



STRATEGIC
ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT
NON-TECHNICAL REPORT

Ashover Parish
Neighbourhood
Plan

OCTOBER 2016

Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	3
2.0	The key environmental issues.....	4
3.0	Framework of objectives.....	5
4.0	Testing the Plan objectives.....	6
5.0	Environmental Appraisal of Housing Allocations.....	8
6.0	Environmental Appraisal of Neighbourhood Plan Policies.....	11
7.0	Conclusions.....	13

1.0 Introduction

The Ashover Neighbourhood Plan (Neighbourhood Plan) is at the draft Submission stage. In order to assess any significant environmental effects, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Plan is being undertaken in accordance with Regulation 12 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

This document is the non-technical summary of the SEA Report currently published alongside the Submission Draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan. It summarises the stages of the SEA Report undertaken and provides a brief overview of environmental issues facing the Neighbourhood Plan area and summary of the SEA appraisal of the Neighbourhood Plan housing allocation sites and policies.

1.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessment is European Directive 2001/42/EC (The Directive) and in England The Directive has been transposed via the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Draft neighbourhood plans are required to meet a set of basic conditions in order to proceed to referendum. One of the basic conditions stipulates that ‘the making of the plan does not breach and is otherwise compatible with EU obligations.’ Directive 2001/42/EC and *Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004)* specify the types of plans that must be subject to an environmental assessment.

A ‘screening’ assessment of a draft neighbourhood plan was undertaken in March 2016 and following consultation with the *consultation bodies* it was concluded that an SEA was required to be undertaken for the Ashover Neighbourhood Plan.

A SEA Scoping Report was published in July 2016 outlining the main issues that will need to be considered in finalising the Neighbourhood Plan for the Ashover Parish. A SEA Report, incorporating the comments from the *consultation bodies* now accompanies the Submission draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.2 Methodology

The methodology of the SEA Report follows the steps set out in ‘A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’ (2005).

An important first step in the SEA process involves establishing the ‘scope’; identifying the issues and objectives that should be the focus of the SEA. Consultation undertaken in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan and analysis of baseline data identified a number of key issues. It was established that 10 SEA objectives grouped under 8 ‘topic headings’ would provide the scope and framework for the assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan.

An initial step was to assess the compatibility of the Neighbourhood Plan objectives with the SEA objectives to identify both potential synergies and inconsistencies. A second step was

to identify reasonable strategic alternatives and assess these, alongside the preferred options put forward in the draft Plan. This part of the assessment focused purely on housing sites, each of which were scored against its impact on the SEA objectives from 'likely strong positive effect' to 'likely strong adverse effect'. This process was repeated for each of the Neighbourhood Plan's 28 policies (with the exception of policy AP5 which was assessed greater detail as part of the housing allocation review).

The SEA looked at secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects and identified any opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects. Final conclusions were drawn and measures to monitor significant environmental effects were identified.

2.0 Key environmental issues

A review of the current state of the environment was undertaken to establish the baseline against which the likely effects of the Neighbourhood Plan would be assessed. In accordance with the Guidance, the SEA focuses on the environmental impacts which are likely to be significant. These issues are outlined in table 1 below.

Table 1: Key environmental issues

Topic	Issues Identified
Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New housing development has the potential to lead to impacts on air quality related to increased traffic flows. ▪ Increased tourism with a focus on visitor economy has the potential to lead to impacts on air quality related to increased traffic flows.
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The risk of further habitat fragmentation resulting from new development ▪ High proportion of BAP Priority habitat
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Much of the woodland is of ancient origin at risk from encroaching invasive species. These are a vital component of the local environment because of the importance aesthetically, historically and their contribution to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. ▪ The presence of an SSSI and RIGS ▪ The presence of a Special Area of Conservation within 5km of the NP area.
Climatic Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of carbon dioxide emissions attributable to transport and the potential to further increase emissions through future development and associated traffic.
Historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The potential for development to adversely impact historic landscapes and cause direct damage to archaeological sites, ancient monuments and buildings and/or their settings. ▪ Adverse impact on the Conservation Area and/or its setting ▪ Historic environment assets are at risk of neglect or decay, illustrated by the Listed Buildings at risk, but also non-designated sites.

