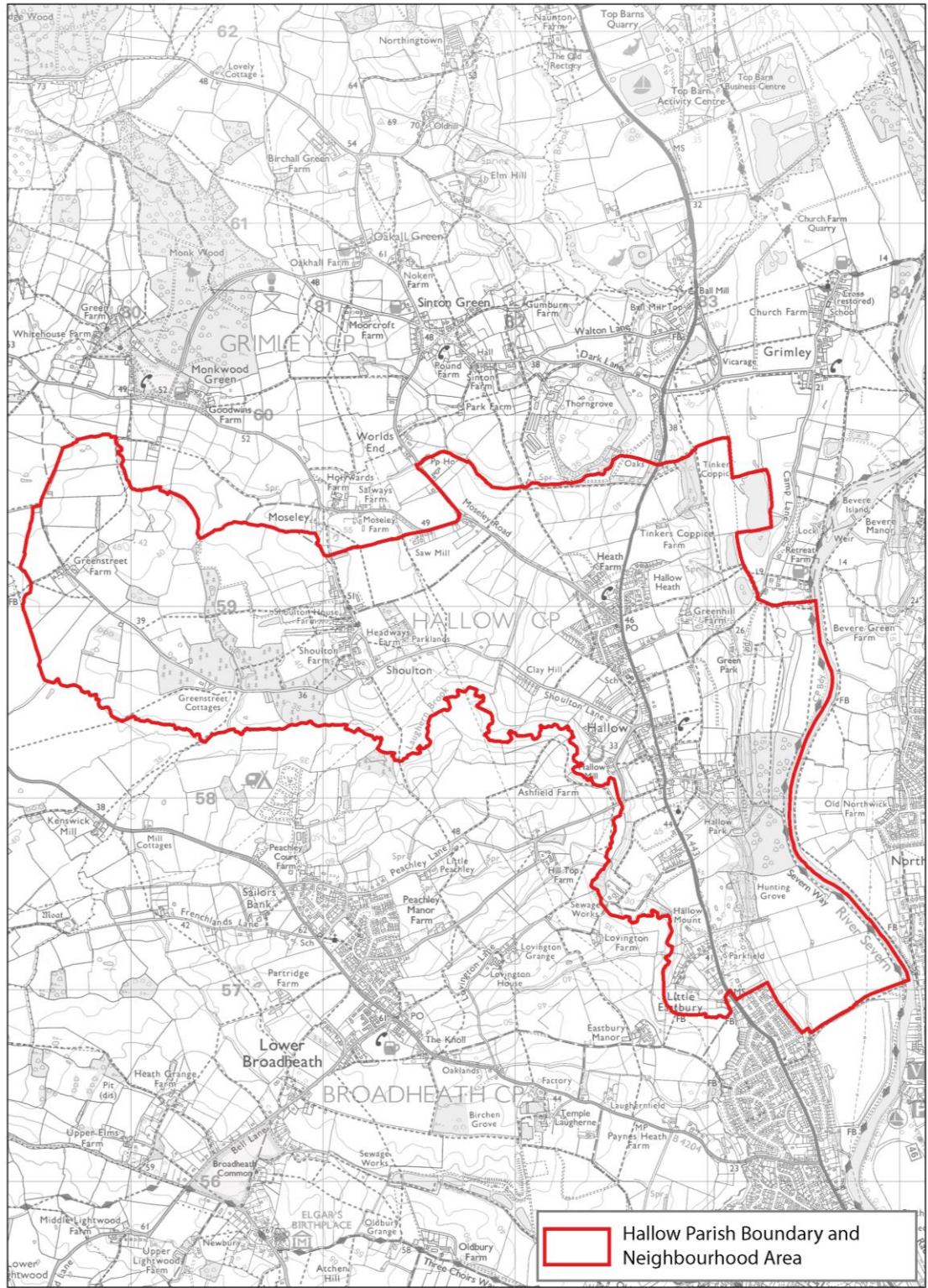
When deciding on whether the proposals are likely to have significant effects, the local authority is required to consult Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. Where the local planning authority determines that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment) it should prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.

