

**Chiseldon Neighbourhood Plan
Strategic Environmental Assessment and
Habitats Regulations Assessment
Screening Opinion**

**Prepared by Swindon Borough Council
on behalf of Chiseldon Parish Council
July 2023**

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1. Introduction

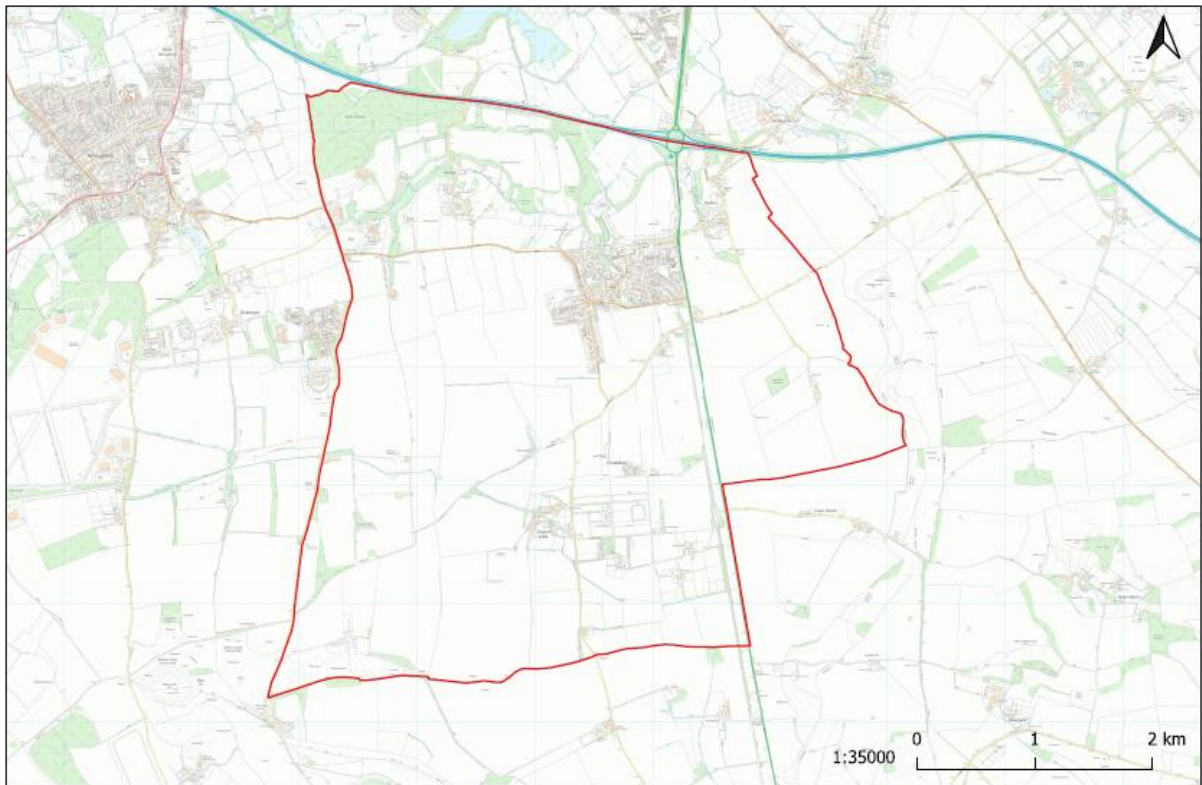
- 1.1 This screening report is designed to determine whether or not the contents of the Chiseldon Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter known as 'CNP') requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plan and Programmes Regulations 2004. The SEA Directive is a European Union requirement that seeks to provide a high level of protection of the environment and to integrate environmental considerations into the preparation and adoptions of certain plan and programmes. The Directive seeks to promote sustainable development by ensuring that a SEA is undertaken where it is identified a plan may have a significant effect on the environment.
- 1.2 The UK left the EU on 31st January 2020. Under the UK-EU withdrawal agreement, a transition period ended on 31st December 2020, during which time all EU law continued to apply to the UK. During the transition period the UK needed to continue following domestic law that implements EU law, or directly applicable EU law that is given effect through the EUWA 2018.
- 1.3 Beyond the transition period, the SEA Regulations, which previously implemented the requirements of the SEA Directive in England, will continue to apply as before unless and until new legislation is introduced.
- 1.4 The Planning Practice Guidance states 'whether a neighbourhood plan proposal requires a strategic environmental assessment, and (if so) the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed. A strategic environmental assessment may be required, for example, where:
 - A neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
 - The neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural heritage assets that may be affected by 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.
- 1.5 The need for an SEA will be based on whether is determined that the contents of the CNP has the potential for environmental harm, the screening assessment does not determine the extent if any of this potential. It is for the SEA, if required to provide this detail.
- 1.4 This report will also screen to determine whether or not the CNP requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Article 6 (3) of the EU Habitats Directive and with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). A HRA is required when it is deemed that likely negative significant effects may occur on protected European Sites (Nature 2000 sites) as a result of the implementation of a plan/project. The UK left the EU on 31

