

Northaw and Cuffley Neighbourhood Plan

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

Statement of Reasons

This statement has been produced to comply with Regulation 15(1) e (ii) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

A neighbourhood plan is required to meet several basic conditions, one of which being it must not breach and be otherwise compatible with EU and Human Rights obligations. This requires neighbourhood plans to fully consider the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations which transpose the EU's SEA Directive into law and which requires those making plans that could impact on the environment to consider whether they are likely to have a significant effect or not.

Following a request from Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council produced a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Screening report for the Northaw and Cuffley Neighbourhood Plan.

The Screening opinion concluded that the Neighbourhood Plan does not require a SEA or a HRA.

The reasons for this are:

- The two sites allocated of housing development have already been through the site selection process, including a sustainability appraisal and a Habitats Regulation Assessment and found to be suitable, as part of the draft Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan housing site allocations process.
- The Neighbourhood Plan does not propose to allocate any great quantum of development than that already included in the draft Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan, so will have no greater environmental effect than that already assessed and found to be acceptable.
- The policies contained in the Neighbourhood Plan are intended to protect and enhance the natural environment and will not result in any significant environmental effects.
- The two sites proposed for housing development are included in the draft Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan, and therefore have already been assessed against the four international designated European sites and found not to have significant environmental effects on these sites.

The response received from the three statutory consultees, Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency did not raise any matters or issues that changed the Council's conclusion that SEA/HRA would not be required for the Northaw and Cuffley Neighbourhood Plan.

The consultation responses are included as Appendices to the initial screening assessment report.