



Mendlesham Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

Statement of reasons for
Mid Suffolk District Council's
Determination

March 2016

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Legislative Background	2
3. Criteria for Assessing the Effects of Supplementary Planning Documents	4
4. Assessment	5
5. Screening Outcome	9
Appendix	10

Neighbourhood Planning Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

1. Introduction

1.1 This screening report is designed to determine whether or not the content of the Mendlesham Neighbourhood Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

1.2 The purpose of the Mendlesham Neighbourhood Plan is to provide for the sustainable development of Mendlesham and the creation of a balanced community. It seeks to do this by providing appropriately sized homes with an expectation that these will be provided in smaller developments to enable easier integration within the community and a greater ability for the local infrastructure to adapt to changes. The neighbourhood plan covers a 15-year period from 2015 to 2030, and sets a minimum number of 75 new homes, which is expected to be largely delivered in and adjacent to Mendlesham village; however no exact locations are specified. The plan also seeks to expand small-scale employment opportunities within the village while maintaining its rural character through built design and protection of green areas.

1.3 The legislative background set out below outlines the regulations that require the need for this screening exercise. Section 4, provides a screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan and whether there is the need for a SEA.

2. Legislative Background

2.1 European Union Directive 200142/EC requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment to be undertaken for certain types of plans or programmes that would have a significant environmental effect. The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) require that this is determined by a screening process, which should use a specified set of criteria (set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations). The results of this process must be set out in an SEA Screening Statement, which must be publicly available.

2.2 In accordance with Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations 2004, Mendlesham Parish Council (the qualifying body) has requested Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC), as the responsible authority, to consider whether an environmental assessment of the emerging Mendlesham Neighbourhood Plan is required due to significant environmental effects. In making this determination, the District Council has had regard to Schedule 1 of the Regulations.

Neighbourhood Planning Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

- 2.3 The draft Neighbourhood Plan has reached the pre-submission stage and consultation has been undertaken by the Parish Council. In line with the advice contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Practice Guidance, the plan's potential scope should be assessed at an early stage against the criteria set out in Schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Mid Suffolk District Council is therefore consulting the statutory consultees (Historic England/Natural England/Environment Agency) on whether an environmental assessment is required.
- 2.4 A SEA can be required in some limited situations where a sustainability appraisal is not needed; Neighbourhood Planning is one of these situations. Sustainability Appraisals incorporate the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations, which implement the requirements of the 'Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.
- 2.5 A sustainability appraisal ensures that potential environmental effects are given full consideration alongside social and economic issues and it is good practice to do one to understand how a plan is to deliver sustainable development. However the Planning Practice Guidance states that there is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood plan to have a sustainability appraisal as set out in section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It is down to the qualifying body to demonstrate how its plan or order will contribute to achieving sustainable development.
- 2.6 This report focuses upon the screening required for a SEA and the criteria for establishing whether a full assessment is needed. Supporting information is provided in the Appendix.**

Neighbourhood Planning Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

3. Criteria for Assessing the Effects of Supplementary Planning Documents

3.1 Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below:

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to

- 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,
- the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
- environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
- 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).

