

Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Our Parish – Our Future – Our Say

2018 - 2031

Basic Conditions Statement

Second Submission Version – February 2019

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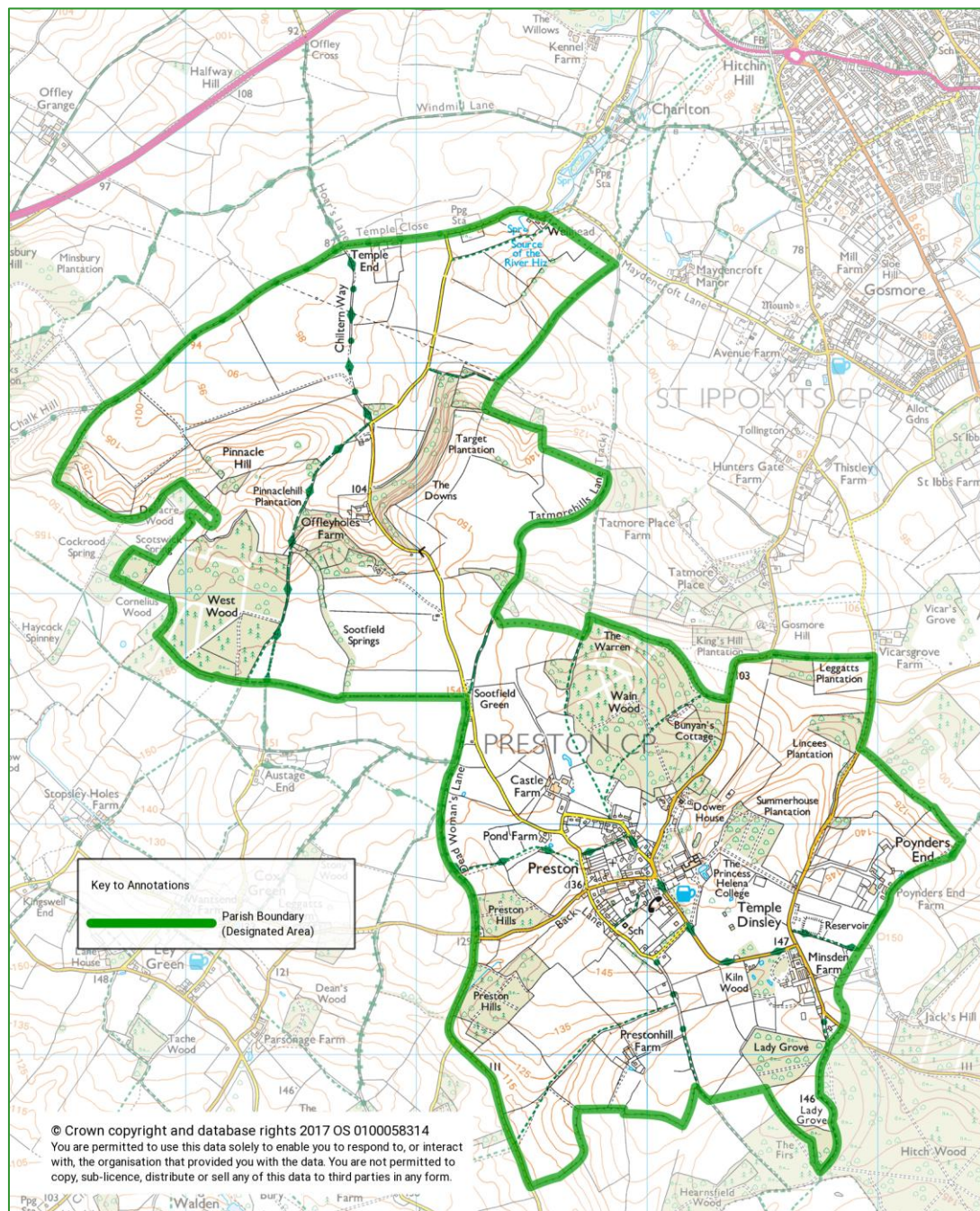
1. Introduction

- 1.1** In accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012 (as amended), this plan must satisfy “basic conditions” before it can come into force. The plan must:
- Have appropriate regard to national planning policy
 - Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
 - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area
 - Not breach and otherwise be compatible with European Union (EU) Regulations, including human rights requirements and not be likely to have a significant effect on a European site or European off shore marine site
- 1.2** In addition, the Neighbourhood Plan must meet the prescribed legal requirements. This statement confirms that the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan, 2018 – 2031, which will be submitted by Preston Parish Council, meets all the necessary requirements.

2. Legal Requirements

- 2.1** The Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan (hereinafter called the Neighbourhood Plan) will be submitted by Preston Parish Council, which as the qualifying body is entitled to submit a neighbourhood plan for its own parish. The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by the Preston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (hereinafter called the Steering Group) and overseen by Preston Parish Council. The whole parish of Preston has been formally designated as the Neighbourhood Area through an application made under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (part 2 S6), and approved by North Hertfordshire District Council on 14th June 2016.
- 2.2** The Neighbourhood Plan contains policies relating to the development and use of land within the neighbourhood area. The proposals relate to planning matters and have been prepared in accordance with the statutory requirements and processes set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 2.3** The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the period to which it relates as 2018 - 2031. This period has been chosen to align with the end date of the emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031. The emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan was submitted for Examination on the 9th June 2017. The Consultation process on the NHDC Local Plan Main Modifications is taking place between January 3rd and March 4th 2019. The Neighbourhood Plan does not deal with county matters (mineral extraction and waste development), nationally significant infrastructure or any other matters set out in section 61K of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2.4** The Neighbourhood Plan proposal relates to the Preston Neighbourhood Plan Area and to no other area. The Submission Draft Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan does not relate to more than one neighbourhood area and there are no other neighbourhood plans in place within the neighbourhood area. The Neighbourhood Area is shown on the map below:



- 2.5** The remainder of the document is concerned with the Key Requirements of a Neighbourhood Plan. These are:

- **Regard for the National Planning Policy Framework**
- **Contributing to Achieving Sustainable Development**
- **Conformity with the Strategic Policies of the Local Plan**
- **Compatibility with Human Rights and EU Legislation**

3. Regard for the National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.1** The Neighbourhood Plan has had regard to both the Core Planning Principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the 13 themes of delivering sustainable development within it.
- 3.2 Core Planning Principles:** The production of the Neighbourhood Plan has been led by the Steering Group, made up of volunteers, overseen by Preston Parish Council with support, as a 'Critical Friend', from a Planning Consultancy practicing predominantly in Hertfordshire. The policies in the Neighbourhood Plan provide a practical framework to guide the Local Planning Authority in making decisions on planning applications in the parish and to provide the Parish Council with a firm basis on which to comment on planning applications.
- 3.3** The aims of the Neighbourhood Plan were to meet the aspirations and needs of the local residents in a safe, tranquil, rural community which thrives, socially, economically and environmentally, where new development is designed sustainably and intelligently to respect and enhance heritage, biodiversity and landscape.
- 3.4** Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan recognise the importance of a high quality of life and vitality for all residents, encouraging a thriving and prosperous community, promoting a distinctive and flourishing economy, supporting sustainable development, having a positive effect on the environment and protecting wildlife interests, whilst also mitigating climate change and reducing the carbon footprint of the Parish.
- 3.5 Sustainable Development:** Of the 13 themes of delivering sustainable development, only two are not relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan; ensuring the vitality of town centres and facilitating the sustainable use of minerals. The policies in the Neighbourhood Plan that contribute to delivering sustainable development under each of the remaining themes are set out below:
- 1) Delivering a sufficient supply of homes**
 - HD1** Size of Individual Development
 - HD3** Housing types
 - HD4** Tenure of housing
 - 2) Building a strong, competitive economy**
 - AF1** New and Improved Community Facilities
 - AF3** Home based and small businesses
 - 3) Ensuring the vitality of town centres**