Topic	Issues Identified
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managing the impact of development on the character and distinctiveness of the landscape and settlements. ▪ Further loss of tranquillity from increased traffic ▪ Impact on landscape quality from poor design and layout ▪ Development pressures on non-designated sites and landscapes
Natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Further increasing recycling rates and reducing general household waste to landfill.
Population and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ageing population and the implications for housing, facilities, infrastructure and services. ▪ The need to retain and improve community facilities ▪ Potential for new development and infrastructure to contribute to good health through provision of and improvements to the pedestrian and cycling routes. ▪ Impact of HGVs utilising narrow roads on safety and quality of life.
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moderate to poor quality soil
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The potential impact on the Ogston Reservoir SSSI including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increases in nutrient levels within the waterbody from diffuse sources in wider catchment resulting in a loss of aquatic plants in favour of algae; - changes in the amount of water in the waterbody as a result of variations in inflowing streams impacting on nutrient regimes and habitats; and - increases in sediment entering the waterbody. ▪ Poor water quality ▪ The impact of agriculture on water quality

3.0 Framework of objectives

The SEA process uses a framework of objectives to assess the emerging elements of the Neighbourhood Plan against the identified baseline. The proposed SEA framework below was modelled initially on the Scoping Report for the Sustainability Appraisal of the NE Derbyshire Core Strategy (2012). A number of objectives identified were beyond the scope of this SEA and/or were not relevant to the neighbourhood plan level and a few have been modified on the basis of input received from the *consultation bodies* at the scoping stage.

Table 2: SEA objectives

SEA Topics	SEA objectives
Air quality; Soil, Water	1. Reduce air, soil and water pollution.
Biodiversity and geodiversity	2. Protect, enhance and manage biodiversity and geodiversity.
Planning for climate change	3. Ensure mitigation measures to plan for the potential impacts of climate change.

SEA Topics	SEA objectives
Minimising climate Change	4. Minimise Ashover Parish's contribution to climate change.
Historic environment	5. Protect, enhance and manage sites, features and areas of archaeological, historical and cultural heritage importance.
Landscape and built environment quality	6. Protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and built environment, maintaining and strengthening distinctiveness and its special qualities.
Natural resources	7. Protect and conserve natural resources.
Health and wellbeing	8. Safeguard and improve community health, safety and wellbeing.
	9. Reduce barriers for those living in rural areas.
	10. Provide affordable, environmentally sound and good quality housing for all.

4.0 Testing the Plan objectives against the SEA objectives

In order to refine the Neighbourhood Plan objectives and to assist in developing alternatives, the Plan objectives have been tested against the SEA objectives to identify both potential synergies and inconsistencies.

The table below illustrates that there is no incompatibility between the objectives in the Neighbourhood Plan and the SEA objectives. Inevitably, given that the aim of the Neighbourhood Plan has been to plan for growth in the Parish in a sustainable way; there is a high degree of compatibility and/or neutrality between the two sets of objectives. It is therefore considered that no changes are required to the Plan objectives.

Figure 1: Compatibility of objectives

Neighbourhood Plan Objectives																				
1. Ensure that development takes place in the most sustainable locations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0										
2. Encourage the right types of development that meet local needs.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	✓	✓	✓										
3. Conserve and enhance heritage assets and their setting	0	✓	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0										
4. Protect important community facilities and shops.	✓	0	0	✓	0	0	✓	✓	✓	0										
5. Promote high quality design in new development.	✓	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	✓	0	✓										
6. Protect the countryside and special landscape.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0										
7. Protect open spaces that are important to the community and/or wildlife.	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0	✓	✓	0	0										
8. Seek ways of addressing the problems of traffic congestion.	✓	0	✓	✓	0	0	0	✓	0	0										
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	SEA Objectives																			

5.0 Environmental appraisal of the housing allocations

The SEA is required to undertake an appraisal of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the plan and any reasonable alternatives (to fulfilling the plan's objectives). A fundamental aim of the Neighbourhood Plan is to shape and guide where new houses would be best built. The Plan objectives include "ensure that development takes place in the most sustainable locations." The other objectives further support this aim by seeking to protect; important heritage assets, the countryside and special landscape and important open space.

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to propose housing sites that meet the objectives of the plan and have regard to the housing requirements in the emerging North East Derbyshire District Local Plan. Therefore, the focus in fulfilling the key objectives of the Plan is the identification of reasonable alternatives to the allocation of the 'preferred sites'.

Preferred options

At the time that the Steering Group finalised its initial technical assessment, there were five preferred housing sites put forward for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan. These sites were:

- a) Land off Moor Road, Ashover*
- b) Land off Hockley Lane, Ashover
- c) Land off Fallgate*
- d) Land east of Ashover Road, Kelstedge*; and
- e) Land west of Ashover Road, kelstedge

*Subsequently, three of the preferred housing sites have been granted planning permission.