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to

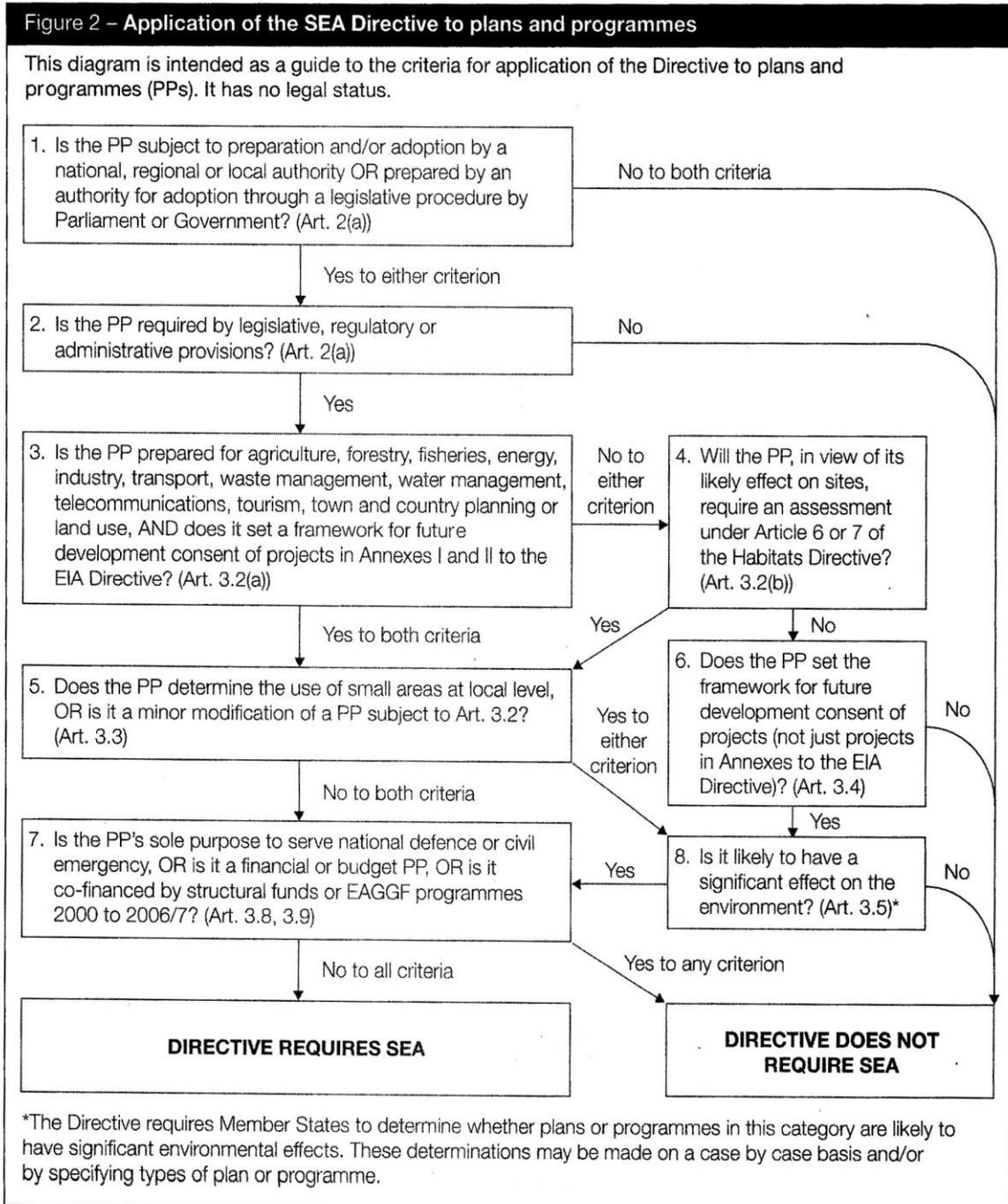
- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
- the cumulative nature of the effects,
- the trans-boundary nature of the effects,
- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
 - intensive land-use,
 - the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

Source: Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC

Neighbourhood Planning Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

4. Assessment

4.1 The diagram below illustrates the process for screening a planning document to ascertain whether a full SEA is required.



Neighbourhood Planning Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

4.2 The table below shows the assessment of whether the Neighbourhood Plan will require a full SEA. The questions below are drawn from the previous diagram which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Y	The preparation and adoption of the NP is allowed under The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The NP is being prepared by Mendlesham Parish Council (as the "relevant body") and will be "made" by Mid Suffolk District Council as the local authority subject to passing an independent examination and community referendum. The preparation of NPs is subject to the following regulations: The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and the Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012.
2. Is the Neighbourhood Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Y	Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan is not a requirement and is optional under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, it will if "made", form part of the statutory Development Plan for the District. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive.
3. Is the Neighbourhood Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	N	The Neighbourhood Plan does not set the framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive. Mendlesham has been identified as a 'Key Service Centre' by the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008). Key Service Centres will act as a focus for development within their functional cluster and, where appropriate, site allocations to meet housing and employment needs will be made in the Site Specific Allocations document. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites, but focuses on shaping how development comes forward under Policies CS5 and CS6 of the adopted Core Strategy. The draft neighbourhood plan identifies a minimum number of 75 new homes over the plan period, which is taken as a simple proportion of the Core Strategy Focused Review policy FC2 which proposes a minimum of 750 dwellings over the 10 Key Service Centres across the district. Development will be approved where proposals score positively against matters in the higher level plan; the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy and Core Strategy Focused Review.
4. Will the Neighbourhood Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	N	The NP is unlikely to have a substantial effect on the identified network of protected sites. A Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report was carried out as part of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy. This report concludes that the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy is unlikely to have an adverse impact on any of the identified sites within approximately 20km of the boundary of the District.