### **1.2 DRAFT HALLOW NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY**

The draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review is essentially a community-led framework for guiding future development and growth of the parish, with the review taking the adopted 2020 HNP forward to the year 2041. 17 draft policies have been proposed, focusing on topics including Sustainable Development, Social and Community, Development, Community Facilities, Historic and Natural Environment, Key Views, Biodiversity and Geodiversity, Local Green Spaces, and Design in the Built Environment.

### 1.3 HALLOW DESIGNATED NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

Figure 1 – Designated Hallow Neighbourhood Area



## 1.4 DRAFT HALLOW NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW POLICY SUMMARIES

Seventeen policies are proposed in the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review (HNPR); they are summarised below.

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
<p><b>HAL1</b> Housing Requirement</p>	<p>Policy HAL1 sets out a housing requirement for the period 2021-2041 of a minimum of 25 dwellings. This will be met by commitments, reallocated sites, and windfall development in accordance with Policy HAL2; HAL3.</p>
<p><b>HAL2</b> Development of Land at Greenhill Lane</p>	<p>Policy HAL2 allocates land at Green Hill Lane for 40 dwellings. And includes criteria for layout, design, access, and landscape for determining any planning application.</p> <p>This is a reallocation and not a new site. It was assessed through the SA prepared for the 'made' HNP and has been partly built out.</p>
<p><b>HAL3</b> Windfall Housing Development</p>	<p>Policy HAL3 principle of windfall development acceptable within the defined development boundary but must conform with the identified criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential need for rural worker.</li> <li>• Reuse of heritage assets.</li> <li>• Of outstanding design quality.</li> <li>• Affordable housing as an exception.</li> <li>• Reuse a redundant or disused building.</li> </ul>
<p><b>HAL4</b> Housing Need</p>	<p>Policy HAL4 requires all new housing development of 5 or more units (subject to viability) to demonstrate that they provide a range of types, size and tenures of housing to meet local housing need. Further criteria set out requirements for bed size, bungalows, age related housing, First Homes etc.</p>
<p><b>HAL5</b> Housing Design</p>	<p>Policy HAL5 sets out requirements for development proposals to reflect local character, identify local distinctiveness and explain how this is reflected in the design process. Additional criteria link to the referencing the Hallow Design Guide and for design and access statements to emphasise the importance of health and well-being in the design of any new development.</p>

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
<p><b>HAL6 Landscape</b></p>	<p>Policy HAL6 for development proposals to be supported it is necessary that they demonstrate how the guidelines and characteristics of the landscape typologies in the Worcestershire Landscape Assessment, have positively influenced the proposal. Emphasise the importance of retaining and conserving existing features, e.g., trees, woodland, hedgerows by restoring, enhancing and improving as appropriate.</p>
<p><b>HAL7 Dark Skies</b></p>	<p>Policy HAL7 sets out criteria to limit lighting in new development and mitigation to maintain dark sky and reduce pollution.</p>
<p><b>HAL8 Local Green Spaces</b></p>	<p>Policy HAL8 identifies six sites in the neighbourhood area (as shown on Map 10) to be designated as Local Green Space.</p>
<p><b>HAL9 Important Views</b></p>	<p>Policy HAL9 requires new development proposals to be sited, designed and at a scale that does not substantially harm the important views, as set out in the plan, from public vantage points.</p>
<p><b>HAL10 Green Infrastructure Network</b></p>	<p>Policy HAL10 sets out a range of criteria for development proposals to meet in terms of the impact on Green Infrastructure (GI) as identified in the plan. These include avoiding loss of function and coverage of GI, watercourses and ecological value of the network, recreational function, and to provide a net gain of GI.</p>
<p><b>HAL11 Biodiversity</b></p>	<p>Policy HAL11 for development proposals to be supported must demonstrate a net gain. Where practical this should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retain existing and create new wildlife habitats.</li> <li>• Include native flora in new planting schemes.</li> <li>• Create biodiversity – friendly environments, e.g., bat and bird boxes, bee hotel etc.</li> <li>• Facilitate wildlife movement by sympathetic boundary treatments that encourages mobility of species.</li> </ul> <p>Unless exceptional development proposals that lead to the loss of ancient woodlands and veteran trees will not be supported.</p>