(Not relevant to this plan)
 - 4) Promoting healthy and safe communities**
 - QL1** Social Interaction
 - QL2** Community Quality of Life
 - AF1** New and Improved Community Facilities
 - HD7** Gardens

HD10 New Housing Development (access arrangements should be safe)

EH3 Open and Green Spaces

EH4 Local Green Spaces

EH5 Tranquillity and Dark Skies

EH6 Views and Vistas

TC1 Safe and Sustainable Transport

5) Promoting sustainable transport

HD2 Pedestrian links and Rights of Way

HD5 High Quality and Energy Efficiency (including the provision of electric car charging points)

HD6 Design (including the provision of secure, covered cycle parking space)

TC1 Safe and Sustainable Transport

6) Supporting high quality communications

TC2 Broadband and Mobile Coverage

7) Making effective use of land

HD1 Size of Individual Development (including number of and size of units)

QL3 Local Distinctiveness

EH1 Village Boundary and Rural Character and Setting

EH2 Conservation Areas and Heritage Assets (including the prevailing character and setting)

8) Achieving well-designed places

QL3 Local Distinctiveness (with regard to architecture and landscape schemes responding to their context)

AF3 Home-based and Small Businesses (where design and car parking will satisfy other policies in the plan and the amenities of residents will protect the amenities of neighbours)

HD2 Pedestrian Links and Rights of Way (in terms of enabling links to other areas of the village)

HD3 Housing Types (in particular the style being in keeping with neighbouring properties and the rest of the village)

HD5 Sustainability and Energy Efficiency (including designs that will enable residents to work from home)

HD6 Design

HD7 Gardens

HD8 Drainage Provisions

HD9 Residential Extensions

HD10 New Housing Development

HD11 Construction Management

EH5 Tranquillity and Dark Skies (where new development will not include streetlights)

TC1 Safe and Sustainable Transport (where new housing developments will include at least 2 off-road parking spaces per residential unit)

9) Protecting Green Belt land

EH1 Village Boundary and Rural Character and Setting

10) Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

HD8 Flood Risk and Drainage Provisions

11) Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

HD5 Sustainability and Energy Efficiency (with regard to water conservation, biodiversity improvements and ensuring a low carbon footprint)

EH1 Rural Character and Setting (ensuring open countryside, woodlands, hedgerows and green corridors are protected)

EH3 Open and Green Spaces

EH4 Local Green Spaces

EH5 Tranquillity and Dark Skies (in terms of noise and light pollution and increases in traffic)

EH7 Protecting and Enhancing the Local Environment

EH8 Hedgerows, Trees and Verges

12) Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

QL3 Local Distinctiveness (in relation to preserving heritage and historic features)

EH2 Conservation Areas and Heritage Assets

13) Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

(Not relevant to this plan)

4. Contributing to Achieving Sustainable Development

4.1 A Steering Group of local residents prepared the Neighbourhood Plan based on the principles of sustainable development. Sustainable development is an integral part of the Neighbourhood Plan Vision Statement and the Objectives were developed to deliver the Aims and Vision in a sustainable way, for example, H9, which seeks to ensure any infill development is sustainable and maintains or enhances the character of the village; and T1, which supports and encourages sustainable transport, including walking, and cycling. The Neighbourhood Plan also refers to Hertfordshire County Council's 'Building Futures', a sustainable development guide.

4.2 The policies that have been developed with the community were specifically designed to ensure that Preston Parish develops in a sustainable way, for example, TC1 Safe and Sustainable Transport. It was recognised that good connectivity was vitally important to support the existing businesses operating from home and to ensure that new business were sustainable (Policies TC2 and AF3).

4.3 Conditions should be placed on planning applications to ensure that they include sustainable features (Policy HD5). This was recognised as being particularly important in relation to the proposed new housing development on Land off Templars Lane – a site allocation for 21 new homes in the emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan (site reference PR1). The Neighbourhood Plan will ensure that a wide choice of high quality homes are built in order to support a sustainable, mixed and inclusive community (Policies HD3 & HD4)

5. Conformity with the Strategic Policies of the Local Plan

- 5.1** At the time of preparing this document, the current development plan for the area consisted of the Saved Local Plan Written Statement 2007 (based on the saved policies from the District Local Plan 1996 and the Minerals and Waste Plans produced by Hertfordshire County Council. These policies have been taken into account in the formulation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 was submitted for examination on the 9th June 2017. The Consultation process on the NHDC Local Plan Main Modifications is being undertaken between January 3rd and March 4th 2019. By the time the Neighbourhood Plan is submitted in February 2019 to the District Council under Regulation 15, the Main Modifications Consultation will still be taking place. As a result, throughout the Neighbourhood Plan references are made to the policies in the emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 and other planning documents. However, because of the timing, the Neighbourhood Plan Policies have been compared with the relevant Saved policies from North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2, in the table in Appendix A to ensure compatibility.

- 5.2** Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan have been written on the basis that Preston Village now has a defined settlement boundary and is a Category A village excluded from the Green Belt. There has been no significant objection to the removal of the village from the Green Belt and there is no reason to suspect that this policy will not prevail. Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will therefore conflict with Policy 2 Green Belt and Policy 3 Settlements within the Green Belt in the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2. In addition, the Car Parking Standards contained in Policy 55 in the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 are very out of date; the Neighbourhood Plan proposes new more relevant car parking standards and justifies those new requirements, which reflect the car parking standards in the emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031
- 5.3** Preston Parish Council will lead on and monitor the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan with a full review every five years to ensure that the policies remain in line with the North Hertfordshire Local Plan and any changes to national legislation.

6. Compatibility with Human Rights and EU Legislation

- 6.1** The proposal and policies in the Neighbourhood Plan are compatible with the human rights legislation and all the existing requirements of European Law. The making of the Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012) or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007), either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

- 6.2** To ensure compliance, a Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report was prepared in January 2018 (attached at Appendix B). Following consultation with North Hertfordshire District Council, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, it was determined in April 2018 that a Strategic Environmental assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan was not required and the determination is attached at Appendix C. Following amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan and to ensure on-going compliance, a new Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report was prepared in January 2019 (attached at Appendix D)

7. Summary

- 7.1** It is a legal requirement that Preston Parish Council submit this statement. It confirms that the submitted Preston Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions required of a neighbourhood plan as defined in current neighbourhood planning legislation.