**Neighbourhood Planning
Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination**

	<p>There are 15 European sites within 20km of Mid Suffolk District (see the Appendix for location of sites in relation to Mendlesham, description of sites and their distances to Mendlesham). Some areas are covered by more than one designation. All the sites are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breckland SAC and SPA; • Rex Graham Reserve SAC; • Redgrave & South Lopham Fens Ramsar site; • Waveney & Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC; • Redgrave & South Lopham Fens Ramsar site; • Dews Ponds SAC; • Benacre to Easton Bavents SAC and SPA; • Minsmere-Walberswick SAC, SPA and Ramsar site; • Sandlings SPA; • Alde-Ore Estuary SPA and Ramsar site; • Alde, Ore and Butley Estuaries SAC; • Orfordness- Shingle Street SAC; • Staverton Park and the Thicks, Wantisden SAC; • Deben Estuary SPA and Ramsar site; and • Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA and Ramsar site. <p>Mid Suffolk District Council is committed to the implementation of a series of measures to ensure that the Core Strategy policies will not have a significant effect on the European sites. These measures include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protecting the environment from unsafe or unhealthy pollutants (see Policy CS4); 2. Protecting the districts natural capital and applying an ecological network approach (see Policy CS4); 3. Protecting, managing and enhancing the network of designated sites and ecological networks (see Policy CS5); 4. Monitoring Programme. Reporting on this monitoring plan will be tied in with the annual monitoring programme described in Section 4 of the Core Strategy; and 5. Planned Mitigation Measures - if during the monitoring programme it is found that recreational pressure is increasing, this will trigger the requirement to consider whether additional mitigation is required. <p>None of the sites above fall within the district. The Core Strategy HRA screening report (see page 20) found that the policies in the Core Strategy, Core Strategy Focused Review and Stowmarket Area Action Plan (AAP) are unlikely to have significant effects on the European sites. This was due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The distance of the European Sites away from the district boundary; • The nature of the proposed policies themselves. <p>The HRA screening report concluded that the Core Strategy would not lead to significant adverse effects. The Mendlesham Neighbourhood Plan is a lower level plan than the Core Strategy and focuses, amongst other things, on shaping development, protecting,</p>
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**Neighbourhood Planning
Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination**

		maintaining and enhancing existing green space assets. The Neighbourhood Plan does not propose specific residential development sites, but instead provides further local criteria for developers to meet which is in general conformity with the District Council's Core Strategy. Any development proposal that would be likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, will be subject to assessment at the project application stage. It therefore follows that a full SEA is not deemed to be required for the Mendlesham Neighbourhood Plan.
5. Does the Neighbourhood Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	N	Not site specific, but provides guidance informing what developments that come forward during the plan period should address.
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Y	The Neighbourhood Plan is to be used by Mid Suffolk District Council in helping determine future planning applications. The neighbourhood plan however focuses on shaping how development comes forward.
7. Is the PP's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	N	
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	<p>The environmental designations have been identified further in the Mendlesham Baseline information which includes maps, distances and vulnerability (see the Appendix for summary). Whilst it is inevitable that the level of development coming forward in the neighbourhood plan area will have some impact on the environment, it is the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy and Core Strategy Focused Review themselves which provide the planning framework for the actual level of growth. A full SEA was undertaken on the Core Strategy as part of the Sustainability Appraisal and an SEA undertaken of the relevant changes in the Focused Review.</p> <p>The Mendlesham NP focuses on shaping how development comes forward and the proposed minimum growth distribution is contained within the District Council's Core Strategy Focused Review.</p>

Neighbourhood Planning Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

5. Screening Outcome

5.1 As a result of the assessment in Section 4, it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan that were not covered in the Sustainability Appraisals of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy and Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review. Any development proposal that would be likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, will be subject to assessment at the project application stage.

5.2 As such, the Mendlesham Neighbourhood Plan does not require a SEA to be undertaken. The outcome of this screening determination will however need to be reviewed by Natural England, Historic England and Environment Agency if significant changes are made to the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