DRAFT POLICY	SUMMARY
<p><b>Policy HAL12</b> <b>Community Facilities and Local Shops</b></p>	<p>Policy HAL12 identifies several community facilities and local shops, including the post office and local store and sets out a range of criteria to limit their loss and safeguard the future of these assets for the community.</p>
<p><b>Policy HAL13</b> <b>Recreation</b></p>	<p>Policy HAL13 safeguarding of identified playgrounds, recreation, allotments, and sporting facilities in the village. The policy requires any development proposals that may result in their loss will be determined against SWDP38.</p>
<p><b>Policy HAL14</b> <b>Hallow Conservation Area</b></p>	<p>Policy HAL14 sets out several criteria that any new development within the conservation area must meet.</p>
<p><b>Policy HAL15</b> <b>Non-designated Heritage Assets</b></p>	<p>Policy HAL15 sets out criteria that development proposals must show how they protect or enhance the heritage asset. Any changes or alterations of non-designated heritage asset must be design sensitivity and have regard to historical and architectural interest and setting.</p>
<p><b>Policy HAL16</b> <b>Archaeological Assets</b></p>	<p>Policy HAL16 set out requirements for archaeological survey, evaluation and recording, either through desktop or field work to establish the significance or potential significance of the heritage asset.</p>
<p><b>Policy HAL17</b> <b>Sustainable Transport</b></p>	<p>Policy HAL17 requires new development to reduce the reliance on the private car and increase opportunities for active travel and public transport. The policy is supported by specific criteria to support this objective.</p>

## 1.5 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) PROCESS

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

The SEA process aims to ensure that likely significant environmental effects arising from a Plan are identified, assessed, mitigated, communicated and monitored, and

that opportunities for public involvement are provided. It enables environmental considerations to be accounted for in decision-making throughout the production of a Plan in an integrated manner.

Figure 2 sets out the screening procedure and how a plan should be assessed against the SEA Directive criteria. This outline procedure has then been applied to the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review in Table 1.