January 2020 under the terms set out in the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 (“the Withdrawal Act”). This established a transition period, which ended on 31 December 2020. The Withdrawal Act (WA) retained the body of existing EU-derived law within our domestic law, meaning that legislation relating to nature conservation (section 4 of the WA) continued to apply to and in the UK post-Brexit. The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act received Royal Assent on 29th June 2023 and makes significant changes to the domestic body of ‘retained EU Law’. Section 2(1) of the REUL Act will repeal and thereby remove the effect of section 4 of the WA from the end of 2023. Secondary legislation to preserve the direct effect provisions of the Habitats Directive has not yet been announced by the Government. The Environment Act 2021 acts as the UK’s new framework for environmental protection.

2. Chiseldon Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.1 The Parish of Chiseldon is located in the south of Swindon Borough, and is predominantly rural in character. The parish is bounded by the M4 to the north, and is dissected north to south on the east by the A346 (Marlborough Road). The parish covers the village of Chiseldon, and the hamlets of Badbury, Burderop Park, Hodson, Draycot Foliat. The parish is entirely located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which represents the most significant environmental constraint.
- 2.2 The Chiseldon Neighbourhood Area was designated on the 31 January 2022. The Neighbourhood Plan Area covers the Parish as set out in Figure 1. Chiseldon Parish Council, as the qualifying body for the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, has delegated the responsibility for the Plan's production to the Chiseldon Neighbourhood Plan steering group, made up of Parish Councillors and community volunteers.
- 2.3 A draft of the pre-Regulation 14 Neighbourhood Plan has been supplied to the Council for screening purposes. The plan period is to 2037 and is prepared under the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan for Swindon Borough, which runs to 2026. A new Local Plan for the borough to 2042 is at an early stage of preparation.
- 2.4 The vision, as identified by the community is:
- In 2037, Chiseldon will be a place where people want to live, play and relax. It will be a healthy and thriving village with a diversity of age ranges and all facilities will be up to date. Residents will enjoy a healthy environment and new houses will cater to all sectors of the community. Local job opportunities and businesses will continue to thrive.*
- 2.5 The CNP does not allocate sites for development, rather it sets a local development management policy framework which seeks to manage any subsequent applications which may come forward in accordance with the vision stated above.
- 2.6 The Neighbourhood Plan policy topic areas are set out below:
- Policy 1: Housing Mix
 - Policy 2: Sustainable Transport
 - Policy 3: Biodiversity net gain and local nature recovery
 - Policy 4: Local Green Spaces
 - Policy 5: Design
 - Policy 6: Non-designated Heritage Assets
 - Policy 7: Play equipment and play areas
 - Policy 8: Community Facilities

Figure 1 – Chiseldon Neighbourhood Plan Area



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Neighbourhood Planning Area Application

Sensitive Areas and Potential Environmental Constraints.

Sensitive areas identified through the EIA Regulations, comprising:

Natura 2000 sites	None within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Within 15km: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pewsey Downs SAC • River Lambourn SAC • Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC • North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC There are no SPAs or Ramsar sites within 15km.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	Burderop Woods SSSI located within the plan area.
National Parks	None

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	The Neighbourhood Area is entirely within the North Wessex Downs AONB.
World Heritage Sites	None
Scheduled monuments	A series of Scheduled Monuments are located at the south western boundary of the Neighbourhood Area: 'Field system and earthwork enclosure on Burderop Down' 1016383 Disc barrow on Burderop Down, 1km north-east of Upper Herdswick Farm 1010457 Bowl barrow 1km west of Sheppard's Farm Dairy 1012439