Preferred housing sites

Key	Housing Site	Number of dwellings
PO1	Land off Hockley Lane, Ashover;	5 dwellings
PO2	Land west of Ashover Road, Kelstedge	8 dwellings

Alternatives

The alternative sites were primarily chosen on the basis of those sites put forward in the North East Derbyshire District Council SHLAA that could yield 5 dwellings or more.

Alternative housing sites

Key	Housing Site	Number of dwellings
AO1	Land off Vernon Lane, Kelstedge (ASH/2207)	24
AO2	Grange Farm, Ashover (ASH/2201) and Garden East of Lime Tree House, Church St, Ashover (ASH/602)	50
AO3	Corner of Moor Rd and Narrowleys Lane (ASH/2001)	28
AO4	Corner of Butts Road and Narrowleys Lane, Ashover (ASH/2301)	16
AO5	Marsh Green Lane, Ashover (Northern) (ASH/2302)	14
AO6	Marsh Green Lane, Ashover (Southern) (ASH/2303)	10
AO7	St Emerys Hillside, Ashover (ASH/2203)	10

The preferred options and reasonable alternatives have been tested against the SEA objectives as outlined in table 3 below.

In assessing the significance of effects, the following scale and symbols are used. This assessment methodology has been applied to both the appraisal of housing allocation sites and policies.

Significance of effect	Symbol
Likely strong positive effect	++
Likely positive effect	+
Neutral/no effect	0
Likely adverse effect	-
Likely strong adverse effect	--
Uncertain effects	+/-

Table 3: SEA appraisal of preferred housing sites and reasonable alternatives

SEA Objective	Sites								
	PO1	PO2	A01	A02	A03	A04	A05	A06	A07
1. Reduce air, soil and water pollution.	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Protect, enhance and manage: Geodiversity and;	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Biodiversity.	0	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	-
3. Ensure mitigation measures to plan for the potential impacts of climate change.	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Minimise Ashover Parish's contribution to climate change.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
5. Protect, enhance and manage sites, features and areas of archaeological, historical and cultural heritage importance.	-	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0
6. Protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and built environment, maintaining and strengthening distinctiveness and its special qualities.	+	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7. Protect and conserve natural resources.	++	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8. Safeguard and improve community health, safety and wellbeing.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9. Reduce barriers for those living in rural areas.	+	+	+	++	++	++	++	++	++
10. Provide affordable, environmentally sound and good quality housing for all.	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	+

5.1 Summary of findings

Taking into account the SEA objectives, it is considered that none of the alternative sites perform significantly better in regards to potential environmental effects, than the two preferred sites.

The preferred sites are adjacent to the current Limits to Development, do not include designated or non-designated environmental and/or historic assets. Therefore, the proposed sites are not anticipated to have an impact on any designated sites. The majority of the sites (preferred and alternative) have the potential to effect in some way, the setting of an environmental and/ or historic asset. However, given the smaller scale of the proposed development sites, these effects can be mitigated against through implementation of the other policies in the Plan.

All sites scored positively for health and wellbeing; through the provision of housing that will meet the needs of the local population in terms of type, size and quality. However, the larger sites (over 10 dwellings) scored more positively in terms of the potential yield of affordable housing.

6.0 Environmental appraisal of the Neighbourhood Plan policies

This section considers the potential effects of applying the draft policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Each policy has been assessed against the ten SEA objectives of the SEA framework. The significance of the likely environmental effects of implementing the Plan policies are summarised in table 4 below.

In summary, no significant adverse environmental effects have been identified with regards the Neighbourhood Plan policies. The effects of implementing a number of the policies (AP1, AP2, AP4, AP6 and AP22) on some of the SEA objectives are uncertain, and will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Policy AP2 seeks to update the Limits to Development and was assessed as having a neutral effect on historic, landscape and built environment given that it is essentially an update; a reflection of the current built area and live planning permissions for housing. Introducing new boundaries for Fallgate and Alton is likely to have a positive effect on the landscape by directing future development to infill.

Policies AP4 to AP8 support a sustainable level of housing of a type that meets the needs of the local community and therefore is likely to have a positive effect on health and wellbeing. Policies AP14 to AP17 seek good quality design and protection of the distinctive landscape and heritage assets and therefore are likely to have a positive impact on the historic environment and landscape and built environment quality.