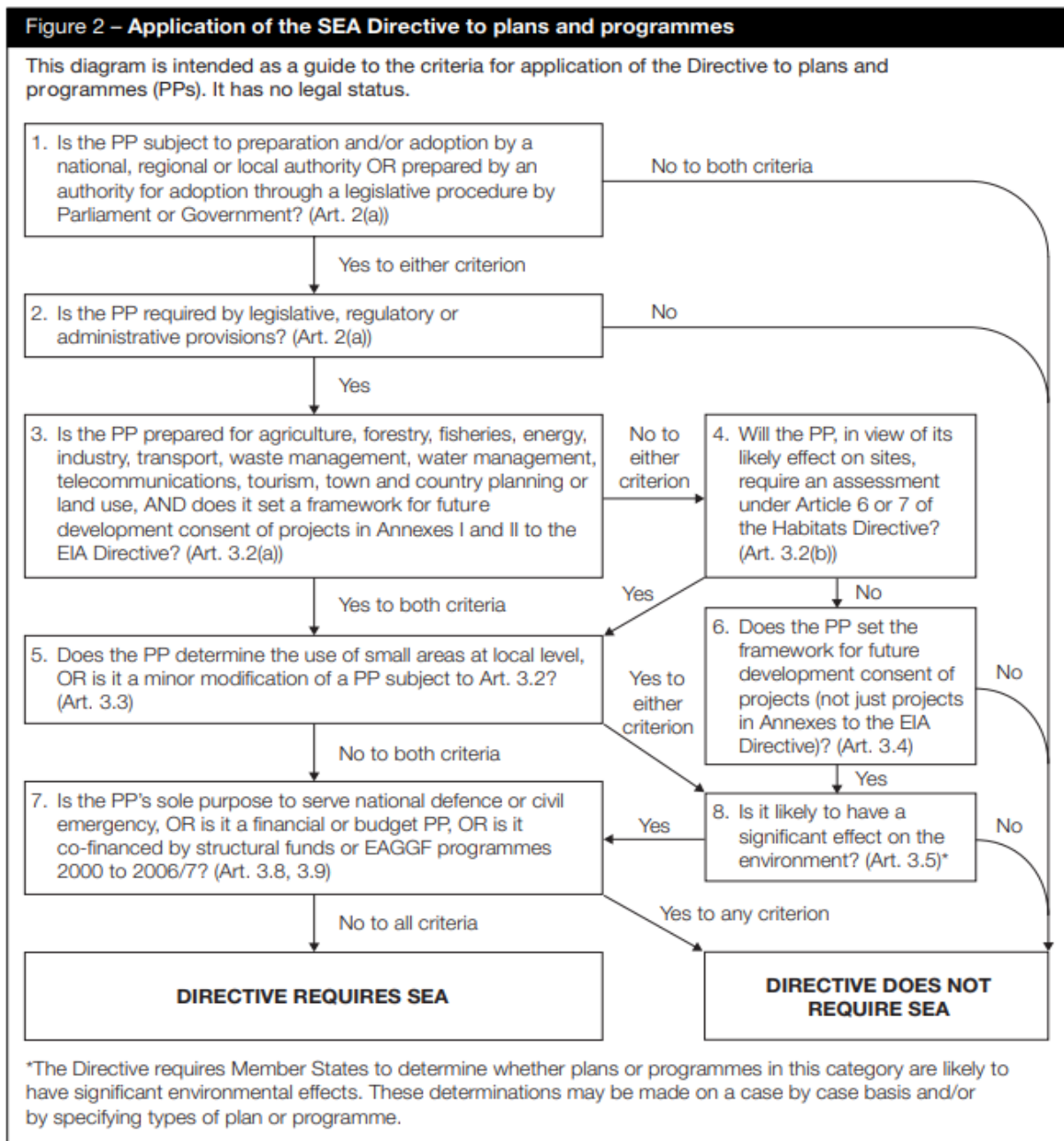


Figure 2 Application of the SEA Directive to Plans and Programmes (source: A Practical Guide to Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, ODPM, 2005)



Table 1: Assessment of the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review using SEA Directive Criteria

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review 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))	Y	The Neighbourhood Plan review is being prepared by a Qualifying Body, i.e. Hallow Parish Council under the Localism Act 2011. If the Plan review is passed by means of an either Examination and/or Referendum, it will be formally adopted/made by the Local Planning Authority. It will then form part of the local development framework and be afforded significant weight in planning decisions.
2. Is the Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	N	A review of a Neighbourhood Plans is not a mandatory requirement, and the Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review is being prepared voluntarily by the local Qualifying Body in line with the provisions of the Localism Act. The review is being undertaken to keep it the Plan up to date and maintain its weight etc. as part of the Local Development Framework. If the Plan review is adopted it will form part of the statutory development plan, and it is therefore considered necessary to answer the following questions to determine if an SEA is required.
3. Is the Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	Y	The Plan is prepared for the purposes of town and country planning and sets out a framework for future development consent of projects.

4. Will the Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	<b>N</b>	See Screening Opinion for HRA in Section 3 of this report.
5. Does the Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	<b>Y</b>	The Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review is made up of several policies which, when adopted, will form part of the Local Development Framework, and so will have significant weight in planning decisions.
6. Does the Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	<b>Y</b>	When readopted, the Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review will be a statutory planning document. It will form part of the Local Development Framework and so will have significant weight in planning decisions. The responsibility for issuing development consent will remain with the Local Authority.
7. Is the Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	<b>N</b>	Not Applicable

8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	?	The Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review is not proposing any further allocated sites for development. However, it does set out policies for the purposes of Development Management that may have a significant effect on the environment. To investigate the likelihood of potential impacts further a case-by-case assessment has been conducted, the full results of which can be found in Table 2.
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Based upon the initial screening carried out against the criteria in Table 1 above, the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review may have a significant effect on the environment. To explore these potential effects further, a case-by-case assessment has been conducted. The criteria used in the undertaking of such an assessment are drawn from Article 3.5 (Annex II) of the SEA directive, and the results are shown in Table 2.

