

<p>Leekfrith Neighbourhood Plan</p>	
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Strategic Environmental Assessment

Screening Report

June 2018

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1. Introduction

A neighbourhood plan must be compatible with European Union (EU) obligations, as incorporated into UK law, in order to be legally compliant.

This screening report is designed to determine whether or not the contents of the submission draft Leekfrith Neighbourhood Plan (Jan 2018) (hereafter known as 'LNP') requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC.

The relevant planning authorities, Peak District National Park Authority PDNPA and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council SMDC) must decide whether LNP is compatible with the above Directive:

- when it takes the decision on whether the neighbourhood plan should proceed to referendum; and
- when it takes the decision on whether or not to 'make' the neighbourhood plan (which brings it into force)

2. Legislative Background

The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC (the Directive) and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations).

Article 3(2) of the Directive makes SEA mandatory for plans and programmes 'which are prepared for . . . town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent for projects . . .'

There are plans for which an SEA is not always required. For plans which 'determine the use of small areas at local level' or are 'minor modifications' to existing plans, the Directive only requires SEA where they are **likely to have significant environmental effects**. The expressions 'small area' and 'local level' are not defined in the Directive and must be interpreted in relation to the nature and scope of a particular plan.

In order to determine whether the LNP is likely to have significant environmental effects, and therefore require an SEA, and (if so) the level of detail needed, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) National Planning Practice Guidance advises that the relevant planning authority should:

- at an early stage assess the draft neighbourhood plan's potential scope against the criteria set out in Schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004); and
- in so doing, should consult the statutory consultation bodies, in this case, Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency; and
- where a plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects, prepare a statement of its reasons.

Where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment an SEA must be carried out. Section 3 of this report assess LNP for the likeliness of significant environmental effects.

3. Determination of the likeliness of significant environmental effects of Leekfrith neighbourhood plan

Table 1: Comparison of Leekfrith Neighbourhood Plan against Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004		
Significance Criteria set out in SEA Directive (Annex ii) and Schedule 1 of Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004	Impact of the draft Leekfrith Neighbourhood Plan	Likelihood of significant environmental effects
1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:		
(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	<p>Leekfrith Neighbourhood Plan (LNP) would, if adopted, form part of the statutory development plan for the Leekfrith Neighbourhood Area (LNA). Therefore the 'projects and other activities' for which LNP helps to set a framework are concerned with managing land-use and development.</p> <p>However the location, nature and size of the area affected by LNP are all small. The population is just 363 people living in 139 households. The relevant area is rural, comprising only 2 villages (Meerbrook and Upper Hulme), scattered farmsteads and open land. Most of the parish lies within the Peak District National Park and part is a designated Special Area of Conservation, meaning that development is extremely restricted.</p> <p>LNP sits within the wider framework set by the National Planning Policy Framework, and by law must 'be in general conformity' with strategic planning policies for the area, in this case the Core Strategies of Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC), as well as having regard to the policies in the emerging SMDC Local Plan. Therefore the degree to which LNP sets a framework for land use is minimal – it is the lowest level plan in the planning hierarchy and is local in nature, concerned only with the parish of Leekfrith. Development on a large scale would be unsustainable in this rural parish as it would generate a disproportionate number of additional journeys outside the villages and may undermine the spatial strategy. Policies in the emerging SMDC Local Plan and in the PDNPA Core Strategy control development in rural areas both in terms of scale and type, in order to ensure that the character of settlements and countryside is not undermined. An assessment of the LNP policies for their conformity to the adopted Core Strategies has been undertaken. This confirms that LNP is in general conformity with the Core Strategies and no significant changes are introduced.</p> <p>In addition, the above strategic policies were themselves subject to a full Sustainability Appraisal which included an SEA assessment.</p> <p>SEA of SMDC Core Strategy concluded “ . . .the Core Strategy will contribute permanent positive</p>	Not likely

	<p>social, economic and environmental impacts on sustainability by creating distinctive, sustainable and self-sufficient settlements, meeting local needs and a strong, prosperous economy. . . Negative impacts would largely result from the development of new residential and employment sites due to the use of greenfield sites, impact on soil resources, loss of views/impact on the landscape and energy consumption of new buildings.</p> <p>The SEA of the PDNPA Core Strategy concluded that it “is likely to have a generally positive effect on the SA Objectives and the SEA Directive topics. There are, perhaps unsurprisingly, no significant adverse effects expected as a result of the policies, and only relatively few minor adverse effects. These are likely to be relatively small-scale, localised and the result of policies that deliver significant benefits to other SA Objectives.”</p> <p>There are only 4 policies in LNP:</p> <p>Policy 1 describes the development that would be permissible at Upper Hulme Mill, currently a small industrial site with a mix of traditional and modern buildings. Policy 2 permits the temporary renting of ancillary holiday accommodation on the general rented market Policy 3 requires any proposal for development to be accompanied by a transport statement Policy 4 allocates land for a temporary (28 day rule) car park</p>	
<p>(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.</p>	<p>LNP is the lowest level land use plan and does not influence other plans or programmes in a hierarchy. Its influence is restricted to the 4 areas of local planning policy as described above.</p>	<p>Not likely</p>
<p>(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development</p>	<p>One of the ‘basic conditions’ that LNP in law must meet is that it will contribute to improvements in environmental, economic and social conditions or that consideration has been given to how any potential adverse effects arising from the proposals may be prevented, reduced or offset.</p> <p>The goal of sustainable development is described in the LNP’s ‘Visions’:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A community for all ages • Where the focal points of our community are valued and protected • Where sustainable businesses can thrive and employ • Conservation <p>Policy 1 will achieve the aim of sustainable development by permitting the sensitive redevelopment of a</p>	<p>Not likely</p>