6. Conclusion

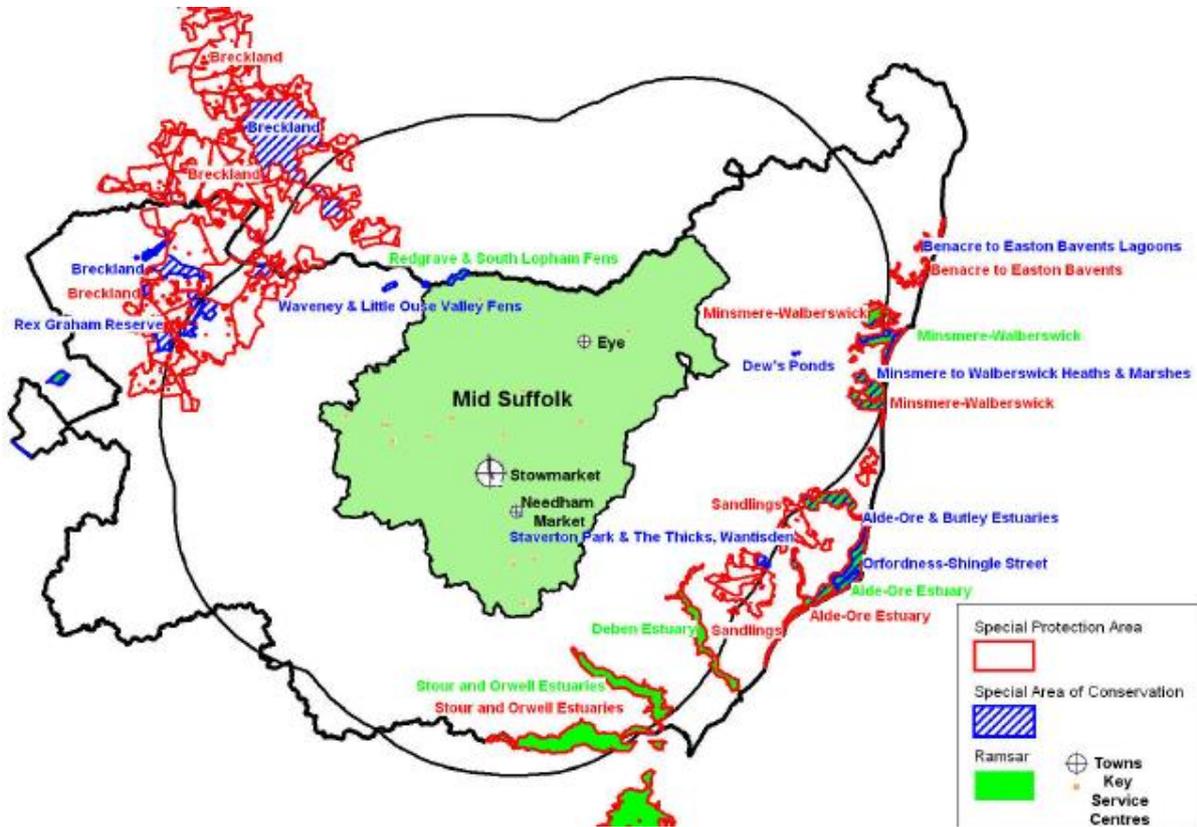
6.1 The Statutory Consultees were contacted and invited to comment upon the content of the screening opinion dated January 2016. The conclusion reached upon the basis of the SEA Screening Assessment set out in the Table above is that the Mendlesham Neighbourhood Development Plan will not have significant effects in relation to any of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations.

6.2 Should the Neighbourhood Plan policies and proposals change significantly at a later stage a review of this screening determination will be requested from the Statutory Consultees. The three statutory consultees will be involved and kept up-to-date with the plan's progress to alleviate any concerns.

Neighbourhood Planning Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

APPENDIX

STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS¹



Ramsar Sites

A Ramsar site is the land listed as a Wetland of International Importance under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention) 1973. The Stour and Orwell Estuaries Ramsar is located approximately 30km to the south of Mendlesham and includes extensive mud-flats, low cliffs, saltmarsh and small areas of vegetated shingle on the lower reaches. The Ramsar supports important numbers of breeding Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, while in winter they hold

¹ Designation relates to, or having the nature of, a statute (such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, or the National Parks and Countryside Act, 1949). The National Planning Policy Framework states for plan-making that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless: specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted. For example, those policies relating to sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives (see paragraph 119) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast or within a National Park (or the Broads Authority); designated heritage assets; and locations at risk of flooding or coastal erosion.

[See circular 05/2006](#)

Neighbourhood Planning Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

major concentrations of water birds, especially geese, ducks and waders. The geese feed and the waders roost in agricultural land beyond the designated area. The vulnerability of the Ramsar is affected by natural coastal processes exacerbated by fixed sea defences, port development and maintenance dredging.

