

Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Statement

November 2024

Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Statement for the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

Summary

This document is the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Statement for the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan (MWNDP) Review.

This HRA Screening Statement concludes that there is no likely significant effect on any European Site as a result of the policies contained within the MWNDP and as such the MWNDP is 'screened out' of the HRA process and no further HRA assessments (including 'Appropriate Assessments') are deemed necessary.

Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood planning is a new community right introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and guidance on its implementation is provided in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Neighbourhood Plans form part of the Statutory Land Use Plan and as such must be subject to HRA under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) [the Habitats Regulations].

Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

The current MWNDP period runs from 2013 to 2026. Given the progress of the emerging Shropshire Local Plan through its examination stage, in March 2023 the Much Wenlock Parish Council Planning and Environment Committee decided to review the MWNDP.

An application by Much Wenlock Town Council to designate a neighbourhood plan area went out for public consultation from 27 June to 10 August 2010. The application was approved by Shropshire Council's Cabinet on 12 September 2012 and a formal notice was issued. For the purposes of MWNDP Review the same designated area will be used.

The Plan period will be from 2024 to 2038, to coincide with the period for the Shropshire Local Plan Review, which is standard practice where there is an emerging Local Plan.

The starting point for the review of MWNDP was to ensure that the residents of Much Wenlock parish were given the opportunity to decide what development should happen and where it should take place until the end of the Plan period in 2038. This engagement has informed the preparation of seven planning objectives that in turn led to the development of draft planning policies. These are currently in draft form and may be further refined when these are considered at the formal consultation stages.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) set out the process by which the HRA of plans and projects must be undertaken. Further guidance has been provided by government and Natural England on the process.

Shropshire Council is the ‘Competent Authority’ in terms of HRA for the ‘making’ of the MWNDP. Shropshire Council has produced this HRA Screening Statement to accompany the draft MWNDP at the Regulation 14 consultation stage. Natural England has been given an opportunity to formally comment on a SEA/HRA Screening Opinion Survey and it is their advice, on the basis of material supplied with the consultation, that significant effects on Habitat Sites are unlikely.

The HRA process assesses the potential effects arising from a plan against the conservation objectives of any site designated for its nature conservation importance.

The following natural environmental designations exist in the neighbourhood area:

Designation	Sites
National Landscape	Shropshire Hills National Landscape (SHNP) – the western part of the parish falls within the NL.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Wenlock Edge: Biological & Geological Whitwell Coppice: Biological & Geological Farley Dingle: Geological Tickwood and Benthall Edge: Biological & Geological
Geological Conservation Review sites (GCR)	Wenlock Edge Whitwell Coppice Farley Dingle
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	There are a number of Local Wildlife Sites in the parish. The full detail is held by Shropshire Council .
Local Nature Reserves	Windmill Hill.
Ancient woodland	Significant areas of ancient woodland, including nine woods listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory.
Local Green Spaces	As set out in Policy MW16 (Local Green Space).

The NDP seeks to ensure that development is located in the most sustainable locations, within the settlement boundaries and away from sensitive environmental areas. A number of policies seek to safeguard such areas, for instance the Policy MW16 (Local Green Space) and the policies around Landscape, environment and biodiversity. None of the policies – individually or collectively – would impact negatively on the designated environmental sites.

HRA Screening

Each policy within the MWNDP has been screened to determine whether it has potential to cause a ‘Likely Significant Effect’ on any European Site.

Any policy with no 'Likely Significant Effect' will be screened out of the HRA process. Any policy where potential for a 'Likely Significant Effect' is identified will be subject to further more detailed, assessment (sometimes called an 'Appropriate Assessment') in line with the Habitats Regulations and relevant guidance documents.

Table 1 below considers the potential impacts arising from each of the policies within the draft Three Parishes Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Table 1

