1.0 Introduction

1.1 Under "The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004"¹ (the SEA Regulations), Councils must, where appropriate, carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of land-use and spatial plans.

1.2 The first part of the SEA process is to screen the relevant plan or programme to test whether a SEA is required. The Council has a duty to consult with specified environmental organisations (Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency) when determining the need for SEA.

1.3 This report constitutes the determination statement as to the need for a full SEA under Regulation 9(3) of the SEA Regulations. The report sets out the SEA screening process of the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement SPD along with Wokingham Borough Council’s reasoning behind its determination that a SEA is not required. The Council consulted on its provisional view that a SEA was not required and the responses received accepted this view as detailed in section 5.

2.0 Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement

2.1 Arborfield & Newland Parish Council has prepared a Village Design Statement (VDS) which has been submitted to the Borough Council for eventual adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Village Design Statement will amplify the policies within Wokingham Borough Council’s Adopted Core Strategy, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, and Borough Design Guide with respect to the parish of Arborfield & Newland. The VDS does not allocate land or contain policies that should be subject to independent examinations. Instead it is an analysis of the area’s character and local distinctiveness that provides practical guidance and support to those involved in the decision making process.

2.2 The Core Strategy (Policy CP1 Sustainable Development and CP3 General Principles for Development) states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment, which includes high quality design. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) further defines the need for high quality design (mainly Policy CC01 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development but also many other policies in particular those regarding residential uses, landscape and nature conservation, and heritage). These policies are in line with Core Planning Principles in the National Planning Policy Framework to

Determination Statement that a SEA is not required for the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement SPD

always seek to secure high quality design and take account of the different roles and character of different areas. Section 7 in the NPPF elaborates on this further, requiring good design as a key aspect of sustainable development.

2.3 The adopted Borough Design Guide SPD provides more detailed advice on how adopted policies in the Core Strategy and MDD which aim to enhance the quality of development and make sure proposals are of the highest quality of design will be applied. That means inclusive, safe, harmonious, welcoming, sustainable places that are well-related to their surroundings. The Borough Design Guide is an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

2.4 Village Design Statements (VDS) are prepared by local communities with support of Parish Councils and provide a detailed description of the character of a village, in accordance with Countryside Agency guidelines. Wokingham Borough Council currently has 11 VDS, which are part of the adopted Borough Design Guide SPD.

2.5 The Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement has been presented for adoption by Wokingham Borough Council as a standalone SPD, which necessitates undergoing scoping for a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

3.0 Strategic Environmental Assessment
3.1 Under the SEA Regulations, local authorities must, where appropriate, carry out a SEA of land-use and spatial plans.

3.2 Regulation 5 (2) of the Regulations describes that an environmental assessment should be undertaken for a plan or programme which -
(a) is prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, and

3.3 The Village Design Statement falls under criterion (a) of Regulation 5(2), being a plan prepared for town and country planning or land use. However, for a plan or programme to be deemed relevant under SEA Regulation 5(2) it must also be consistent with sub-paragraph (b).

3.4 In respect of sub-paragraph (b) the Village Design Statement will provide guidance that supplements existing policies within the Adopted Core Strategy and the MDD and adopted guidance within the Borough Design Guide SPD, providing further guidance on the design of new development in Arborfield and Newland Parish. Furthermore, the
Village Design Statement does not allocate land or contain policies that should be subject to independent examinations. Instead it is an analysis of the area’s character and local distinctiveness that provides practical guidance and support to those involved in the decision making process. Therefore it is not considered that the VDS will require an assessment under the Habitats Directive. It is recognised that all applications for development in the area covered by the VDS would need to be assessed for whether they require an assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. Where a proposed development was considered to generate likely significant effects upon the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area, these would need to be addressed before the authority could apply the guidance in the VDS.