Potential Environmental Constraints

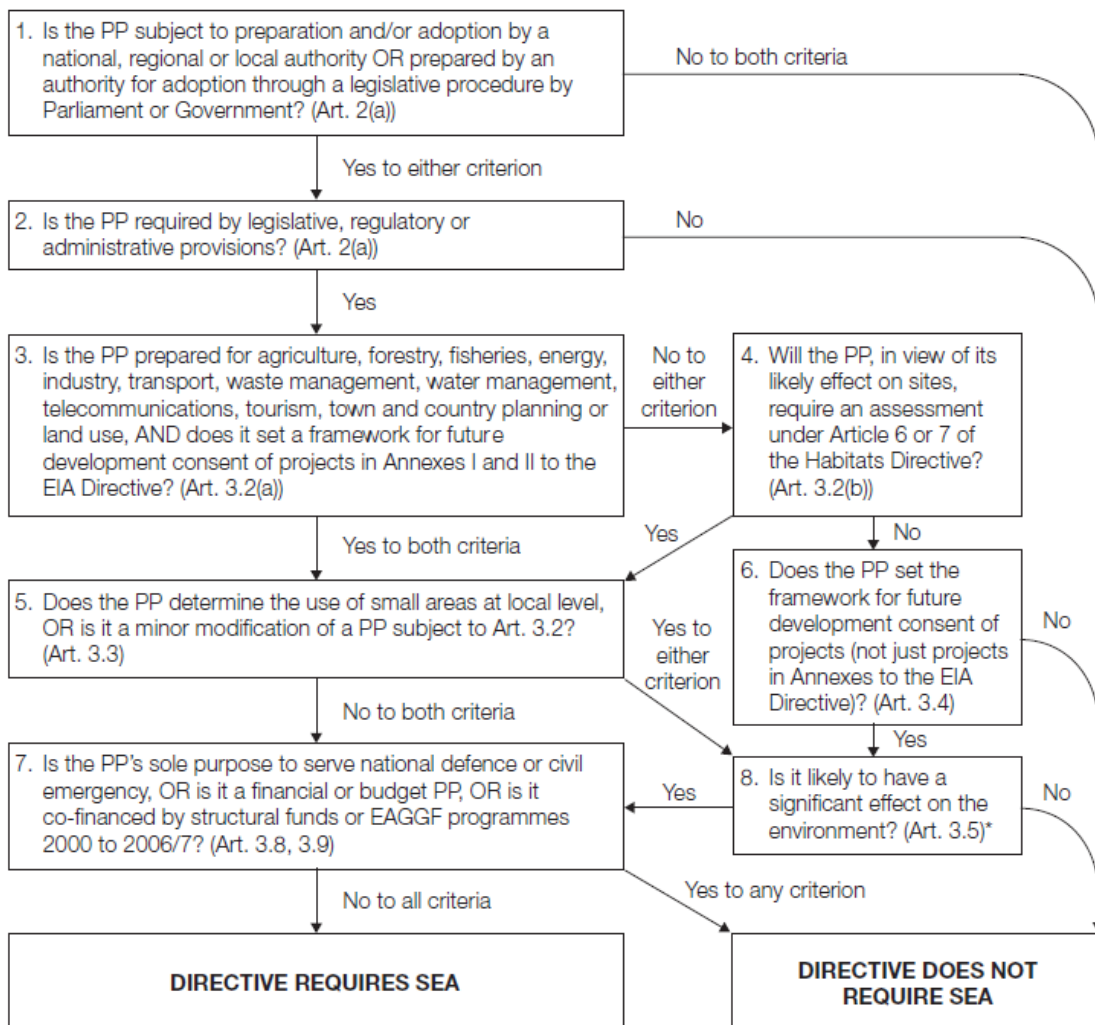
National Nature Reserve	No
Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat	No
Nationally listed building	Yes
Buildings at Risk	No
Conservation Area	Chiseldon, Badbury and Hodson
Flood Zone 3a and 3 b	FZ 3 along the River Og
Air Quality Management Area	No
BMV	Largely ALC 2
Source Protection Zones	No

3. SEA Screening Process

- 3.1 The screening report seeks to determine whether or not a SEA is required for the Chiseldon Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with European and National legislation.
- 3.2 The screening opinion will be undertaken in two parts: the first part will assess whether the plan requires SEA (as per the flow chart, shown in figure 1); the second part of the assessment will consider whether the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, using the criteria drawn from Schedule 1 of the EU SEA Directive and the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programme Regulations 2004.
- 3.3 Figure 1 below, from the government guidance 'A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' sets out the approach to be taken in determining whether a SEA is required.

Figure 1: Application Criteria of the SEA Directive

This diagram is intended as a guide to the criteria for application of the Directive to plans and programmes (PPs). It has no legal status.