## 1.6 HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT (HRA) PROCESS

The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) refers to the assessment required for any plan or project to assess the potential implications for European wildlife sites. The HRA therefore looks at whether the implementation of the plan or project would harm the habitats or species for which European wildlife sites are designated. The relevant European wildlife site designations are Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), which together form part of the Natura 2000 network.

In addition to SPAs and SACs, Ramsar sites are also designated areas which, as a matter of government policy, are to be treated in the same way as European wildlife sites (although they are not covered by the Habitats Regulations). European wildlife sites and Ramsar sites are collectively known as internationally designated wildlife sites.

The legislation sets out a process to assess the potential implications of a plan on internationally designated wildlife sites. The first stage of this process is a screening exercise where the details of nearby internationally designated sites are assessed to see if there is the potential for the implementation of the plan to have an impact.

## 2. SEA SCREENING

### 2.1 SEA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

European Directive 2001/42/EC requires a full Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken for certain types of plans and programmes that would have a significant environmental effect.

Table 2 below provides the screening determination of the need to carry out a full Strategic Environmental Assessment for the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review. This has been made in accordance with the Regulations and will be subject to consultation with the strategic environmental bodies before Malvern Hills District Council makes its determination on the necessity for a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Table 2: The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004: Schedule 1 - Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment.

<b>Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)</b>	<b>Likely to have significant environmental effects?</b>	<b>Summary of significant events</b>
1(a) the degree to which the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	<b>NO</b>	The Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review would, if adopted, form part of the statutory Development Plan and as such would contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects.
1(b) the degree to which the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	<b>NO</b>	The draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review, when adopted, will be used alongside the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP), and any subsequently adopted review of the SWDP, in the determination of planning applications.
1(c) the relevance of the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review for the integration of	<b>NO</b>	The policies of the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review are not considered to have a

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)	Likely to have significant environmental effects?	Summary of significant events
environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;		significant impact on the integration of environmental considerations.
1(d) environmental problems relevant to the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review:	<b>NO</b>	The draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review is more likely to promote environmental sustainability than create any environmental problems.
1(e) the relevance of the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management and water protection);	<b>NO</b>	The policies of the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review are not considered to be relevant to the implementation of EC legislation.
2(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review;	<b>NO</b>	It is considered unlikely that there will be any irreversible damaging environmental impacts associated with the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review. The Plan features policies which seek to protect and enhance the natural and built environment, and the plan is therefore likely to result in beneficial rather than damaging effects.
2(b) the cumulative nature of the effects of the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review;	<b>NO</b>	The policies of the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Pan Review are unlikely to have any significant cumulative negative environmental impacts.
2(c) the transboundary nature of effects of the draft Hallow	<b>NO</b>	The draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review is unlikely to have

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (SEA Directive, Annex II)	Likely to have significant environmental effects?	Summary of significant events
Neighbourhood Plan Review;		any significant negative environmental impacts on adjoining parishes.
2(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents) due to the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review;	<b>NO</b>	It is considered that there will be no risk to human health or the environment as a result of the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review.
2(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	<b>NO</b>	The policies of the Neighbourhood Development Plan apply to the entirety of Hallow parish and are unlikely to significantly affect areas beyond the Neighbourhood Area boundary.
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  (iii) intensive land-use; and	<b>NO</b>	The draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review will not have any substantial impact on these factors.
2(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	<b>NO</b>	The policies of the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review are unlikely to have a negative impact on any environmental designations in the Neighbourhood Area.