The Minsmere-Walberswick Ramsar is located approximately 25km to the east of Mendlesham. It contains a complex mosaic of habitats, notably, areas of marsh with dykes, extensive reedbeds, mudflats, lagoons, shingle and driftline, woodland and areas of lowland heath. The site supports the largest continuous stand of reed in England and Wales and demonstrates the nationally rare transition in grazing marsh ditch plants from brackish to fresh water. The combination of habitats create an exceptional area of scientific interest supporting nationally scarce plants, British Red Data Book invertebrates and nationally important numbers of breeding and wintering birds.

The Deben Estuary Ramsar is located approximately 20km south-east of Mendlesham. This estuary is relatively narrow and sheltered. It has limited amounts of freshwater input and the intertidal areas are constrained by sea-walls. The site supports nationally and internationally important flora and fauna. This includes a population of the mollusc *Vertigo angustior*. Martlesham Creek is one of only about fourteen sites in Britain where this species survives.

The Alde-Ore Estuary Ramsar is located approximately 25km south-east of Mendlesham. It comprises the estuary complex of the rivers Alde, Butley and Ore, including Havergate Island and Orfordness. There are a variety of habitats including, intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh, vegetated shingle (including the second-largest and best-preserved area in Britain at Orfordness), saline lagoons and grazing marsh. The Orfordness/Shingle Street landform is unique within Britain in combining a shingle spit with a cusped foreland. The site supports nationally-scarce plants, British Red Data Book invertebrates, and notable assemblages of breeding and wintering wetland birds.

Redgrave and South Lopham Fens Ramsar is located approximately 20km north-west of Mendlesham. It is an extensive example of lowland base-rich valley, remarkable for its lack of fragmentation. The diversity of the site is due to the lateral and longitudinal zonation of the vegetation types characteristic of valley mires, such as dry birch woodland, scrub and carr, floristically-rich fen grassland, mixed fen, wet heath and areas of reed and saw sedge. The site supports many rare and scarce invertebrates, including a population of the fen raft spider *Dolomedes plantarius*.

Special Protection Areas

A Special Protection Area (SPA) is the land classified under Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

The Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA is located 30km to the south of Mendlesham. It contains an internationally important assemblage of birds. Qualifying species include; Avocet (breeding), Northern pintail *Anas acuta* (wintering), Dark-bellied Brent goose *Branta bernicla bernicla* (wintering), Red knot *Calidris canutus* (wintering), Black-tailed godwit (Icelandic) *Limosa limosa islandica* (wintering), Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola* (wintering), and Redshank *Tringa totanus* (wintering and passage). The vulnerability of the SPA is

Neighbourhood Planning Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

affected by pressure for increased port development and marine recreation in this area including tourism.

The Sandlings SPA is located 20km to the south-east of Mendlesham. Qualifying species include; Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Woodlark *Lullula arborea*.

The Alde-Ore Estuary SPA is located 25km to the south-east of Mendlesham. Qualifying species include; Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* and Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*.

The Minsmere-Walberswick SPA is located 25km to the east of Mendlesham. Qualifying species include; Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* and Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*.

The Benacre to Easton Bavents SPA is located 35km to the east of Mendlesham. Qualifying species include; Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* and Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*.

The Breckland SPA is located 40km to the west of Mendlesham. Qualifying species include; Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedipnemos* and Woodlark *Lullula arborea*.

Special Areas of Conservation

A Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is the land designated under Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora.

The Alde, Ore and Butley Estuaries is located approximately 25km to the south-east of Mendlesham and is an estuary made out of three rivers. It is the only bar-built estuary in the UK with a shingle bar. The estuary contains large areas of shallow water and is diverse and species-rich containing many lengths of vegetated or shingle habitat, saltmarsh, grassland and reed bed.

The Orfordness-Shingle Street SAC is located approximately 25km to the south-east of Mendlesham. Orfordness is an extensive shingle structure consisting of a foreland, a 15 km-long spit and a series of recurves running from north to south. It supports some of the largest and most natural sequences in the UK of shingle vegetation affected by salt spray. The southern end has a particularly fine series of undisturbed ridges, with zonation of communities determined by the ridge pattern. Pioneer communities with sea pea *Lathyrus japonicus* and false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland occur. Locally these are nutrient-enriched by the presence of a gull colony; elsewhere they support rich lichen communities. Drift-line vegetation occurs on the sheltered, western side of the spit, at the transition from shingle to saltmarsh, as well as on the exposed eastern coast. The drift-line community is widespread and comprises sea beet *Beta vulgaris*, *maritima* and orache *Atriplex*. The site also includes a series of percolation lagoons that have developed in the shingle bank adjacent to the shore at the mouth of the Ore estuary. The salinity of the lagoons is maintained by percolation through the shingle, although at high tides sea water can overtop the shingle bank. The fauna of these lagoons includes typical lagoon species, such as the cockle *Cerastoderma glaucum*, the ostracod *Cyprideis torosa* and the

Neighbourhood Planning Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

gastropods *Littorina saxatilis tenebrosa* and *Hydrobia ventrosa*. The nationally rare starlet sea anemone *Nematostella vectensis* is also found at the site.