*The Directive requires Member States to determine whether plans or programmes in this category are likely to have significant environmental effects. These determinations may be made on a case by case basis and/or by specifying types of plan or programme.

4. Screening Assessment

4.1 Assessment 1: Establishing the Need for SEA, based on the flow chart shown in Figure 1.

Table 1: Assessment 1

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority, or prepared by authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? [Art. 2(a)]	Y	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by Chiseldon Parish Council (as the 'qualifying body') under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. Once the Plan has been prepared, and subject to examination and referendum, it will be 'made' by Swindon Borough Council as the Local Planning Authority. The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is subject to the following regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 • The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2016 • The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? [Art. 2 (a)]	Y	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is not a requirement and is optional under the provision of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. However, once 'made' it forms part of the statutory Development Plan for the Borough and will be used when making decisions on planning applications.</p>
3. Is the NP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste 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?	Y	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is prepared to set out a framework for town and country planning and sets a framework for future development consent in the neighbourhood area, within which projects in Annexes I and II of the EIA Directive may be brought forward. However there are no projects under Annex 1 and Annex 2 that are proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>

[Article 3,2(a)]		
4. Will the NP, 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 Chiseldon NP is unlikely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. See Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion in Appendix 2
5. Does the NP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a NP subject Art 3.2 [Art 3.3]	Y	The Neighbourhood Plan is not expected to identify small sites at a local level. The NP will however be used to determine the use of sites/small areas at a local level
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	Once 'made', the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the Development Plan for the Borough and will be used when making decisions on planning applications.
7. Is the NP's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it financial or budget PP, Or is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGDD programmes 200 to 2006/7? [Art 3.8, 3.9]	N	Not Applicable
8. It is likely to have a significant effect on the environment? [Art 3.5]	N	See Assessment 2: Likely significant effects on the environment

4.2 Assessment 2: Likely Significant Effects on the Environment

4.3 Assessment 2 is undertaken in accordance with the criteria for determining likely significance of effects on the environment. Figure 2 below shows the criteria as set out in Article 3.5 of the SEA Directive.

Figure 2: Criteria for determining likely significance of effects on the environment

1. The characteristics of neighbourhood plans, having regard, in particular, to
 - The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions by allocation resources,
 - The degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
 - The relevance of the plan for integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
 - Environmental problems relevant to the plan,
 - The relevance of the plan for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or waste 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 of 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 protections status.

4.4 Approach to allocations

4.5 The CNP does not propose to allocate any sites for development. The draft CNP sets out that the plan is being prepared under the framework of the adopted Local Plan 2026. Within this framework, the Local Plan does not allocate Chiseldon Parish with any site allocations. Policy SD2 sets out that of the identified housing requirement, the 'Other Villages' in the Borough (identified as Broad Blunsdon, Chiseldon,

Wanborough and Bishopstone) to receive around 100 units in total over the plan period. 31 dwellings have been delivered in Chiseldon between the start of the plan period and 2022. Therefore the Parish is considered to have already delivered its policy requirement under the Local Plan 2026.

- 4.6 The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in a context where the Borough (at the time of screening) cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply and is greater than 5 years old, and therefore Paragraph 14 of the NPPF is engaged. Planning applications therefore may be brought forward within the parish and an assessment of planning balance will be made by the decision maker. The Neighbourhood Plan policies, if adopted, would form part of that planning consideration.
- 4.7 The policies set out in the draft CNP and provided to the Council and have been used to undertake the second part of the screening assessment. If the conclusion of the screening exercise is that an SEA is not required, any major changes to the existing policies or introduction of new policies should be subject to a further screening assessment.
- 4.8 Table 2 outlines the results of the second part of the screening assessment based upon the criteria detailed in figure 2.

Table 2: Assessment 2

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects on the Environment	Is the CNP Likely to have significant environmental effect?	Justification for Assessment
1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to -		
a) The degree to which the Plan 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 CNP sets a local policy framework for development proposals but does not specify particular locations for development. The CNP will sit within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework, the strategic policies of the Local Plan 2026. It supports the implementation of policies in the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026, which has already been subject to SEA.
b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a	No	The CNP must be in general conformity with the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The CNP supports the implementation of higher tier