	<p>currently used site for housing and business uses</p> <p>Policy 2 will achieve the aim of sustainable redevelopment by providing homes in existing properties</p> <p>Policy 3 will achieve the aim of sustainable development by requiring the traffic implications of a development to be considered.</p> <p>Policy 4 will contribute to the aims of sustainable development by dealing with the impact of visitor traffic in a way that is sensitive to landscape and habitats.</p>	
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	LNP is relevant for the consideration of environmental problems but at a purely local level. The environmental concerns addressed by LNP are measures in relation to soil and material assets including to minimise the use of non-renewable resources through the re-use of existing buildings and in relation to climate change, air and water through minimising impacts on existing traffic congestion.	Not likely
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation (for example plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection.)	LNP is restricted to land use planning and not directly relevant to the implementation of European legislation.	
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular to :		
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	<p>The area to be affected is the parish of Leekfrith, comprising the village of Meerbrook, the hamlet of Upper Hulme, and scattered farmsteads. It is a protected rural, upland landscape. The PDNPA's landscape character assessment describes the area as comprising 'upper valley pastures', 'wooded slopes and valleys' and 'moorland hills and ridges'. Part of the area is within the Peak District National Park, the South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation and Peak District Moors special Protection Area.</p> <p>Modest but enduring positive effects are expected to be achieved through policies to improve the built environment and to address traffic congestion and air quality.</p>	Not likely.
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects	Overall the cumulative nature of the effects is likely to be small scale but positive in terms of their environmental impact.	Not likely
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects	There will be no transboundary effects across member states however there may be beneficial effects across neighbouring parishes through improved car parking for visitors..	Not likely
(d) the risks to human health or the environment	No risks to human health identified. Risk to the environment is minimised by conformity with National Park Core Strategy. The Plan seeks to improve human health by addressing traffic and related air quality issues.	Not likely
(e) the magnitude and spatial	LNP covers the parish area of Leekfrith (approximately 3,000ha), population 363 (2011 census).	Not likely

extent of the effects.	Magnitude and spatial extent of effects is comparatively small.	
(fi) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.	<p>The area to be affected is the parish of Leekfrith, comprising the village of Meerbrook, the hamlet of Upper Hulme, and scattered farmsteads. The value and vulnerability of the area is high, recognised by the designation (in part of the area) as Peak District National Park, the South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation and Peak District Moors Special Protection Area. It is a protected rural, upland landscape. The PDNPA's landscape character assessment describes the area as comprising 'upper valley pastures', 'wooded slopes and valleys' and 'moorland hills and ridges'</p> <p>Policy 1 would impact on the hamlet of Upper Hulme, and affects land that is adjacent to a conservation area, The Policy would have a small, positive, effect on the environment and character of the settlement by preserving existing buildings of quality and requiring removal of non-traditional structures.</p> <p>Policy 4 would impact on land that is adjacent to the SPA/SAC, however it is improved grassland of low wildlife value. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, in the Regulation 14 statutory consultation, did not object to this policy.</p>	Not likely. The positive contribution of Policy 1 to the environment of Upper Hulme was made more explicit in the policy rather than appearing in the map key as a result of comments received during Reg 14 consultation.
(fii) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values.	Due to the scale of development proposed, the plan is unlikely to result in exceedance of environmental quality standards such as those relating to air, water and soil quality.	Not likely
(fiii) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to intensive land use	Intensive land use is not proposed by LNP	Not likely
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	The area of LNP is partly within a National Park and part of the area is designated Special Protected Area/Special Area of Conservation. The emerging SMDC Local Plan and PDNPA Core Strategy include policies for the protection of landscape character, the historic environment and the integrity of European sites.	Not likely

4. Conclusion of Screening Process

It is demonstrated, through assessment against the significance criteria in the SEA Directive and Regulations, as set out in Section 3, that the impact of the implementation of Leekfrith Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to result in significant environmental effects. On this basis, a full SEA will not be required to be undertaken.