Policy	Assessment of Potential Impacts	Potential for Likely Significant Effect
Policy MW1: Supporting sustainable development	This policy seeks to ensure that any development within the parish is directed to the most appropriate, sustainable locations, where there is easy access to the main village services and facilities. This will help to protect the wider sensitive landscape of the parish and safeguard against the sprawl and coalescence of the individual parish settlements. The policy supports the re-use of previously developed brownfield sites in preference to greenfield. It also supports the concept of compact and walkable neighbourhoods to address the potential additional strains of development in the parish on road systems, particularly for developments that are furthest away from the main facilities.	No
Policy MW2: Meeting Local Housing Needs	The Plan does not seek to allocate sites for residential development. This policy seeks to influence the mix (type, size, tenure, affordability) of any new housing development in the parish in order that it contributes to identified local housing needs. It is underpinned by a Housing Needs Assessment that has been prepared for the parish and local feedback from residents.	No
Policy MW3: Rural exception sites	The policy sets out parameters against which any rural exception sites should be considered. It's an update to the existing policy. There has been a RES delivered in the parish in recent years.	No
Policy MW4: Infill development	The policy sets out how infill development, which may come forward as windfall, should be considered in terms of contributing to local character.	No
Policy MW5: Protecting existing employment land	This is an expansion of the policy in the made NDP and is being retained. It effectively seeks to protect existing sites for employment use and encourage new, in particular where they may be used for mixed use development (housing / employment)	No
Policy MW6: Enhancing the village centre	The policy seeks to support uses that will help to retain the vibrancy of Much Wenlock village centre, attracting additional footfall through support for independent shops and improving	No

	the public realm. It builds on an existing policy in the NDP, adding additional local detail.	
Policy MW7: Supporting sustainable rural tourism	The policy supports sustainable tourism activities in terms of the provision of facilities for visitors, setting out what would be supported and the criteria against which they would be assessed. An associated project will be to actively develop a visitor strategy for the parish – exploring signage, promoting active travel including routes to and from the railway stations at Telford and Shrewsbury.	No
Policy MW8: Flexible workspaces and opportunities for home working	This policy recognises the growing contribution of home-based and small-to-medium sized businesses in Much Wenlock and seeks to encourage opportunities for them, including by supporting the provision of start-up and move-on business units as well as the provision of a shared office space. This would provide a greater incentive and opportunity for local people to work locally. Homeworking too has become commonplace for many in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.	No
Policy MW9: Reducing Flood risk	The policy builds on the existing policy to set out parameters for development proposals in terms of reducing flood risk and ensuring adequate drainage. It is underpinned by an extensive evidence base and links to the later policy on biodiversity in terms of exploring natural mechanisms to reduce surface water.	No
Policy MW10: Improving walking, cycling and equestrian opportunities	The policy seeks to promote opportunities to improve the 'movement network' locally to enable walking, cycling (and equestrian) etc. This will help to encourage a shift to active travel, at least for shorter journeys in and between the settlements. Specific projects where improvements could be made have been set out as projects, in conjunction with the policy. The policy embeds the walkable neighbourhoods concept, which is nationally endorsed. It seeks to ensure that any new development is accessible to the main 'active' route network.	No
Policy MW11: Publicly accessible parking	Notwithstanding the overarching aim to promote active travel, it is unrealistic to expect a rural community such as Much Wenlock to move away from vehicles altogether. This also applies to visitors to the area – there is no railway station in so most arrive by private vehicle. The policy seeks to safeguard existing off-road public car parking and where appropriate, support additional that will serve the village centre – this would be required to include provision for EV charging points and cycle facilities.	No
Policy MW12: Alleviating traffic impacts at key pinchpoints	Whilst strategic transport matters fall largely outside the scope of the NDP (dealt with by Shropshire Highways/ National Highways), the NDP identifies particular road junctions and 'pinchpoints' that experience challenging traffic conditions.	No

	This will ensure that any new development addresses these specifically in their Transport Statements/ Assessments.	
Policy MW13: Community facilities (recreational, sports, cultural)	The policy seeks to safeguard existing important community facilities and also supports the provision of upgrades where required or new facilities, which may come forward through future development/ contributions etc. An audit of facilities has been undertaken to identify this need.	No
Policy MW14: Character and Design of development	The policy seeks to ensure that development is designed to the highest standards and contributes positively to local character. It adds additional local detail to national and local plan policies and is underpinned by a design guidance prepared for the parish.	No
Policy MW15: Heritage assets	The policy seeks to conserve/ enhance/ celebrate local heritage. It identifies a list of 'non-designated heritage assets' which contribute to the local sense of place and identity. It also sets out parameters related to the Conservation Area.	No
Policy MW16: Local Green Space	This policy designates Local Green Spaces in the parish, justified against the NPPF criteria.	No
Policy MW17: Locally significant views	This policy sets out a series of views in and across the parish, which have been identified by the community as being important to safeguard. The policy seeks to safeguard the views from inappropriate development.	No
Policy MW18: Green/blue infrastructure and biodiversity net gain	This policy seeks to ensure that the multiple benefits of MW's green and blue spaces – including their importance in combating pressure on wildlife, habitats, biodiversity and geodiversity and in off-setting the effects of air pollution - are recognised and enhanced. This applies particularly where individual spaces have a greater collective value as part of wider chains of green infrastructure. This will serve to support the requirement to conserve and, where possible, provide a net gain in biodiversity through planning policy whilst accommodating sustainable development.	No
Policy MW19: Landscape and environment	This policy seeks to ensure that development proposals have considered how they can enhance the natural environment – both flora and fauna – including the features of it that are particularly distinctive to Much Wenlock. It also seeks to ensure that development proposals contribute to the provision of adequate open space.	No
Policy MW20: Dark skies	Parts of Much Wenlock parish provide ideal locations from which to enjoy dark skies and stargazing. These dark skies also support both nocturnal and diurnal wildlife. This policy seeks to ensure that development does not encroach on this valued aspect of parish.	No