<p>hierarchy.</p>		<p>policies, alongside local policies at the Neighbourhood Area level. Therefore, it is not considered to have significant influence on other plans or programmes or their effect on the environment.</p> <p>The new Local Plan is currently emerging, and is at an early stage in it's preparation. In line with Planning Practice Guidance, the local planning authority should work with the qualifying body so that complementary neighbourhood and local plan policies are produced. It is important to minimise any conflicts between policies in the neighbourhood plan and those in the emerging local plan. However, it is anticipated that the CNP, if adopted, would be in place prior to the adoption of the new Local Plan. Section 38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to become part of the development plan.</p> <p>It does not influence other plans.</p>
<p>c) The relevance of the plan for integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The CNP contributes, as required, to the achievement of sustainable development at the Neighbourhood Area Level. The policy framework set out in the CNP is planned to have a positive impact on the local environmental assets and places valued by local people. The likelihood of significant effects on the environment is, therefore, minimised. The CNP does not allocate sites for development but promotes sustainable development through policies within which development can be brought forward.</p>
<p>d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The location of the neighbourhood plan area is entirely within the AONB however the plan does not allocate</p>

		<p>development</p> <p>Open spaces of local wildlife conservation importance, which are likely to be protected by the policies in the plan.</p> <p>The CNP sets a local policy framework for development proposals but does not specify particular locations for development. It is therefore considered that the policy framework will have a minimal environmental impact on the Neighbourhood Area.</p>
e) The relevance of the plan for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or waste protection).	No	The CNP has to be in general conformity with the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026. The Local Plan has to have regard to European Community legislation on the environment and therefore this legislation will not be relevant for the Neighbourhood Plan.
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to -		
i. The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	No	Although no specific developments are proposed within the CNP some limited development is probable during the duration of the Plan, so an element of environmental change will take place. However, the policy framework, seeks to ensure any future development is in keeping with the character of the village, protects the rural environment and is sustainable in design.
ii. The cumulative nature of the effects.	No	The CNP policy framework seeks to protect the environmental assets of the parish which cumulatively are expected to have a neutral to positive effect on environmental assets
iii. The trans-boundary nature of the effects.	No	The CNP policy framework seeks to the effects of the Plan are small in nature and unlikely to have transboundary impacts to have a significant effect on

		neighbouring areas. Policies around Nature Recovery Network are likely to support a positive effect on transboundary matters regarding ecological networks.
iv. The risk to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	No	No risks to human health or the environment as a result of the policies proposed have been identified.
v. The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	No	The CNP is only concerned with development within the designated Neighbourhood Area, the potential for environmental impacts are likely to be limited and minimal. The geographical area covers xx and the size of the current population is xxx
vi. The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Special natural characteristic 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. 	No	In relation to the Natural Environment, the Neighbourhood Plan Area is located entirely within the North Wessex Downs AONB. The EIA Regulations identifies AONBs as 'sensitive areas' and therefore have highest value. Burderop Wood SSSI is located in the north west of the parish. In relation to the Historic and Cultural Heritage of the area, there are a number of listed buildings, three Conservation Areas (Hodson, Chiseldon, and Badbury) each supported by a Conservation Area Appraisal. The CNP is unlikely to adversely affect the value and vulnerability of the area in relation to its natural or cultural heritage, as it does not allocate any sites for development. It is likely to provide greater support to enhance the natural and cultural assets of the area.

4.9 Conclusion

4.10 On the basis of the SEA screening assessment as set out in Tables 1 and 2 above, it is concluded that the CNP will not have significant effects in relation to any of the criteria set out in schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations, and therefore, does not require an SEA.

5. Habitats Regulations Assessment

5.1 The Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) refers to the assessment required for any plan or project to assess the potential implications for European wildlife sites. Therefore, the HRA, looks at whether the implementation of the plan or project would harm the habitats or species for which European wildlife sites are designated. European wildlife sites are:

- Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)

5.2 In addition to SPA and SAC sites, Ramsar sites are designated under the Ramsar Convention (Iran 1971 as amended by the Paris Protocol 1992). Although they are not covered by the Habitats regulations, as a matter of Government policy, Ramsar sites should be treated in the same way as European wildlife sites. The sites are collectively known as internationally designated wildlife sites.

5.3 This Screening Assessment relates to a Neighbourhood Development Plan that will be in general conformity with the strategic policies within the development plan (the higher-level plan for town and country planning and land use). This Screening Assessment uses the Habitats Regulations Assessment of Swindon Borough Council Local Plan 2026 as its basis for assessment. It also draws on the Habitats Regulation Assessment screening undertaken to support the Local Plan Review, which represents a recent screening exercise. From this, the Local Authority will determine whether the Chinnor Neighbourhood Development Plan Review II is likely to result in significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and policies and, therefore, whether an 'Appropriate Assessment' is required.