## **2.2 SEA SCREENING OPINION**

The assessments shown above identify no potential significant negative effects arising from the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review and as such, will not require a full SEA to be undertaken. This determination is pending the findings of consultation and the formal views of the statutory environmental bodies. This view is taken as the policies in the Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review seek to reinforce and do not deviate from the remit of the emerging policies of the South Worcestershire Development Plan.

### 3. HRA SCREENING

#### 3.1 HRA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

There are no internationally designated wildlife sites within the Hallow Neighbourhood Area. For the purposes of this screening assessment, sites that fall within a 20km radius are also considered. There are two sites identified within this range – Lyppard Grange SAC and Bredon Hill SAC which are approximately 5km east and 20km south-east of the Hallow Neighbourhood Area respectively.

Lyppard Grange Ponds SAC is located on the eastern outskirts of Worcester, situated amongst a recent housing development on former pastoral farmland. The site comprises two ponds in an area of grassland and scrub (public open space). The site provides habitat for Great Crested Newts *Triturus Cristatus*, which are dependent on both the existing terrestrial habitat (to provide foraging areas and refuge) and on the aquatic habitat (for breeding).

The potential impact of development on Lyppard Grange SAC as well as Bredon Hill SAC and Dixon Wood SAC was examined by a full HRA as part of the production of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP). The HRA screening of the SWDP concluded that there was uncertainty with regard to the potential for significant effects on two sites as a result of increased disturbance, in particular due to increased recreational activity. Concerns were raised specifically relating to the Lyppard Grange SAC and the potential impact of proposed development on water levels and quality.

As a result of the concerns raised, a full Appropriate Assessment (AA) was conducted (this can be viewed on the SWDP website – <http://www.swdevelopmentplan.org>). The AA concluded that the policies of the SWDP (including land allocations) were not likely to have adverse effects on the integrity of Bredon Hill SAC, Lyppard Grange SAC or Dixon Wood SAC. In addressing concerns relating to possible increased disturbance at the SACs, it was concluded that the location of the sites in relation to proposed developments and also the availability of more suitable areas of open space for recreation in close proximity would keep potential impacts to a minimum. It was also considered that the policies of the SWDP would sufficiently mitigate the potential impact of proposed developments on the water environment, leading to minimal effect on the SAC sites.

The policies in the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review are considered to be in general conformity with the SWDP (2016), and with this and the SWDP AA in mind, it can be considered that the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review will have no negative impact on internationally designated wildlife sites.



### **3.2 HRA SCREENING OPINION**

As a result of the above assessment, it is considered that the policies of the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review are in general conformity with those contained in the SWDP. It is therefore concluded that the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review is unlikely to have a negative impact on any internationally designated wildlife sites and as such, the recommendation is made that a full AA is not required.

### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The preceding assessment exercises have examined whether the draft Hallow Development Plan Review is likely to require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment or a Habitats Regulation Assessment Appropriate Assessment.

The SEA screening exercise featured in Section 2 concludes that the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review will not require a full Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken. This is because the Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review is in general conformity with the SWDP and does not deviate from the land allocations for development made in the SWDP.

The HRA screening exercise featured in Section 3 concludes that the draft Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review does not require a full Habitats Regulation Assessment Appropriate Assessment to be undertaken. There are no internationally designated wildlife sites within the Hallow Neighbourhood Area, with only Lyppard Grange and Bredon Hill falling within a 20km radius. The impact on this site and others because of the land allocations contained within the SWDP has been assessed in the SWDP HRA AA, and as the Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review is considered to be in general conformity with the SWDP and does not deviate from the land allocations for development made in the SWDP, the recommendation is made that a full AA is not required.

Both of the above-mentioned recommendations were subject to consultation with the statutory environmental bodies (i.e., the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England); the five-week consultation period ran from Thursday 24 August until midnight on Thursday 28 September 2023. All three consultation responses are attached to this report, however in short, all three statutory environmental bodies agreed that neither a full SEA nor HRA AA are required.