8. Appendices

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A. Neighbourhood Plan Policies

North Hertfordshire Local Plan No.2 Saved Policies	Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan Policies																										
	QL1	QL2	QL3	AF1	AF2	AF3	HD1	HD2	HD3	HD4	HD5	HD6	HD7	HD8	HD9	HD 10	HD 11	EH1	EH2	EH3	EH4	EH5	EH6	EH7	EH8	TC1	TC2
Policy 2 Green Belt	0	0	✓	0	0	0	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy 3 Settlements within the Green Belt	0	0	0	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy 14 Nature Conservation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0
Policy 16 Areas of Archaeological Significance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy 19 Historic Parks and Gardens	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy 25 Re-use of Rural Buildings	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy 26 Housing Proposals	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy 28 House Extensions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy Rural Housing Needs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Key ✓ Compatible x Conflicting 0 No Link or Not Applicable or Not Covered in this Plan

	Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan Policies																										
North Hertfordshire Local Plan No.2 Saved Policies	QL1	QL2	QL3	AF1	AF2	AF3	HD1	HD2	HD3	HD4	HD5	HD6	HD7	HD8	HD9	HD 10	HD 11	EH1	EH2	EH3	EH4	EH5	EH6	EH7	EH8	TC1	TC2
Policy 30 Replacement or Extension of Dwellings in the Countryside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy 33 Relatives and Staff Accommodation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy 34 Caravan and Mobile Homes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy 36 Employment Provision	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy 39 Leisure Uses	✓	0	0	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy 42 Shopping	0	0	0	0	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy 51 Development Effects and Planning Gain	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy 55 Car Parking Standards	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	x	0
Policy 57 Residential Guidelines and Standards	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	0

Key ✓ Compatible x Conflicting 0 No Link or Not Applicable or Not Covered in this Plan

B. Preston Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Determination 2018

1. Introduction

This report sets out a draft Screening Determination for the Preston Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan and has been prepared by North Hertfordshire District Council. The purpose of the screening is to assess if the Neighbourhood Plan will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). More detail is given in the following sections on SEA (section 2) and Neighbourhood Plans (section 3), and Preston Neighbourhood Plan specifically (section 4).

The assessment of the Preston Neighbourhood Plan and the draft Determination is included in sections 5, 6 and 7.

2. Strategic Environmental Assessment context

European Union Directive 2001/42/EC requires an SEA to be undertaken for certain types of plans or programmes that could have significant environmental effects. The Directive has been transposed into law for England and Wales in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations). The purpose of Strategic Environmental Assessment is to promote sustainable development through assessing the extent to which the plan will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives.

Under Regulation 9 of the Regulations, the responsible body (local parish or town council or neighbourhood forum) is required to determine whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects, and therefore whether an SEA is required. This process is called screening, and is undertaken using a specified set of criteria (set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations). The Regulations require that the results of this process are set out in an SEA Screening Determination (this document), which must be publicly available. This document should be submitted with the Neighbourhood Plan proposal and made available to the independent examiner.

Before the responsible body makes a formal determination, there is a requirement to consult three statutory consultation bodies designated in the regulations (Historic England, the Environment Agency & Natural England) on whether an environmental assessment is required. This draft document has been produced to facilitate that consultation.

3. Neighbourhood Plans and Strategic Environmental Assessment

Planning Practice Guidance states that *"to decide whether a draft Neighbourhood Plan might have significant environmental effects, it must be assessed (screened) at an early stage of the plan's preparation according to the requirements set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004"*¹.

¹ Paragraph: 028 Reference ID: 11-028-20150209

The Guidance also suggests that *the “The local planning authority, as part of its duty to advise or assist, should consider putting in place processes to determine whether the proposed Neighbourhood Plan will require a strategic environmental assessment.”*² In this case North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) is providing assistance by undertaking the screening determination.

The Guidance notes particular circumstances which may require a SEA³:

“ A strategic environmental assessment may be required, for example, where:

- *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 is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan”.*

The Determination has taken account of the Guidance in reaching its conclusions, and it notes that the particular circumstances described above are encompassed by the criteria outlined in Schedule 1 of the Regulations.

4. Preston Neighbourhood Plan

The parish of Preston is located in the North Hertfordshire District of Hertfordshire. It is 4 miles south of Hitchin at the north east end of the Chiltern Hills and 38 miles north of Central London. The parish covers the village and surrounding countryside. At the 2011 census the population of the parish of Preston was 420 and there were 158 dwellings in the parish.

There are 63 listed buildings and structures within the Parish on 41 sites. Thirty three of these are situated in the designated Conservation Area. Two buildings, Princess Helena College, in the Conservation area, and Tudor House are Grade II*, with the remaining 61 being Grade II.

The Neighbourhood Plan has been produced by the Qualifying Body, Preston Parish Council (PPC), and covers the period 2011 to 2031. In June 2016 the PPC established the Preston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group which has included Parish Council members and community volunteers. The Neighbourhood Plan area was designated in June 2016 and is shown in the map below.

The Plan is the result of consultation within the community through questionnaires and consultation events. It has also involved liaison with NHDC and the wider community, either through direct communication or through the Preston Neighbourhood Plan dedicated web site.

The Plan does not include proposals for housing or other development. Its overall approach is to support appropriate development which protects the character of the village and the environment. The Plan's objectives are shown below.

² ibid

Paragraph: 046 Reference ID: 11-046-20150209

Living in Preston (Quality of Life)

Objective Q1: To encourage the provision of opportunities for social interaction through cultural, leisure, sport and commercial activities for all members of the community.

Objective Q2: To promote a community quality of life including clean air and water, enjoyment of open spaces, conservation of wildlife and natural resources, security from crime and protection from toxic substances.

Objective Q3: To prioritise local distinctiveness in every element of change and growth.

Amenities and Facilities

Objective A1: To support all existing amenities, facilities and services available in the parish and new ventures where appropriate for the benefit of the community.

Objective A2: To support existing businesses and promote businesses and employment opportunities on a scale compatible with Preston parish's rural character.

Housing and Development

Objective H1: To ensure that any development is sensitively planned and phased over the period of the Plan, protecting and enriching the landscape and built setting.

Objective H2: To ensure the integration of new residents into the village, new developments should link into or enhance paths and rights of way.

Objective H3: To ensure that any development delivers a range of housing to buy or to rent to meet local needs including affordable housing.

Objective H4: To support developments which have a low carbon footprint and are eco-friendly.

Objective H5: To encourage the provision of suitable storage areas for refuse, bicycles and mobility scooters.

Objective H6: To ensure that each property has the benefit of a garden.

Objective H7: To seek to ensure that the impact of new development on sewage, surface water drainage and water pressure is assessed and that infrastructure, services and utilities to existing houses are improved or at least not exacerbated.

Objective H8: To seek to ensure that individual extensions are of an appropriate scale for the site and maintain or enhance village amenities.

Objective H9: To seek to ensure any new housing scheme or infill development is of an appropriate scale and maintains or enhances the character of the village.

Objective H10: To seek to ensure that all development meets the requirements of the relevant Housing and Development Policies contained within this Plan in order to reduce the impact of building construction for local residents, surrounding properties and the narrow lanes within the village.

Environment and Heritage

Objective E1: To protect and enhance the rural environment of the parish, and its varied landscapes.

Objective E2: To maintain and protect good access to the countryside by means of footpaths and bridleways.

Objective E3: To protect 'greenspace' e.g The Green and all verges, within and around the village, so as to maintain and enhance the appearance of this rural settlement.

Objective E4: To recognise all merits of the built environment across the parish, and to seek to protect this architectural heritage, especially that of the many Listed Buildings.

Objective E5: To take special care of the Conservation Area, and to raise awareness of the relevant legislation.

Objective E6: To ensure new developments do not create flood risk and problems with the sewerage system and surface water drainage, while at the same time ensuring that any existing problems are not exacerbated.

Objective E7: To support the conservation of flora and fauna and to maintain and enhance the different habitats and their distinctive and varied species.

Transport and Communication

Objective T1: To support and encourage sustainable transport, including walking and cycling.

Objective T2: To support and encourage safe use of roads, paths and bridleways for all users: walkers, joggers, cyclists and horse riders, as well as being safe for motorised vehicles.

Objective T3: To support the development of efficient and effective broadband speed and mobile coverage throughout the parish, while maintaining a good landline service, meeting the domestic, social and business needs of the community.

Objective T4: To support the maintenance of the rural character of the lanes in the parish.

Objective T5: To support on-going improvements to transport, to utility infrastructure and to digital coverage consistent with other objectives.