3.6 Further to the above, Regulation 5(6) of the SEA Regulations indicates that an environmental assessment need not be carried out – (a) for a plan or programme of the description set out in paragraph (2) or (3) which determines the use of a small area at local level; or (b) for a minor modification to a plan or programme of the description set out in either of those paragraphs, unless it has been determined under regulation 9(1) that the plan, programme or modification, as the case may be, is likely to have significant environmental effects, or it is the subject of a direction under Regulation 10(3).

3.6 Since the SPD has to conform to the approach of the Core Strategy, and the very limited amplification it provides, it is therefore considered to fall under criterion (b) of Regulation 5(6). It is only therefore if it is considered ‘likely’ that the SPD will have significant environmental effects that a full SEA is required.

3.7 The regulations advise that the likelihood of any significant environmental effects should be determined by a screening process, which should use a specified set of criteria (set out in Schedule 1 to the

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2 Pursuant to Regulation 13(8) of The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004
Determination Statement that a SEA is not required for the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement SPD

Regulations). The results of this process must be summarised in an SEA screening statement, which must be publicly available.

4.0 **SEA Screening of the Arborfield & Newland VDS SPD**

4.1 The screening process set out in Regulation 9 of and Schedule 1 to the SEA Regulations includes two sets of characteristics for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment as follows:
- The characteristics of the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement; and
- The characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected.

4.2 Under each characteristic are a number of criteria with which to assess the SPD against. These criteria are individually assessed for the SPD below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Likely Significant effect?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to—</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(a) 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;</td>
<td>The Arborfield &amp; Newland Village Design Statement (VDS) will provide more detailed advice on how adopted policies in the Council’s adopted Core Strategy together with policies in the Council’s adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) and the Council’s adopted Borough Design Guide (BDG) will be applied, providing further guidance through which to shape future development, reinforce local distinctiveness and provide a framework for future physical changes in the area. The SPD therefore provides guidance which supplements existing policy rather than setting a framework in itself.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;</td>
<td>The Arborfield &amp; Newland VDS SPD will provide guidance that supplements policies within the adopted Core Strategy and MDD, and sits at the lowest tier of the Local Development Framework.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;</td>
<td>The Arborfield &amp; Newland VDS SPD will promote sustainable development by seeking to ensure the highest standard of design and to recognise the unique natural and built characteristics of the area. It will not however provide environmental policy in its own right so does not have a significant effect on environmental considerations.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and</td>
<td>The Arborfield &amp; Newland VDS SPD is primarily concerned with enabling the local community to improve its natural and built environment and is not being prepared in order to tackle a particular environmental problem.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes</td>
<td>The Arborfield &amp; Newland VDS SPD is not relevant to the implementation of EC legislation on the environment.</td>
<td>No</td>
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</table>
Determination Statement that a SEA is not required for the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement SPD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Likely Significant effect?</th>
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<tr>
<td>linked to waste management or water protection).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;</td>
<td>The Arborfield &amp; Newland Village Design Statement SPD is a material consideration in the decision making process. It is to be used by residents and/or their agents/architects when preparing planning applications and by planning officers in determining applications. The SPD is unlikely to have any adverse effects as it is intended to make incremental but cumulative improvements to the area. In addition, since the SPD does not relate to specific sites within the borough, it is extremely unlikely that its implementation will generate significant environmental effects. This is because any site where a planning application is submitted to which the SPD is then applied will only be acceptable to the authority where environmental effects do not arise.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;</td>
<td>As noted above, the SPD would not in itself result in new activities with any significant environmental effects. Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that any cumulative impacts will arise. Where they are likely to arise, the Council through determining planning applications will ensure such issues are appropriately considered and addressed.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) the transboundary nature of the effects;</td>
<td>As noted above, the SPD would not in itself result in new activities with any significant environmental effects. Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that any transboundary impacts will arise. Where they are likely to arise, the Council through determining planning applications will ensure such issues are appropriately considered and addressed.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);</td>
<td>There are no significant or likely risks to human health or the environment from a village design statement.</td>
<td>No</td>
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### Determination Statement that a SEA is not required for the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement SPD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Details</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);</td>
<td>The SPD will not change the focus of the policy approach of the Core Strategy and is therefore not considered to have any significant impacts in this regard.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to—</td>
<td>Since the SPD amplifies the approach of the Core Strategy, it is not considered to significantly affect any of these matters directly. Where applications are submitted which could affect these matters, the Council through determining planning applications will ensure such issues are appropriately considered and addressed.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- i. special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- ii. exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- iii. intensive land-use; and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national,</td>
<td>The only areas of recognised national importance for environmental matters in the Borough are the designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest. In addition, the southern part of the borough lies within areas where development could adversely affect the SPA designated pursuant to the Birds Directive. Where applications are submitted which could affect these sites, the Council through determining planning applications will ensure such issues are appropriately considered and addressed.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[European] Community or international protection status.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Determination Statement that a SEA is not required for the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement SPD