## Appendix: Statutory Environmental Bodies Consultation Responses



Ms Frances Fleming  
Wychavon and Malvern Hills District Council  
Civic Centre  
Queen Elizabeth Drive  
Persore  
Worcestershire  
WR10 1PT

Direct Dial: 0121 625 6887

Our ref: PL00793860

14 September 2023

Dear Ms Fleming

### **HALLOW NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN- SEA/HRA SCREENING**

Thank you for your consultation and the invitation to comment on the SEA Screening Document for the above Neighbourhood Plan.

For the purposes of consultations on SEA Screening Opinions, Historic England confines its advice to the question, "Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?" in respect of our area of concern, cultural heritage.

Our comments are based on the information supplied with the screening request. On the basis of the information supplied and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of the 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with your view that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

Regarding HRA Historic England does not disagree with your conclusions but would defer to the opinions of the other statutory consultees.

The views of the other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for a SEA is made. If a decision is made to undertake a SEA, please note that Historic England has published guidance on Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Historic Environment that is relevant to both local and neighbourhood planning and available at: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>

I trust the above comments will be of help in taking forward the Neighbourhood Plan.

Yours sincerely,

P. Boland.



THE FOUNDRY 82 GRANVILLE STREET BIRMINGHAM B1 2LH

Telephone 0121 625 6888  
HistoricEngland.org.uk



Wychavon District Council  
Planning Policy  
Civic Centre Queen Elizabeth Drive  
Persnore  
Worcestershire  
WR10 1PT

**Our ref:** SV/2018/110042/OR-  
10/IS1-L01

**Your ref:**

**Date:** 12 September 2023

**FAO: Frances Fleming**

Dear Frances

**Hallow Neighbourhood Plan Review - Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion Consultation**

Thank you for your consultation of the above consultations, which were received on 24 August 2023. We previously offered comments upon the made Hallow Neighbourhood Plan in February 2021 and note the addition of two policies and no new site allocations.

We note the locations of proposed strategic sites and would have no comments to offer in the absence of sites allocated within Flood Zones 2 and 3 (the medium and high risk zones respectively).

We have recently updated our Neighbourhood Plan pro-forma guidance for distribution to Parish Councils. I have enclosed a copy within this email. The purpose of the guidance is to assist the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans, including an appropriate evidence base. This includes consideration of some of the relevant environmental issues that should be considered, including flood risk (from rivers and sea), water quality, water resources and includes latest Climate Change recommendations for flood risk.

For each proposed site allocation, we recommend completing the pro-forma to check the environmental constraints. This will help collect evidence, identify challenges, inform policy and assist delivery of sustainable solutions

We note that the previous neighborhood plan was subject to a SEA and HRA screening assessment, and it was concluded that there was no need for a full SEA or Appropriate Assessment.

We note the additions of policies '*HAL1 – Housing Requirement*' and '*HAL 3 –*

Environment Agency  
Hafren House Welshpool Road, Shelton, Shrewsbury, SY3 8BB.  
Customer services line: 03708 506 506  
[www.gov.uk/environment-agency](http://www.gov.uk/environment-agency)

Cont/d..

*Windfall Housing Requirement*. We do not offer detailed bespoke advice on policy but advise you ensure conformity with your Local Plan and refer to our guidance. This might assist with your consideration of a local environmental enhancements or improvement policies that may be necessary.

I trust that the above is of use to you at this time.

Yours faithfully

**Mr. Matt Bennion**  
**Planning Specialist**

Direct e-mail [matthew.bennion@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.bennion@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Date: 21 September 2023  
Our ref: 447361  
Your ref: Hallow Neighbourhood Development Plan



Mr Andrew Ford  
Malvern Hills & Wychavon District Councils

**BY EMAIL ONLY**  
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Dear Mr Ford

### **Hallow Neighbourhood Development Plan – Screening Opinion**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 20 September 2023.

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

#### **Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:

- **significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,**
- **significant effects on Habitats sites<sup>1</sup>, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.**

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the [Planning Practice Guidance](#). This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Habitats sites are those referred to in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (Annex 2 - glossary) as "any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites".

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's [standing advice](#) on protected species.

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission [standing advice](#).

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk)

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle  
Consultations Team