5. Screening assessment

As noted above, the Regulations specify a set of criteria which must be used to assess whether any plan covered by the Regulation is likely to have a significant environmental effect and therefore require a SEA. The table below considers each of these criteria in turn.

Table 1: Assessment of likelihood of significant effects on the environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Likely to have significant effects?	Justification for assessment
1 (a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	No	The framework for development in Preston is currently set by the saved policies of the existing North Hertfordshire Local Plan and the NPPF. A new Local Plan is currently being developed, with adoption timetabled for March 2018. The Preston Neighbourhood Plan does not include site allocations or provide for any other projects which are likely to have significant effects.
1 (b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	No	A Neighbourhood Plan is at the bottom of the planning hierarchy and must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan
1 (c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	No	The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on protecting the quality of the neighbourhood and its environment, particularly in the case of any development which arises out of the existing planning framework or the emerging new Local Plan. The emerging Local Plan has been subject to sustainability appraisal at all stages, and the outcomes of those assessments have been considered with regard to this Neighbourhood Plan. It is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan's likely impact will be to have a positive effect on the environment by providing an additional layer of policy protection.
1(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan	No	None have been identified.

1 (e) 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)	No	The Plan will be in conformity with the saved Local Plan Policies, the NPPF and the emerging Local Plan which have taken account of existing legislation for environmental protection. As noted above it is likely to have a positive effect by improving environmental protection policies.
2 (a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	No	No significant effects have been identified
2 (b) the cumulative nature of the effects	No	No significant effects have been identified
2 (c) the trans-boundary nature of the effects	No	No significant effects have been identified
2 (d) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	No	No significant effects have been identified
2 (e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	No	No significant effects have been identified

<p>2 (f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</p> <p>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards</p> <p>(iii) intensive land-use</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The neighbourhood area does contain sensitive features, as noted above, but there are no proposals in the Plan which are likely to have significant environmental effects on these features. In fact key Plan policies are designed to protect these features.</p> <p>The following specific policies protect sensitive features:</p> <p>QL1: Social Interaction QL2: Community Quality of Life QL3: Local Distinctiveness HD5: Sustainability and Energy Efficiency HD8: Drainage Provisions HD9: Residential Extensions HD10: New Housing Development HD11: Construction Management EH2: Open and Green Spaces EH5: Tranquillity and Dark Skies EH6: Protecting and Enhancing the Local Environment EH7: Conservation Areas and Heritage EH8: Views and Vistas EH9 Flood Risk and Drainage EH10: Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment EH11: Wildlife Sites EH12: Biodiversity TC1: Safe and Sustainable Transport</p> <p>Policies in Appendix to Neighbourhood Plan HERC1,HERC2,HERC3,HERC4 HERC5,HERC6,HERC7,HERC8,HERC9 HERC10</p>
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<p>2 (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>As noted above Preston is located on the edge of the Chilterns AONB. Any effects are likely to be positive. The views of the AONB from the village will be protected by Policy EH8 Views and Vistas.</p> <p>In addition, Preston has: SSSI: Wain Wood Ancient Woodland Inventory Sites:13 Medieval Monastic Site: 1 Historic Landscape Park and Garden: 1 Areas of Archaeological Significance: 4 Area of Landscape Conservation: 1 Local Wildlife sites: 9</p> <p>The above sites are protected by policies: EH1: Village Boundary EH3: Open and Green Spaces EH6: Protecting and Enhancing the Local Environment EH7: Conservation Areas and Heritage EH10: Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment EH11: Wildlife Sites EH12: Biodiversity</p> <p>In appendix: HERC1,HERC2,HERC3,HERC4 HERC5,HERC6,HERC7,HERC8,HERC9 HERC10</p> <p>As also discussed above, any other effects are also likely to be positive. The Habitats Regulation Assessment screening report produced by NHDC in February 2013 concluded that in combination, there is not likely to be any significant combined impact on European sites from any plans or projects developed for the District.</p>
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6. Consultation responses

7. Screening determination

In summary, it is concluded that the Preston Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore a SEA is not required. The principal reasons for this conclusion are:

No sites are allocated for development in the Plan.

The Plan focuses on protecting the quality of the parish and its environment, particularly in the case of any development which arises out of the existing District planning framework or the emerging Local Plan. It is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan's likely impact will be to have a positive effect on the environment by providing an additional layer of protection.

The neighbourhood area does contain sensitive features, particularly heritage features as noted above but there are no proposals in the Plan which are likely to have significant environmental effects on these features. In fact as already noted, key plan policies are designed to protect these features.

C. SEA Screening Determination Statement for Preston Neighbourhood Plan 2018 – 2031

The determination statement is Included, in the following pages, as supplied by North Hertfordshire District Council.

Appendix 1: Map of the Neighbourhood Plan Area	31
Appendix 2: Response from Historic England – February 2018	33
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**Strategic Environmental Assessment
Screening Determination Statement
for
Preston Neighbourhood Plan
2018 - 2031**

April 2018

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report sets out a Screening Determination for the Preston Neighbourhood Plan. The purpose of the screening is to assess if the Neighbourhood Plan will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). More detail is set out in the following sections on Neighbourhood Plans and SEA (Section 3) and the Preston Neighbourhood Plan (Section 4) specifically.
- 1.2. The assessment of the Preston Neighbourhood Plan and the determination is included in Section 7.

2. Strategic Environmental Assessment Context

- 2.1. European Union Directive 2001/42/EC requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken for certain types of plans or programmes that could have significant environmental effects. The Directive has been transposed into law for England and Wales in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations).
- 2.2. Under the Regulations, the responsible body is required to determine whether a plan covered by the Regulations is likely to have significant environmental effects, and therefore whether a SEA is required. This process is called screening, and is undertaken using a specified set of criteria (set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations). The Regulations require that the results of this process are set out in an SEA Screening Determination (this document), which must be publicly available.
- 2.3. Before the responsible body makes a formal determination, there is a requirement to consult three statutory consultation bodies designated in the Regulations (the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) on whether an environmental assessment is required. Consultation took place in January and February 2018 and responses were received from Historic England and Natural England.

3. Neighbourhood Plans and Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.1. Planning Practice Guidance states that *“to decide whether a draft neighbourhood plan might have significant environmental effects, it must be assessed (screened) at an early stage of the plan’s preparation according to the requirements set out in Regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans, Programmes Regulations 2004”*¹.
- 3.2. The Guidance also suggests that *“the local planning authority, as part of its duty to advise or assist should consider putting in place processes to determine whether the proposed*

¹ Paragraph : 028 Reference ID: 11-028-20150209

*neighbourhood plan will require a strategic environmental assessment*². In this case, the Council is providing assistance by undertaking the screening determination.

3.3. The Guidance notes particular circumstances which may require a SEA³:

“A strategic environmental assessment may be required, for example, where:

- 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 is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan”.*

3.4. This Screening Determination has taken account of the Guidance in reaching its conclusions, and it notes that the particular circumstances described above are encompassed by the criteria outlined in Schedule 1 of the Regulations.

4. Preston Neighbourhood Plan

4.1. The Parish of Preston is located 4 miles south of Hitchin, 38 miles north of central London and covers an area of 682 hectares. At its centre is the small village of Preston with a population of approximately 420 people and 158 dwellings. The village has a school, village hall, public house and a church. It is also home to a private school in the former manor house of Temple Dinsley. The village has been classified as a Category A village in the emerging Local Plan, one site has been allocated within the village for residential development, a village boundary has been defined for the village and the remainder of the Parish has been designated as Green Belt.