Policy MW21: Climate change and design	Noting that energy use in UK housing accounts for 27% of total carbon emissions, this policy seeks to ensure that development meets the highest environmental standards in terms of its construction, materials and energy use. This will help to mitigate against climate change and contribute to achieving the national target of zero net carbon by 2050.	No

Conclusion of the HRA Screening Process for the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

The policies within the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan have been screened under the Habitat Regulations Assessment process.

The conclusion of the HRA Screening Process is that none of the proposed policies within the draft Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan has the potential to lead to a 'Likely Significant Effect' on a European Site.

The draft Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan can be 'screened out' of the Habitat Regulations Assessment process and an 'Appropriate Assessment' is not required.

Update at Regulation 16

Following the Regulation 14 consultation, Much Wenlock Town Council have updated the draft Neighbourhood Plan in response to comments received. On reviewing the version of the draft Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review submitted at Regulation 15, Shropshire Council is of the opinion that none of the proposed policies within the draft Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan has the potential to lead to a 'Likely Significant Effect' on a European Site. As a result, the screening opinion remains the same and the draft Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Development Plan can be 'screened out' of the Habitat Regulations Assessment process and an 'Appropriate Assessment' is not required.

Appendix 1: Responses from statutory consultees.

Date: 07 November 2024
Our ref: 493120
Your ref: Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan – HRA Screening Response

Ms Rosie Corner
Shropshire Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

Rosie.Corner@shropshire.gov.uk



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

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Corner

Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review - SEA/HRA Screening Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 18 September 2024.

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: Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that significant effects on Habitats Sites are unlikely,

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland.

Where Neighbourhood Plans could have significant environmental effects, they may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended). The Neighbourhood Plan proposals should also be screened to ascertain whether Strategic Environmental Assessment is necessary. Further guidance on deciding whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects and the requirements for consulting Natural England on SEA are set out in the [planning practice guidance](#).

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

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

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

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

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

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

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Ben Jones
Consultations Team

Shropshire Council (Development Plans)
Forward Planning Team
Shirehall Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
Shropshire
SY2 6ND

Our ref: SV/2016/109232/SE-
03/SC1-L01
Your ref: SEA Screening
Consultation
Date: 27 September 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

**Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Review (2024 – 2038) – Strategic
Environmental Impact Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations
Assessment (HRA) Screening Report Consultation**

Strategic Environmental Assessment

The European Union directive 200142/EC requires a SEA to be undertaken for certain types of plans and programmes that would have 'significant' environmental effect(s).

Paragraph: 046 in the Flood Risk and Coastal Change section of the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (Reference ID: 11-046-20150209) states "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".

Having reviewed the Screening Report submitted, and in consideration of the matters within our remit, and given the lack of specific site allocations within the neighbourhood plan, we concur with the conclusions that the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is unlikely to have significant environmental impacts, and a **Strategic Environmental Assessment** is not therefore required.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Article 6(3) of the European Habitats Directive (1992) requires that any plan (or project), which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site (also known as a "Natura 2000" site), but would be likely to have a

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

significant effect on such a site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to an 'appropriate assessment' of its implications for the European site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

Having reviewed the screening report, and in consideration of matters within our remit, we concur that the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant effects on the European designated sites.

We note that no European or Ramsar sites have been identified within the plan area and there does not appear to be any obvious pathways to sites in neighbouring plan areas.

We trust that the above is of assistance.

Yours faithfully

Emma Millband
Planning Officer

Direct e-mail emma.millband@environment-agency.gov.uk