5.0 Consultation with Statutory Bodies
5.1 The Council has a duty to consult with specified environmental organisations (Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency) when determining the need for SEA and, in situations where an SEA is not deemed to be required, it also has a duty to prepare a statement of its reasons for this determination. An SEA Screening Statement was sent to the following organisations:
   • The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage);
   • Natural England; and
   • The Environment Agency.

5.2 This notification was sent by the Council on 17th September 20143 with a request for any comments on the Draft SEA Determination Statement to be returned by 22nd October 2014. The Council on the same day made available a copy of its reasoning for why a Strategic Environmental Assessment was not required at the planning reception of its Shute End offices4. A copy of the notice and draft determination was also made available on the Council’s website.

5.3 During the consultation, the Council received responses from Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency. These organisations agreed that the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement SPD was unlikely to require a SEA. The responses can be found as appendices to this statement.

6.0 Final Conclusion
6.1 The Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement SPD will provide more detailed advice on how policies CP1 and CP3 in the adopted Core Strategy together with policy CC01 of the Adopted MDD will be applied and will provide further guidance through which to shape future development, reinforce local distinctiveness and provide a framework for future physical changes in the area. Following consultation on the draft screening of the document, the Council considers its earlier view that the SPD will not have any significant environmental impacts remains valid. Therefore, a SEA is not required.

7.0 Final Statement of Determination
7.1 Following consultation, it is considered that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is NOT required for the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement SPD for the reasons set out in Section 4 above.

3 Pursuant to Regulation 11(1) of the SEA Regulations
4 Pursuant to Regulation 11(2)(a) of the SEA Regulations.
Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for your email. I can confirm that the Environment Agency agrees with the Borough Council’s draft determination that an SEA is not required for the Village Design statement. Please accept my apologies for the slight delay in this reply.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Johnson

Judith Johnson
Planning Specialist - Sustainable Places team

Environment Agency - West Thames (Farnham)
Goldcrest House, Alice Holt Lodge, Farnham, Surrey. GU10 4LH

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency
team email: planning-farnham@environment-agency.gov.uk
tel: 01252 729625

Note that I now work part-time, and my usual working days are Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday

Have your say on the draft updates to the river basin management plans and the draft flood risk management plans

I am writing with respect of the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement which Arborfield & Newland Parish Council have submitted to Wokingham Borough Council to adopt as a Supplementary Planning Document. As part of the work in preparing to adopt the Village Design Statement, the authority needs to consider whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment would be required.

The Council has undertaken a draft determination of whether such an Assessment is required for the Village Design Statement (attached). This draft determination indicates that the Council does not consider that an SEA is required for the Village Design Statement. I am therefore writing to obtain your views on whether you agree or disagree with the Council’s provisional view by 4pm on Wednesday 22 October. A copy of this draft determination will shortly be available on the Council’s website - [http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning/developers/designspd/](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning/developers/designspd/).

