Date: 20th April 2016
Our ref: 183252 Pirton NP SEA/HRA
Your ref:

NATURAL ENGLAND

Clare Skeels -Senior Planning Officer
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Dear Ms Skeels,

Pirton Neighbourhood Plan: Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated the 12th April 2016 which was received by email on the same date.

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.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

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/does-a-neighbourhood-plan-require-a-sustainability-appraisal/

Natural England welcomes the production of an SEA Screening Report and is satisfied that the Local Planning Authorities conclusion that **an SEA is not required** is appropriate.

Habitat Regulations Assessment

Where a Neighbourhood Plan could potentially lead to significant environmental effects it will be necessary to screen the Plan in relation to the Habitats and Species Regulations (2010), as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations'). One of the basic conditions that will be tested at Examination is whether the making of the plan is compatible with European obligations and this includes requirements relating to the Habitats Directive.

In relation to the Habitats Regulations, a Neighbourhood Plan cannot progress if the likelihood of significant effects on any European Site, either alone (or in combination with other plans and projects) cannot be ruled out) (see Schedule 2, The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012). Therefore measures may need to be incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that any likely significant effects are avoided in order to secure compliance with the Regulations. A screening exercise should be undertaken if there is any doubt about the possible effects of the Plan on European protected sites. This will be particularly important if a Neighbourhood Plan is to progress before a Local Plan has been adopted and/or the Neighbourhood Plan proposes development which has not be assessed and/or included in the

Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Local Plan.

Natural England welcomes the consideration given to the Habitats Regulations. We are satisfied that the conclusion of the Local Planning Authority (as competent authority) that there are no likely significant effects on European sites is appropriate, and therefore advise that **further Habitats Regulations Assessment is not required.**

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 Jamie Melvin on 020 602 61025. 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,

Mr Jamie Melvin
Lead Adviser
West Anglia Team