The Staverton Park & The Thicks SAC is located approximately 20km to the south-east of Mendlesham. The site is representative of old oak *Quercus* spp. woods, and its ancient oaks have rich invertebrate and epiphytic lichen assemblages. Despite being in the most 'continental' part of southern Britain, the epiphytic lichen flora of this site includes rare and Atlantic species, such as *Haemotomma elatinum*, *Lecidea cinnabarina*, *Thelotrema lepadinum*, *Graphis elegans* and *Stenocybe septata*. Part of the site includes an area of old holly *Ilex aquifolium* trees that are probably the largest in Britain. The site has a very well-documented history and good conservation of woodland structure and function.

The Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths and Marshes SAC is located approximately 25km to the east of Mendlesham. Lowland dry heaths occupy an extensive area of this site on the east coast of England, which is at the extreme easterly range of heath development in the UK. The heathland is predominantly heather – western gorse (*Calluna vulgaris* – *Ulex gallii*) heath, usually more characteristic of western parts of the UK. This type is dominated by heather, western gorse and bell heather *Erica cinerea*. Shingle beach forms the coastline at Walberswick and Minsmere. It supports a variety of scarce shingle plants including sea pea *Lathyrus japonicus*, sea campion *Silene maritima* and small populations of sea kale *Crambe maritima*, grey hair-grass *Corynephorus canescens* and yellow horned-poppy *Glaucium flavum*. A well-developed beach strandline of mixed sand and shingle supports annual vegetation. Species include those typical of sandy shores, such as sea sandwort *Honckenya plectoides* and shingle plants such as sea beet *Beta vulgaris maritima*.

The Dews Pond SAC is located approximately 15km east of Mendlesham. It comprises a series of 12 ponds set in an area of formerly predominantly arable land. The ponds range from old field ponds created for agricultural purposes to some constructed in recent years specifically for wildlife. Some of the land has been converted from arable to grassland, with a variety of grassland types present. Other habitats include hedges and ditches. Great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* have been found in the majority of ponds on the site.

The Benacre to Easton Bavetns Lagoons SAC is located approximately 35km to the east of Mendlesham. It is a series of percolation lagoons on the east coast of England. The lagoons (the Denes, Benacre Broad, Covehithe Broad and Easton Broad) have formed behind shingle barriers and are a feature of a geomorphologically dynamic system. Sea water enters the lagoons by percolation through the barriers, or by overtopping them during storms and high spring tides. The lagoons show a wide range of salinities, from nearly fully saline in South Pool, the Denes, to extremely low salinity at Easton Broad. This range of salinity has resulted in a series of lagoonal vegetation types, including beds of narrow-leaved eelgrass *Zostera angustifolia* in fully saline or hypersaline conditions, beds of spiral tasselweed *Ruppia cirrhosa* in brackish water, and dense beds of common reed *Phragmites australis* in freshwater. The site supports a number of specialist lagoonal species.

The Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC is located approximately 20km to the west of Mendlesham. This site occurs in the East Anglian centre of distribution of calcareous fens and contains very extensive great fen-sedge *Cladium mariscus* beds, including managed examples, as well as stands in contact zones between small sedge mire and species-poor

Neighbourhood Planning Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

Cladium beds. The habitat type here occurs in a spring-fed valley fen. Purple moor-grass – meadow thistle (*Molinia caerulea* – *Cirsium dissectum*) fen-meadows are associated with the spring-fed valley fen systems. The *Molinia* meadows occur in conjunction with black bog-rush – blunt-flowered rush (*Schoenus nigricans* – *Juncus subnodulosus*) mire and calcareous fens with great fen-sedge. Where the fen-meadow is grazed it is more species-rich, with frequent southern marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*. A population of Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* occurs in a valley fen at Weston Fen.