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Rebecca Bird, AICP BA MUP
Neighbourhood Planner, Land Use & Transport Team, Wokingham Borough Council
Tel: 0118 974 6456 | Mobile: 07809 311 560
E-mail: rebecca.bird@wokingham.gov.uk
www.wokingham.gov.uk
Post: PO Box 157, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1WR

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Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for your email.

I have now had a chance to look through and consider both documents, and I can advise that Natural England have no comments to make.

I note and welcome that Paragraph 3.5 of the Village Design Statement clarifies that the Statement does not allocate land or contain policies that should be subject to independent examinations, and that where a proposed development was considered to generate likely significant effects upon the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area, then these would need to be addressed before the authority could apply the guidance in the VDS.

Yours sincerely,

Mary.

Mary Tomlinson BSc (Hons) MSc
Lead Adviser
Sustainable Development and Regulation
Thames Valley Team
Tel: 07771 834 975
Email: Mary.tomlinson@naturalengland.org.uk

Natural England, Red Kite House, Howbery Park, Crowmarsh Gifford, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 8BD

www.naturalengland.org.uk

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Hello Mary

I’m sorry to have taken so long to respond. Attached is a copy of the document. It is not yet a public document as we are waiting until the end of the SEA consultation before releasing it, which is why it is not on our website.

Kind regards,

Rebecca
From: Tomlinson, Mary (NE) [mailto:Mary.Tomlinson@naturalengland.org.uk]
Sent: 09 October 2014 13:13
To: Rebecca Bird

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for consulting Natural England on the above.

I have a copy of the Draft Determination Statement on need for an SEA of the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement – September 2014, however I am struggling to locate a copy of the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement itself.

Please could you direct me to where it is location, or email across a copy at your convenience.

Many thanks in advance.

Yours sincerely,

Mary.

Mary Tomlinson BSc (Hons) MSc
Lead Adviser
Sustainable Development and Regulation
Thames Valley Team
Tel: 07771 834 975
Email: Mary.tomlinson@naturalengland.org.uk

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From: Rebecca Bird [mailto:Rebecca.Bird@wokingham.gov.uk]
Sent: 17 September 2014 08:45
To: Rebecca Bird
Cc: John Spurling; Sarah Hollamby; 'Arborfield & Newland Parish Council'
Subject: Consultation by Wokingham BC on whether the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement needs a Strategic Environmental Assessment ~[UNCLASSIFIED]~
Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing with respect of the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement which Arborfield &
Newland Parish Council have submitted to Wokingham Borough Council to adopt as a
Supplementary Planning Document. As part of the work in preparing to adopt the Village Design
Statement, the authority needs to consider whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment would be
required.

The Council has undertaken a draft determination of whether such an Assessment is required for the
Village Design Statement (attached). This draft determination indicates that the Council does not
consider that an SEA is required for the Village Design Statement. I am therefore writing to obtain
your views on whether you agree or disagree with the Council's provisional view by 4pm on
Wednesday 22 October. A copy of this draft determination will shortly be available on the Council's

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Rebecca

Rebecca Bird, AICP BA MUP
Neighbourhood Planner, Land Use & Transport Team, Wokingham Borough Council

Tel : 0118 974 6456 | Mobile: 07809 311 560
E-mail : rebecca.bird@wokingham.gov.uk
www.wokingham.gov.uk
Post: PO Box 157, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1WR

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Dear Ms Bird,

Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement SEA Screening Opinion

Thank you for your e-mail of 17th September seeking English Heritage’s opinion on whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment should be required for the Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement.

Having considered the Council’s Draft Determination Statement, English Heritage concurs with the Council’s opinion that it is not likely that the SPD will have any significant environmental impacts and that, therefore, a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

Thank you again for consulting English Heritage.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Small
Historic Environment Planning Adviser
(Bucks, Oxon, Berks, Hampshire, IoW, South Downs National Park and Chichester)

E-mail: martin.small@english-heritage.org.uk