4.2. The Neighbourhood Plan has been produced by the Qualifying Body, Preston Parish Council (PPC), and covers the period 2018 – 2031. The neighbourhood planning area was designated on 14 June 2016 and an initial Steering Group meeting was held in July 2016. A map of the neighbourhood planning area is attached in Appendix 1.

4.3. The Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan was published for consultation in January 2018 and was the result of consultation with the community through questionnaires and informal open consultation events.

4.4. The Neighbourhood Plan does not include proposals for housing or other development. Its overall approach is to support the appropriate development which protects the character of the village and the environment. The Plan objectives are shown in the table overleaf.

² ibid

³ Paragraph: 046 Reference ID: 046-20150209

Table 1: Preston Neighbourhood Plan Objectives – January 2018

Living in Preston (Quality of Life)	
Objective Q1	To encourage the provision of opportunities for social interaction through cultural, leisure, sport and commercial activities for all members of the community.
Objective Q2	To promote a community quality of life including clean air and water, enjoyment of open spaces, conservation of wildlife and natural resources, security from crime and protections from toxic substances.
Objective Q3	To prioritise local distinctiveness in every element of change and growth.
Amenities and Facilities	
Objective A1	To support all existing amenities, facilities and services available in the parish and new ventures where appropriate for the benefit of the community.
Objective A2	To support existing businesses and promote businesses and employment opportunities on a scale compatible with Preston parish's rural character.
Housing and Development	
Objective H1	To ensure that any development is sensitively planned and phased over the period of the Plan, protecting and enriching the landscape and built setting.
Objective H2	To ensure the integration of new residents into the village, new developments should link into or enhance paths and rights of way.
Objective H3	To ensure that any development delivers a range of housing to buy or to rent to meet local needs including affordable housing.
Objective H4	To support developments which have a low carbon footprint and are eco-friendly.
Objective H5	To encourage the provision of suitable storage areas for refuse, bicycles and mobility scooters.
Objective H6	To ensure that each property has the benefit of a garden.
Objective H7	To seek to ensure that the impact of new development on sewage, surface water drainage and water pressure is assessed and that infrastructure, services and utilities to existing houses are improved or at least not exacerbated.
Objective H8	To seek to ensure that individual extensions are of an appropriate scale for the site and maintain or enhance village amenities.
Objective H9	To seek to ensure any new housing scheme or infill development is of an appropriate scale and maintains or enhances the character of the village.

Objective H10	To seek to ensure that all development meets the requirements of the relevant Housing and Development Policies contained within this Plan in order to reduce the impact of building construction for local residents, surrounding properties and the narrow lanes within the village.
Environment and Heritage	
Objective E1	To protect and enhance the rural environment of the parish, and its varied landscapes.
Objective E2	To maintain and protect good access to the countryside by means of footpaths and bridleways.
Objective E3	To protect “greenspace” e.g. The Green and all verges, within and around the village, so as to maintain and enhance the appearance of this rural settlement.
Objective E4	To recognise all merits of the built environment across the parish, and to seek to protect this architectural heritage, especially that of the many listed buildings.
Objective E5	To take special care of the Conservation Area, and to raise awareness of the relevant legislation.
Objective E6	To ensure new developments do not create flood risk and problems with the sewerage system and surface water drainage, while at the same time ensuring that any existing problems are not exacerbated.
Objective E7	To support the conservation of flora and fauna and to maintain and enhance the different habitats and their distinctive and varied species.
Transport and Communication	
Objective T1	To support and encourage sustainable transport, including walking and cycling.
Objective T2	To support and encourage safe use of roads, paths and bridleways for all users: walkers, joggers, cyclists and horse riders, as well as being safe for motorised vehicles.
Objective T3	To support the development of efficient and effective broadband speed and mobile coverage throughout the parish, while maintaining a good landline service, meeting the domestic, social and business needs of the community.
Objective T4	To support the maintenance of the rural character of the lanes in the parish.
Objective T5	To support on-going improvements to transport, to utility infrastructure and to digital coverage consistent with other objectives.

5. Screening Assessment

5.1. As noted above, the Regulations specify a set of criteria which must be used to assess whether any plan covered by the Regulations is likely to have a significant environmental effect and therefore require a SEA. The table below considers each of these in turn.

Table 2 : Assessment of likelihood of significant effects on the environment

	Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Likely to have significant effects?	Justification for assessment
1 (a)	The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	No	The framework for development in Preston is currently set by the saved policies in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). A new Local Plan is currently being prepared. It is anticipated that adoption of the Local Plan 2011 – 2031 will take place in 2019. The Preston Neighbourhood Plan does not include any site allocations or provide for any other projects which are likely to have significant effects.
1 (b)	The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	No	A neighbourhood plan is at the bottom of the planning hierarchy and must be prepared to be in conformity with the NPPF and the Local Plan.
1 (c)	The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	No	The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on protecting the quality of the village and its environment, particularly with regard to possible future development which has been identified through the Local Plan process (which has been subject to a sustainability appraisal at all stages). It is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan's likely impact will be to have a positive effect on the environment by providing an additional layer of protection.
1 (d)	Environmental problems relevant to the plan	No	None have been identified.
1 (e)	The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment	No	The Neighbourhood Plan will be in conformity with the saved Local Plan Policies, the NPPF and the emerging Local Plan which have taken account of existing

	(e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection.		European and National legislation for environmental protection.
2 (a)	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	No	No significant effects have been identified.
2 (b)	The cumulative nature of the effects.	No	No significant effects have been identified.
2 (c)	The trans-boundary nature of the effects.	No	No significant effects have been identified.
2 (d)	The risks to human health of the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	No	No significant effects have been identified.
2 (e)	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	No	No significant effects have been identified.
2 (f)	<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage (ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards (iii) Intensive land-use 	No	<p>The neighbourhood area does contain both natural and heritage sensitive features but there are no proposals in the Plan which are likely to have significant environmental effects on these features. The following policies in the neighbourhood plan are designed to protect these features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy QL2 – Community Quality of Life • Policy QL3 – Local Distinctiveness • Policy EH3 – Open and Green Spaces • Policy EH6 – Protecting and Enhancing the Local Environment • Policy EH7 – Conservation Areas and Heritage • Policy EH10 – Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment • Policy EH11 – Wildlife Sites • Policy EH12 – Biodiversity
2 (g)	The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international	No	The Habitat Regulation Assessment Screening Report - September 2016 prepared by the District Council concluded that individually or in combination, there

	protection status.		<p>is not likely to be any significant impact on European sites from any plans or projects in the District.</p> <p>There is one Site of Special Scientific Interest in the parish but it is considered that there are no proposals in the neighbourhood plan which will have a significant effect on the SSSI. This has been confirmed by Natural England in their response to the draft screening report.</p>
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6. Consultation Responses

- 6.1. Consultation with the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England on the draft SEA Screening Determination between January and February 2018. Responses were received from Historic England and Natural England.
- 6.2. In their response, Historic England stated that it concurred with the draft screening report that a SEA is not required for the Preston Neighbourhood Plan and Natural England stated that there are unlikely to be any significant environmental effects from the proposed plan. Copies of the responses are attached as Appendices 2 (Historic England) and 3 (Natural England).