The Breckland SAC is located 40km to the west of Mendlesham. This is a gently undulating plateau underlain by bedrock of Cretaceous Chalk, covered by thin deposits of sand and flint. The conditions during the last glaciation have given rise to the patterned ground features and ice depressions (pingos) that we see today and that are of high geological and biological importance. The continental climate, with low rainfall and free-draining soils, has led to the development of dry heath and grassland communities. Relatively lush river valleys provide a gentle contrast to the drier harsher surroundings. Occasional woods with alder *Alnus glutinosa* and willow *Salix* sp. the most dominant trees occur beside rivers and streams in the floodplains. These woods rely on high water levels and sometimes surface flooding as both river flooding or spring flows can be very important. The dry heaths of Breckland are of the *Calluna vulgaris* – *Festuca ovina* (heather – sheep's-fescue) community. The sand sedge-dominated *Carex arenaria* sub-community is typical of areas of blown sand – a very unusual feature of this location. The highly variable soils of Breckland, with underlying chalk being largely covered with wind-blown sands, have resulted in mosaics of heather-dominated heathland, acidic grassland and calcareous grassland that are unlike those of any other site. In many places there is a linear or patterned distribution of heath and grassland, arising from fossilised soil patterns that formed under peri-glacial conditions. Breckland is the most extensive surviving area of the rare *Festuca ovina* – *Hieracium pilosella* – *Thymus praecox* (sheep's-fescue – mouse-ear-hawkweed – wild thyme) grassland type. The grassland is rich in rare species typical of dry, winter-cold, continental areas, and approaches the features of grassland types in central Europe more than almost any other semi-natural dry grassland found in the UK. Wangford Warren and adjoining parts of RAF Lakenheath have one of the best-preserved systems of active inland sand dunes in the UK. The habitat type, which is in part characterised by the nationally rare grey hair-grass *Corynephorus canescens* occurring here at its only inland station, is associated with open conditions with active sand movement. The site shows the colonisation sequence from open sand to acidic grass-heath. The Breckland meres are examples of hollows within glacial outwash deposits and are fed by water from the underlying chalk aquifer. Natural fluctuations in groundwater tables mean that these lakes occasionally dry out. The flora is dominated by stonewort – pondweed *Characeae* – *Potamogetonaceae* associations. A number of the water bodies within the site support populations of amphibians, including great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*.

The Rex Graham Reserve SPA is located approximately 40km to the west of Mendlesham. It is a disused chalk pit and surrounding land most of which is developing dry calcareous grassland characterised by false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*. The site supports the largest population of military orchid *Orchis militaris* in the UK. The pit also contains a large number of bushes of mezereon *Daphne mezereon* which is also rare as a wild plant. Other species found on the site include twayblade *Listera ovata*, adder's tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, ploughman's spikenard *Inula conyza* and mullein *Verbascum thapsus*.

Neighbourhood Planning Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

Environmental Stewardship Schemes

Environmental Stewardship Schemes replaced Environmentally Sensitive Areas which were introduced in 1987 to offer incentives to encourage farmers to adopt agricultural practices which would safeguard and enhance parts of the country of particularly high landscape, wildlife or historic value. Land within the Mendlesham NP area is designated as an ESA. The ESA designation does not however have any planning status and cannot be used for decision-making purposes.

Designated Heritage Assets

Mendlesham contains a number of heritage assets. The National Heritage List for England ([the List](#)) records 45 entries in the parish, including one Grade 1 (the Church of St Mary), and one Grade 2* listed buildings.

In 1972 the historic village core was designated as a Conservation Area.

Neighbourhood Planning

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

NON-STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS²

County Wildlife Sites

County Wildlife Sites (CWS) play a key role in the conservation of Suffolk's biodiversity. Suffolk has over 900 County Wildlife Sites, amounting to 19,200 hectares and covering 5% of the county. County Wildlife Site designation is non-statutory, but it recognises the high value of a site for wildlife. Many sites are of county, and often regional or national, importance. They are often designated because they support characteristic or threatened species or habitats included in Local or National Biodiversity Action Plans. CWSs have been identified throughout Suffolk and range from small meadows, green lanes, dykes and hedges through to much larger areas of ancient woodlands, heathland, greens, commons and marsh. Outside of statutorily protected designations (such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local and National Nature Reserves), CWSs are one of the most important areas for wildlife in Suffolk. Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) monitors planning applications for any potential impact on County Wildlife Sites.

There are no CWSs within the parish of Mendlesham.

Historic Environment

The Suffolk County Historic Environment Record records nearly 200 entries in the parish, including many archaeological sites.