5.3 The legislation sets out a process to assess the potential implications of a plan on internationally designated sites. The first stage of the process is a 'screening' exercise where the details of nearby internationally designated wildlife sites are assessed to see if there is the potential for the implementation of the Plan to have an impact on the site.

5.4 The screening assessment looks at the potential impact of the Plan on sites within 15km of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

- Pewsey Downs SAC
- River Lambourn SAC
- Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC
- North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC

There are no SPAs or Ramsar sites within 15km.

5.5 The Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 was subject to HRA during its production. This assessment looked at internationally designated sites within 15km of the Borough boundary. The HRA addendum report concluded: *'The policies, [in The Swindon Local Plan] were not likely to have adverse effects on the integrity of European sites, provided that the avoidance and mitigation measures recommended within the HRA Report were incorporated into the Local Plan'*. The HRA addendum goes on to state these recommendations were incorporated into the Submission Local Plan.

5.6 Scoping update

5.7 Since the HRA of the Local Plan 2026 was concluded, further HRA Scoping, Screening and Appropriate Assessment was been undertaken to support the Local Plan Review 2036 (December 2019). This provides updated information relevant to protected sites. The Council will be commissioning a new HRA scoping in 2023/2024 to support the production of the new Local Plan. The outputs from the updates are not yet available. Consideration of matters identified through the Local Plan HRA process since the adoption of the Local Plan 2026 are covered below:

North Meadow SAC

5.8 The HRA report recognised two main areas of concern relating to the North Meadow Clattinger Farm SAC: Water Resources and Quality; and Atmospheric Pollution.

5.9 The HRA report stated: *'At North Meadow Clattinger Farm SAC, the river water levels are important in order to maintain ground water conditions and vegetation thus it was identified that impacts on hydrology from increased levels of abstraction have the potential for likely significant effects. However, the Environment Agency assessment of the site considered the site to be of a favourable condition and indicated the level of development proposed within the Plan period would not have an adverse effect on the water levels that support the sites integrity'*.

5.10 With regard to atmospheric (air) pollution the HRA Report stated *'The assessment concluded that air pollution in particular NO_x gases are a key concern if a road carrying a significant proportion of new traffic runs within 200 metres of the North Meadow Clattinger Farm SAC. The extension to the north and west of Swindon could increase traffic on the A419 however, the current conditions assessments for the site indicated that air pollution is not having an adverse effect on the site'*.

5.11 Since the adoption of the Local Plan 2026, Natural England have advised the Council that recreational pressures from visitors to the North Meadow site have increased and are now causing considerable damage to the wildlife value of the SAC. Work has been undertaken in 2022 to establish where visitors to the site are originating from. This has resulted in a 'Zone of Influence' of 9.4km from the North Meadow SAC, within which residential or holiday accommodation would be screened in for an appropriate assessment. Exceptions are listed should the plan or programme trigger the requirement of an EIA (based on Annex 1 or 2 of the SEA directive).

- 5.12 The neighbourhood plan area is beyond the 9.4km Zone of Influence and the neighbourhood plan does not proposed any triggering development therefore the neighbourhood Plan is screened out.
- 5.13 The CNP has to be in general conformity with the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026, the CNP does not allocate sites, rather sets a local policy framework which seeks to ensure any development is in keeping with the rural character of the village. Therefore, the CNP does not allocate development beyond that identified in the Local Plan.
- 5.14 The outcomes from the Swindon Local Plan's HRA Report conclude that the CNP does not require an additional HRA assessment.

River Lambourn SAC

- 5.15 The River Lambourn SAC is currently subject to Nutrient Neutrality requirements. The Neighbourhood Plan area is not within the identified nutrient neutrality catchment for the River Lambourn SAC, and therefore can be screened out.

5.16 Conclusion

- 5.17 Policies would not result directly in development, and many instead set out criteria relating to development proposed under other policies which have been subject to HRA screening separately. As a result, there are no likely significant affects identified.

6. Conclusions

SEA

- 1.1 On the basis of the SEA screening Assessment set out in Tables 1 and 2 above, it is concluded that the CNP will not have significant effects in relation to any of the criteria set out in schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations, and therefore does not require a SEA.

HRA

- 1.2 It is identified there are internationally designated site within 15km of the Neighbourhood Plan Area, however the plan does not allocate sites and is in general conformity with the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026, the CNP will not require a HRA.