7. Screening Determination

- 7.1. In summary, it is concluded that the Preston Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore a SEA is not required. The principal reasons for this conclusion are set out below:
- There are no sites allocated for development in the Preston neighbourhood plan;
 - The neighbourhood plan focuses on protecting the quality of the village and its environment, particularly in the case of any development which arises from the emerging Local Plan. It is considered that the neighbourhood plan's likely impact will be to have a positive effect on the environment;
 - The neighbourhood area does contain natural and heritage features but there are no proposals in the neighbourhood plan which are likely to have significant environmental effects on these features. As noted in the table above, policies in the neighbourhood plan are designed to protect these features.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Map of the Neighbourhood Plan Area

Appendix 2 – Response from Historic England – February 2018

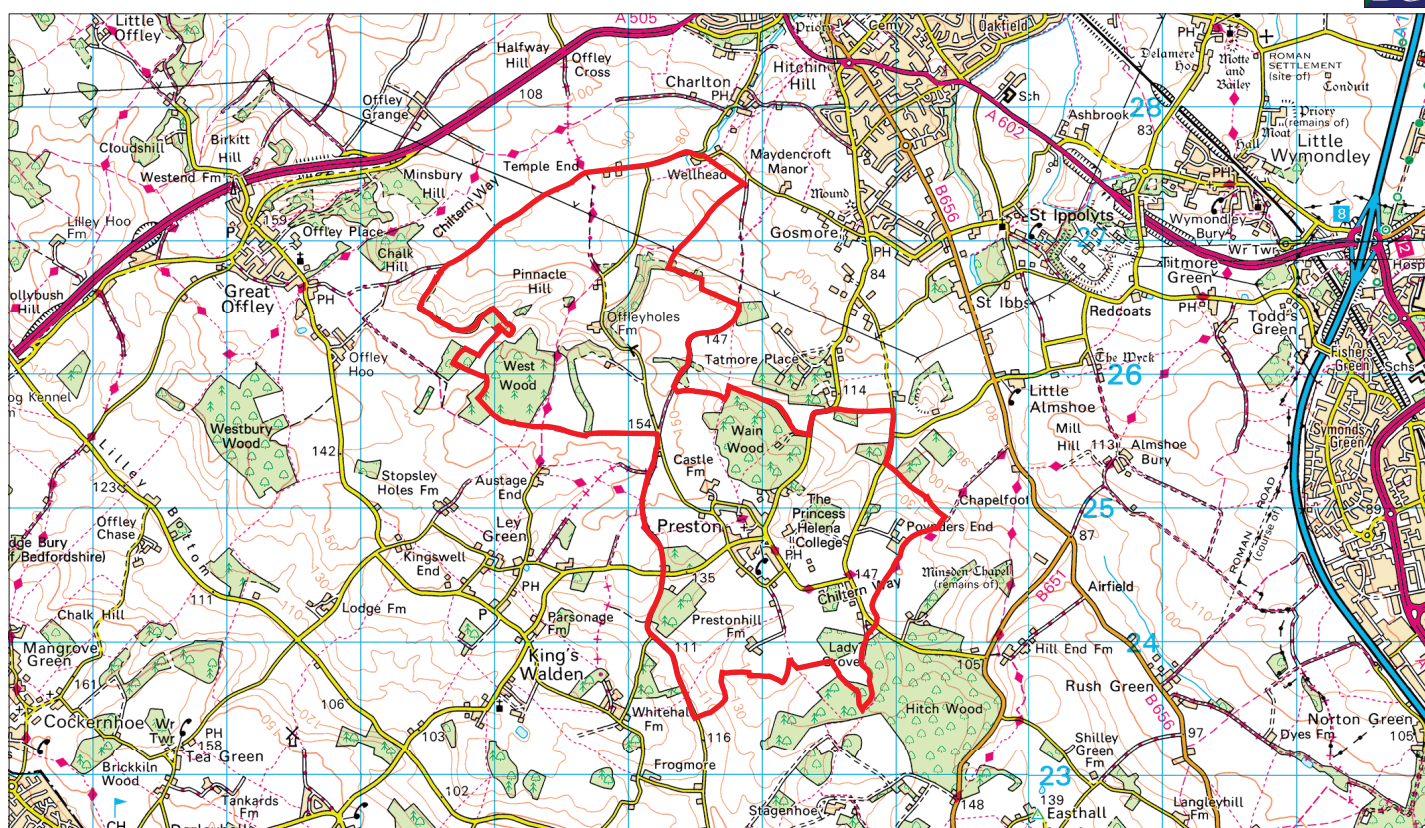
Appendix 3 – Response from Natural England – February 2018

Appendix 1 : Map of the Neighbourhood Plan Area

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



Preston Neighbourhood Plan Area – Designation June 2016



Scale: 1:40000
Date: 26.05.16

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Appendix 2 : Response from Historic England – February 2018



Historic England

EAST OF ENGLAND OFFICE

Ms Clare Skeels
Strategic Planning and Projects Group, North
Hertfordshire District Council
PO Box 10613
Nottingham
NG6 6DH

Direct Dial: 01223 582746

Our ref: PL00283022

9 February 2018

Dear Ms Skeels

Thank you for your email of 8 January 2017 regarding the above consultation. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process. Therefore we welcome this opportunity to review the Preston Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Report. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Preston Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied with the Screening Opinion.

The Screening Report concludes that the Preston Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have significant environmental effects. We note from the information supplied in Table 1 of the SEA Screening, and from the Regulation 14 draft of the plan that we have also been supplied with, that the plan will not be allocating any sites for development.

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 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with the conclusion of the Screening Report that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

The views of the other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for an SEA is made.

I should be pleased if you can send a copy of the determination as required by REG 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

We should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by you with your email dated 8th January 2018. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the SA/SEA process and, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan/guidance) where we consider that, despite the SA/SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.



24 BROOKLANDS AVENUE, CAMBRIDGE, CB2 8BU

Telephone 01223 582749
HistoricEngland.org.uk





Historic England

EAST OF ENGLAND OFFICE

Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the North Hertfordshire District and Hertfordshire County Councils are closely involved throughout the preparation of the plan and its assessment. They are best placed to advise on; local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the Historic Environment Record (HER); how the policy or proposal can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets.

Please do contact me with any queries regarding the above response if they arise.

Yours sincerely,

Edward James
Historic Places Advisor, East of England
Edward.James@HistoricEngland.org.uk



24 BROOKLANDS AVENUE, CAMBRIDGE, CB2 8BU

Telephone 01223 582749
HistoricEngland.org.uk



Appendix 3 : Response from Natural England – February 2018

Date: 14 February 2018
Our ref: 235402



North Herts Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Madam

Preston Neighbourhood Plan – SEA screening determination

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 8 January 2017.

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

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests are concerned (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils) are concerned, that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

Neighbourhood Plan

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans in light of the SEA Directive is contained within the National Planning Practice Guidance¹. The guidance highlights three triggers that may require the production of an SEA, for instance where:

- 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.

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that in our view the proposals contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies / proposals within the plan. It remains the case, however, that the responsible authority should provide information supporting this screening decision, sufficient to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected.

Notwithstanding this advice, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all potential environmental assets. As a result the responsible authority should raise environmental issues that we have not identified on local or national biodiversity action plan species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites or local landscape character, with its own ecological and/or landscape advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local landscape and biodiversity receptors that

may be affected by this plan, before determining whether an SA/SEA is necessary.

Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA/SA screening stage, should the responsible authority seek our views on the scoping or environmental report stages. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter or for any new consultations, please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer.

We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours faithfully
Dawn Kinrade
Consultations Team

Annex 1 - Neighbourhood planning and the natural environment: information, issues and opportunities

Natural environment information sources

The [Magic](http://magic.defra.gov.uk/)¹ website will provide you with much of the nationally held natural environment data for your plan area. The most relevant layers for you to consider are: **Agricultural Land Classification, Ancient Woodland, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Local Nature Reserves, National Parks (England), National Trails, Priority Habitat Inventory, public rights of way (on the Ordnance Survey base map) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (including their impact risk zones)**. Local environmental record centres may hold a range of additional information on the natural environment. A list of local record centres is available [here](#)².