² Local designated sites (which include 'Local Wildlife Sites' and 'Local Geological Sites') make an important contribution to ecological networks and are overseen by Local Sites systems. These systems vary considerably in terms of size (both the administrative area they cover and the number of sites selected) and cover contrasting landscapes in coastal, rural and urban situations. Local Sites systems encompass both biodiversity and geological conservation. Natural England has published advice on the development and management of systems to identify locally designated sites. The NPPF states that local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged.

Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks

Neighbourhood Planning Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

Consultation Responses

The responses received from the consultation bodies concurred with the District Council's Screening Opinion.

Copies of the replies received from the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England are reproduced overleaf.

Email from Environment Agency dated 18 February 2016

Dear Nick

Further to our discussion on Tuesday, I have reviewed the SEA screening opinion report for the Mendlesham Neighbourhood Plan.

I can confirm we agree with the assessment in section 4 of the report and the conclusion set out in section 5 of the report. We do not consider there to be a requirement to conduct a Strategic Environmental Assessment in this case.

Kind regards

Jo

Jo Firth

Sustainable Places Team Leader
Anglian Eastern Area

☎ 0203 025 8411 (please note my new number)

✉ jo.firth@environment-agency.gov.uk

✉ Icen House, Cobham Road, Ipswich, Suffolk. IP3 9JD



Awarded to Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk Area



Historic England

N J Ward
Corporate Manager – Community Planning
Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils

Our ref:
Your ref:
Date: 07 March 2016

By e-mail to: nick.ward@babberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Direct Dial: 01223 582717

Dear Mr Ward

Ref: Mendlesham Neighbourhood Development Plan, SEA Screening Opinion

Thank you for your e-mail dated 01 February 2016 and the attached Screening Report for the above plan. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?" In respect to our area of concern, cultural heritage. Our comments are based on the information supplied with the Screening Report as well as Draft 2.2 of the Mendlesham Neighbourhood Plan (dated October 2015). Ultimately, it will be for Mid-Suffolk District Council to make the final decision in terms of whether SEA is required.

The Screening Report indicates that the Council considers that the Neighbourhood Plan will not result in any significant environmental effects. It would appear that the Neighbourhood Plan focuses on shaping how development comes forward and will respond to policies and proposals in the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy / Local Plan rather than allocating land itself. We note that the draft neighbourhood plan allows for a minimum of 75 new homes but does not identify specific locations. In the absence of specific locations, it is difficult to assess the precise environmental effect of this amount of housing, although it would seem likely that there would be some cumulative effect. We note the report's assertion that the Sustainability Appraisal process for the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy / Local Plan contains environmental assessment relevant to this neighbourhood plan, and we hope that sufficient assessment will be carried out at the appropriate point.

Notwithstanding the above, 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 Council that the preparation of an SEA is not required for this plan.

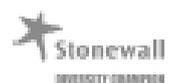


Historic England, Brooklands, 24 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 8BU

Telephone 01223 58 2749 HistoricEngland.org.uk

Please note that Historic England operates an access to information policy.

Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available.



The views of other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for an SEA is made. I would be pleased if you can send a copy of the determination as required by Regulation 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 e-mail 01 February 2016 as well as Draft 2.2 of the Neighbourhood Plan. 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 in the Neighbourhood Plan where we consider that, despite the absence of SA/SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the historic environment.

If you have any queries regarding this letter, please let me know.

Yours sincerely



David Grech

Historic Places Adviser

e-mail: david.grech@HistoricEngland.org.uk



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Date: 04 March 2016
Our ref: 177872



Mr N J Ward

Corporate Manager – Community Planning, Heritage and Design
Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils

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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Mr Ward

**THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF PLANS AND PROGRAMMES REGULATIONS 2004,
REGULATION 9 SCREENING DETERMINATION – MENDLESHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD
DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 01 February 2016 which was received by Natural England the same day.

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.

Where Neighbourhood Plans could have significant environmental effects, they may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. 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 National Planning Practice Guidance at:

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal/sustainability-appraisal-requirements-for-neighbourhood-plans/>

As indicated in the material supplied with the consultation, the Plan does not allocate specific sites for development but instead focuses on shaping it; on this basis, and considering the environmental interests within our remit including designated sites, Natural England agrees with the Council's conclusion that no SEA will be required.

This concludes Natural England's advice which I hope you will find helpful.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Jack Haynes using the details given below. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation, 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 sincerely

Jack Haynes

Land Use Operations Norfolk & Suffolk Team

Email: jack.haynes@naturalengland.org.uk

Tel: 0300 060 1498