Taken as a whole, the policies of the Plan have no net negative impact and many have been assessed as having a positive impact.

Table 4: SEA appraisal of the Neighbourhood Plan policies

SEA Objectives	AP 1	AP 2	AP 3	AP 4	AP 6	AP 7	AP 8	AP 9	AP 10	AP 11	AP 12	AP 13	AP 14	AP 15	AP 16	AP 17	AP 18	AP 19	AP 20	AP 21	AP 22	AP 23	AP 24	AP 25	AP 26	AP 27	AP 28
SEA Objective 1	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+/-	0	++	0	++	++	++
SEA Objective 2	+/-	0	+	+/-	0	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	++	++	+/-	+	0	0	0	0	0
SEA Objective 3	+/-	0	+	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	0
SEA Objective 4	+/-	0	+	+/-	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	++	+/-	0	+	+	+	+	++
SEA Objective 5	+/-	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	+	++	++	+	++	++	0	++	+/-	0	+	0	+	0	0
SEA Objective 6	+/-	0	+	+/-	+/-	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	++	++	++	++	++	++	+	++	+/-	0	+	0	+	0	0
SEA Objective 7	+/-	+	+	+/-	+	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0
SEA Objective 8	+/-	+/-	+	0	0	++	++	0	0	0	++	++	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+/-	+	++	+	++	++	++
SEA Objective 9	+/-	+	0	+	++	+	++	+	+	++	++	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	+	0	+	+
SEA Objective 10	+	+	0	++	++	++	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0

7.0 Conclusions

The Directive requires consideration of secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects. The Neighbourhood Plan has been considered for its effects against the objectives of the SEA framework. Given the modest level of proposed development, the potential for additional effects is limited and mainly cumulative.

The draft Neighbourhood Plan with its proposed sites and policies seeks to guide sustainable development in the Parish. It proposes two housing sites totalling less than twenty dwellings, with the remaining allocation of housing through windfall sites.

The Plan, in accordance with National Planning Guidelines, seeks to guide a level of housing development required to meet the needs of the local community, based on the evidence from the emerging Local Plan. The underlying premise of the Plan is to guide development to the most sustainable locations; protecting important environmental and heritage assets and protecting the countryside and special landscape.

As identified in the now withdrawn draft Local Plan, identification of sufficient sites for housing development in suitable locations within the Parish is difficult given the very special character of the area, both in terms of its built environment and landscape qualities. The Neighbourhood Plan therefore seeks to put forward a number of preferred housing sites (also identified by the District Council through the local planning process), that the community feel best meets their needs and has the least adverse effects on the area. The other policies in the Plan seek to ensure that development on these and other future sites conserve and where possible, enhance the unique character of the area including designated and non-designated environmental and heritage assets.

The more sustainable locations for housing sites tend to be in proximity to local services and facilities, ensuring their viability, reducing the need to travel by car and promoting a healthy lifestyle through walkable communities. The key facilities within the Parish are located within Ashover, the core of which is a Conservation Area encompassing multiple Listed Buildings and is set within a Special Landscape Area. The Plan therefore seeks to strike a balance by allocating small housing sites within or adjacent to the existing built up area, thereby reducing the impact on the landscape character and appearance and the need to travel whilst ensuring that development is of a scale that does not adversely impact on historic assets or their setting.

The Plan contains policies to ensure that future development is of a high quality and designed sensitively in order to ensure that the existing character of the built environment and its setting, is protected and where possible, enhanced.

The development proposed in the Plan is of a very modest scale. However, given the environment, a number of low risk factors have been identified through this report. These factors are unavoidable, given the growth requirements of the emerging Local Plan, and would still exist without the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

It is envisaged that through careful and sensitive design and siting, it is unlikely that the proposed site in Ashover village for 5 dwellings will significantly affect the setting of the adjacent Listed Building or Conservation Area and may indeed enhance it. The Plan, taken as a whole contains policies that seek high quality design through the application of design principles for new development in the Parish and in particular where it has the potential to affect a Listed Building or the Conservation Area. These policies, coupled with ongoing monitoring of effects, should ensure that the potential issues highlighted can be neutralised.

7.2 Next Steps

As per the requirement of Article 5.4 of the SEA Directive, the draft Environmental Report will be published alongside the draft Neighbourhood Plan for formal consultation. The documents will be made available to the statutory consultees; Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England and the public for comments.