Priority habitats are those habitats of particular importance for nature conservation, and the list of them can be found [here](#)³. Most of these will be mapped either as **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**, on the Magic website or as **Local Wildlife Sites**. Your local planning authority should be able to supply you with the locations of Local Wildlife Sites.

National Character Areas (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each character area is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. NCA profiles contain descriptions of the area and statements of environmental opportunity, which may be useful to inform proposals in your plan. NCA information can be found [here](#)⁴.

There may also be a local **landscape character assessment** covering your area. This is a tool to help understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify the features that give it a sense of place. It can help to inform, plan and manage change in the area. Your local planning authority should be able to help you access these if you can't find them online.

If your neighbourhood planning area is within or adjacent to a **National Park** or **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**, the relevant National Park/AONB Management Plan for the area will set out useful information about the protected landscape. You can access the plans on from the relevant National Park Authority or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty website.

General mapped information on **soil types** and **Agricultural Land Classification** is available (under 'landscape') on the [Magic](http://magic.defra.gov.uk/)⁵ website and also from the [LandIS website](http://www.landis.org.uk/)⁶, which contains more information about obtaining soil data.

Natural environment issues to consider

The [National Planning Policy Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2)⁷ sets out national planning policy on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. [Planning Practice Guidance](http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/)⁸ sets out supporting guidance.

Your local planning authority should be able to provide you with further advice on the potential impacts of your plan or order on the natural environment and the need for any environmental assessments.

Landscape

¹ <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

² <http://www.nbn-nfbr.org.uk/nfbr.php>

³ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making>

⁵ <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

⁶ <http://www.landis.org.uk/index.cfm>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

⁸ <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/>

Your plans or orders may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes. You may want to consider identifying distinctive local landscape features or characteristics such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls and think about how any new development proposals can respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness.

If you are proposing development within or close to a protected landscape (National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or other sensitive location, we recommend that you carry out a landscape assessment of the proposal. Landscape assessments can help you to choose the most appropriate sites for development and help to avoid or minimise impacts of development on the landscape through careful siting, design and landscaping.

Wildlife habitats

Some proposals can have adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites or other priority habitats (listed [here](#)⁹), such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or [Ancient woodland](#)¹⁰. If there are likely to be any adverse impacts you'll need to think about how such impacts can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

Priority and protected species

You'll also want to consider whether any proposals might affect priority species (listed [here](#)¹¹) or protected species. To help you do this, Natural England has produced advice [here](#)¹² to help understand the impact of particular developments on protected species.

Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services for society. It is a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution. If you are proposing development, you should seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of a higher quality in line with National Planning Policy Framework para 112. For more information, see our publication [Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land](#)¹³.

Improving your natural environment

Your plan or order can offer exciting opportunities to enhance your local environment. If you are setting out policies on new development or proposing sites for development, you may wish to consider identifying what environmental features you want to be retained or enhanced or new features you would like to see created as part of any new development. Examples might include:

- Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.
- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Think about how lighting can be best managed to encourage wildlife.
- Adding a green roof to new buildings.

You may also want to consider enhancing your local area in other ways, for example by:

⁹<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>

¹¹ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

¹³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35012>

- Setting out in your plan how you would like to implement elements of a wider Green Infrastructure Strategy (if one exists) in your community.
 - Assessing needs for accessible greenspace and setting out proposals to address any deficiencies or enhance provision.
 - Identifying green areas of particular importance for special protection through Local Green Space designation (see [Planning Practice Guidance on this](http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/local-green-space-designation/) ¹⁴).
 - Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).
 - Planting additional street trees.
 - Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
 - Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition, or clearing away an eyesore).
-

¹⁴ <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/local-green-space-designation/>

D. Preston Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Determination 2019

1. Introduction

This report sets out a draft Screening Determination for the Preston Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan and has been prepared by North Hertfordshire District Council. The purpose of the screening is to assess if the Neighbourhood Plan will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). More detail is given in the following sections on SEA (section 2) and Neighbourhood Plans (section 3), and Preston Neighbourhood Plan specifically (section 4).

The assessment of the Preston Neighbourhood Plan and the draft Determination is included in sections 5, 6 and 7.

2. Strategic Environmental Assessment context

European Union Directive 2001/42/EC requires an SEA to be undertaken for certain types of plans or programmes that could have significant environmental effects. The Directive has been transposed into law for England and Wales in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations). The purpose of Strategic Environmental Assessment is to promote sustainable development through assessing the extent to which the plan will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives.

Under Regulation 9 of the Regulations, the responsible body (local parish or town council or neighbourhood forum) is required to determine whether a plan or programme is likely to have significant environmental effects, and therefore whether an SEA is required. This process is called screening, and is undertaken using a specified set of criteria (set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations). The Regulations require that the results of this process are set out in an SEA Screening Determination (this document), which must be publicly available. This document should be submitted with the Neighbourhood Plan proposal and made available to the independent examiner.

Before the responsible body makes a formal determination, there is a requirement to consult three statutory consultation bodies designated in the regulations (Historic England, the Environment Agency & Natural England) on whether an environmental assessment is required. This draft document has been produced to facilitate that consultation.

3. Neighbourhood Plans and Strategic Environmental Assessment

Planning Practice Guidance states that *"to decide whether a draft Neighbourhood Plan might have significant environmental effects, it must be assessed (screened) at an early stage of the plan's preparation according to the requirements set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004"*⁴.

The Guidance also suggests that *"The local planning authority, as part of its duty to advise or assist, should consider putting in place processes to determine whether the proposed Neighbourhood Plan will require a strategic environmental assessment."*⁵ In this case North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) is providing assistance by undertaking the screening determination.

⁴ Paragraph: 028 Reference ID: 11-028-20150209

⁵ *ibid*

The Guidance notes particular circumstances which may require a SEA⁶:

“ A strategic environmental assessment may be required, for example, where:

- *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 is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan”.*

The Determination has taken account of the Guidance in reaching its conclusions, and it notes that the particular circumstances described above are encompassed by the criteria outlined in Schedule 1 of the Regulations.

4. Preston Neighbourhood Plan

The parish of Preston is located in the North Hertfordshire District of Hertfordshire. It is 4 miles south of Hitchin at the north east end of the Chiltern Hills and 38 miles north of Central London. The parish covers the village and surrounding countryside. At the 2011 census the population of the parish of Preston was 420 and there were 158 dwellings in the parish.

There are 63 listed buildings and structures within the Parish on 41 sites. Thirty three of these are situated in the designated Conservation Area. Two buildings, Princess Helena College, in the Conservation area, and Tudor House are Grade II*, with the remaining 61 being Grade II.

The Neighbourhood Plan has been produced by the Qualifying Body, Preston Parish Council (PPC), and covers the period 2011 to 2031. In June 2016 the PPC established the Preston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group which has included Parish Council members and community volunteers. The Neighbourhood Plan area was designated in June 2016 and is shown in the map below.

The Plan is the result of consultation within the community through questionnaires and consultation events. It has also involved liaison with NHDC and the wider community, either through direct communication or through the Preston Neighbourhood Plan dedicated web site.

The Plan does not include proposals for housing or other development. Its overall approach is to support appropriate development which protects the character of the village and the environment. The Plan's objectives are shown below.

Living in Preston (Quality of Life)

Objective Q1: To encourage the provision of opportunities for social interaction through cultural, leisure, sport and commercial activities for all members of the community.

Objective Q2: To promote a community quality of life including clean air and water, enjoyment of open spaces, conservation of wildlife and natural resources, security from crime and protection from toxic substances.

Objective Q3: To prioritise local distinctiveness in every element of change and growth.

Amenities and Facilities

Objective A1: To support all existing amenities, facilities and services available in the parish and new ventures where appropriate for the benefit of the community.

Objective A2: To support existing businesses and promote businesses and employment opportunities on a scale compatible with Preston parish's rural character.

Housing and Development

Objective H1: To ensure that any development is sensitively planned and phased over the period of the Plan, protecting and enriching the landscape and built setting.

Objective H2: To ensure the integration of new residents into the village, new developments should link into or enhance paths and rights of way.

Objective H3: To ensure that any development delivers a range of housing to buy or to rent to meet local needs including affordable housing.

Objective H4: To support developments which have a low carbon footprint and are eco-friendly.

Objective H5: To encourage the provision of suitable storage areas for refuse, bicycles and mobility scooters.

Objective H6: To ensure that each property has the benefit of a garden.

Objective H7: To seek to ensure that the impact of new development on sewage, surface water drainage and water pressure is assessed and that infrastructure, services and utilities to existing houses are improved or at least not exacerbated.

Objective H8: To seek to ensure that individual extensions are of an appropriate scale for the site and maintain or enhance village amenities.

Objective H9: To seek to ensure any new housing scheme or infill development is of an appropriate scale and maintains or enhances the character of the village.

Objective H10: To seek to ensure that all development meets the requirements of the relevant Housing and Development Policies contained within this Plan in order to reduce the impact of building construction for local residents, surrounding properties and the narrow lanes within the village.

Environment and Heritage

Objective E1: To protect and enhance the rural environment of the parish, and its varied landscapes.

Objective E2: To maintain and protect good access to the countryside by means of footpaths and bridleways.

Objective E3: To protect 'greenspace' e.g The Green and all verges, within and around the village, so as to maintain and enhance the appearance of this rural settlement.

Objective E4: To recognise all merits of the built environment across the parish, and to seek to protect this architectural heritage, especially that of the many Listed Buildings.

Objective E5: To take special care of the Conservation Area, and to raise awareness of the relevant legislation.

Objective E6: To ensure new developments do not create flood risk and problems with the sewerage system and surface water drainage, while at the same time ensuring that any existing problems are not exacerbated.

Objective E7: To support the conservation of flora and fauna and to maintain and enhance the different habitats and their distinctive and varied species.

Transport and Communication

Objective T1: To support and encourage sustainable transport, including walking and cycling.

Objective T2: To support and encourage safe use of roads, paths and bridleways for all users: walkers, joggers, cyclists and horse riders, as well as being safe for motorised vehicles.

Objective T3: To support the development of efficient and effective broadband speed and mobile coverage throughout the parish, while maintaining a good landline service, meeting the domestic, social and business needs of the community.

Objective T4: To support the maintenance of the rural character of the lanes in the parish.

Objective T5: To support on-going improvements to transport, to utility infrastructure and to digital coverage consistent with other objectives.

5. Screening assessment

As noted above, the Regulations specify a set of criteria which must be used to assess whether any plan covered by the Regulation is likely to have a significant environmental effect and therefore require a SEA. The table below considers each of these criteria in turn.

Table 2: Assessment of likelihood of significant effects on the environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Likely to have significant effects?	Justification for assessment
1 (a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	No	The framework for development in Preston is currently set by the saved policies of the existing North Hertfordshire Local Plan and the NPPF. A new Local Plan is currently being developed, with adoption provisionally timetabled for March 2020. The Preston Neighbourhood Plan does not include site allocations or provide for any other projects which are likely to have significant effects.
1 (b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or	No	A Neighbourhood Plan is at the bottom of the planning hierarchy and must be in

programmes including those in a hierarchy.		general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan
1 (c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	No	The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on protecting the quality of the neighbourhood and its environment, particularly in the case of any development which arises out of the existing planning framework or the emerging new Local Plan. The emerging Local Plan has been subject to sustainability appraisal at all stages, and the outcomes of those assessments have been considered with regard to this Neighbourhood Plan. It is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan's likely impact will be to have a positive effect on the environment by providing an additional layer of policy protection.
1(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan	No	None have been identified.
1 (e) 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)	No	The Plan will be in conformity with the saved Local Plan Policies, the NPPF and the emerging Local Plan which have taken account of existing legislation for environmental protection. As noted above it is likely to have a positive effect by improving environmental protection policies.
2 (a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	No	No significant effects have been identified
2 (b) the cumulative nature of the effects	No	No significant effects have been identified
2 (c) the trans-boundary nature of the effects	No	No significant effects have been identified
2 (d) the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	No	No significant effects have been identified
2 (e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	No	No significant effects have been identified

<p>2 (f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</p> <p>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards</p> <p>(iii) intensive land-use</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The neighbourhood area does contain sensitive features, as noted above, but there are no proposals in the Plan which are likely to have significant environmental effects on these features. In fact key Plan policies are designed to protect these features.</p> <p>The following specific policies protect sensitive features:</p> <p>QL1: Social Interaction QL2: Community Quality of Life QL3: Local Distinctiveness HD5: Sustainability and Energy Efficiency HD8: Drainage Provisions HD9: Residential Extensions HD10: New Housing Development HD11: Construction Management HD12: New Build within the Conservation Area EH1: Village Boundary and Rural Character and Setting EH2: Conservation Areas and Heritage Assets EH3: Open and Green Spaces EH4 Local Green Spaces EH5: Tranquillity and Dark Skies EH6: Views and Vistas EH7: Protecting and Enhancing the Local and Natural Environment EH8: Hedgerows, Trees and Verges TC1: Safe and Sustainable Transport</p> <p>Policies in Appendix to Neighbourhood Plan HERC1,HERC2,HERC3,HERC4 HERC5,HERC6,HERC7,HERC8,HERC9 HERC10</p>
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<p>2 (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>As noted above Preston is located on the edge of the Chilterns AONB. Any effects are likely to be positive. The views of the AONB from the village will be protected by Policy EH6 Views and Vistas.</p> <p>In addition, Preston has: SSSI: Wain Wood Ancient Woodland Inventory Sites:13 Medieval Monastic Site: 1 Historic Landscape Park and Garden: 1 Areas of Archaeological Significance: 4 Area of Landscape Conservation: 1 Local Wildlife sites: 9</p> <p>The above sites are protected by policies: EH1: Village Boundary and Rural Character and Setting EH2: Conservation Areas and Heritage Assets EH3: Open and Green Spaces EH4 Local Green Spaces EH7: Protecting and Enhancing the Local and Natural Environment EH8: Hedgerows, Trees and Verges</p> <p>In appendix: HERC1,HERC2,HERC3,HERC4 HERC5,HERC6,HERC7,HERC8,HERC9 HERC10</p> <p>As also discussed above, any other effects are also likely to be positive. The Habitats Regulation Assessment screening report produced by NHDC in February 2013 concluded that in combination, there is not likely to be any significant combined impact on European sites from any plans or projects developed for the District.</p>
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6. Consultation responses

7. Screening determination

In summary, it is concluded that the Preston Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore a SEA is not required. The principal reasons for this conclusion are:

No sites are allocated for development in the Plan.

The Plan focuses on protecting the quality of the parish and its environment, particularly in the case of any development which arises out of the existing District planning framework or the emerging Local Plan. It is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan's likely impact will be to have a positive effect on the environment by providing an additional layer of protection.

The neighbourhood area does contain sensitive features, particularly heritage features as noted above but there are no proposals in the Plan which are likely to have significant environmental effects on these features. In fact as already noted, key plan policies are designed to protect these features.