

# Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan

SEA Screening Report

October 2014



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# Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan

## SEA Screening Document

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# Contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	This report.....	1
1.2	Strategic Environmental Assessment .....	1
1.3	The Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan .....	1
2	The Screening Process .....	8
2.1	Strategic Environmental Assessment screening .....	8
2.2	The screening process .....	8
2.3	Determination of significant effects .....	11
2.4	Screening outcome and reasons for determination.....	14

# Abbreviations

<b>AQMA</b>	Air Quality Management Area
<b>EIA</b>	Environmental Impact Assessment
<b>GI</b>	Green Infrastructure
<b>ODPM</b>	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
<b>NP</b>	Neighbourhood Plan
<b>SA</b>	Sustainability Appraisal
<b>SEA</b>	Strategic Environmental Assessment
<b>SUDS</b>	Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

# List of Figures and Tables

<b>Figure 1.1</b>	Neighbourhood Plan Boundary (Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 2013)
<b>Figure 1.2</b>	Risk of flooding from rivers and sea (Environment Agency, 2013)
<b>Figure 1.3</b>	Green belt designations (MAGIC, 2013)
<b>Figure 1.4</b>	Agricultural land classifications (MAGIC, 2013)
<b>Figure 2.1</b>	Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes (ODPM 2005)
<b>Figure 2.2</b>	Statutory land-based designations (MAGIC, 2013)
<b>Table 2.1</b>	Establishing whether there is a need for SEA
<b>Table 2.2</b>	Criteria and response of screening

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 This report

- 1.1.1 This screening report has been prepared to determine whether the Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan (NP) should be subject to 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 Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 1.2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessment legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Detailed guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive'<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2.2 Under the requirements of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC (Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive) and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), specific types of plans that set the framework for the future development consent of projects, must be subject to an environmental assessment.
- 1.2.3 The 2008 Planning Act requires plan making bodies to comply with the SEA Directive by screening the plan's potential effects on the environment.

## 1.3 The Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.3.1 The Loxwood Neighbourhood Planning website<sup>2</sup> explains that the creation of neighbourhood plans started with the Government's Localism Act which came into effect in April 2012. The Act sets out a series of measures to shift power away from central government and towards local people. One of the Localism Act's key components is the Neighbourhood Plan; a new tier in planning policy which enables local people to shape the development of the community in which they live.

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<sup>1</sup> ODPM (2005) A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-directive-guidance>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.loxwood.org/Neighbourhood\\_Plan.html](http://www.loxwood.org/Neighbourhood_Plan.html)

- 1.3.2 The plan has been subject to various community engagement activities, with the purpose of achieving transparency in the plan making process and listening to views of the local people. Open days and village workshops collected public views from the local community on topics such as tourism, transport, housing, sport and leisure ect. The consultations were led by The Glasshouse, a firm of independent consultants specialising in facilitating community engagement.
- 1.3.3 Following the open days and village workshops, the Steering Group created a comprehensive village survey was distributed to residents in September 2012 and queried Loxwood Parish residents on environmental, housing, community, infrastructure, education, sports and leisure, economy and business, demographics and youth and young people related issues.. The survey results were revealed to the village at an Open day in January 2013.
- 1.3.4 The beginning of the NP evolved after being established as a 'Plan Area' by Chichester District Council (CDC) in March 2013. Housing, traffic, transport and infrastructure results from the village survey were brought forward to the evidence gathering phase of the NP. Loxwood NP has been subjected to extensive consultations within the parish and key stakeholders.
- 1.3.5 Village survey and consultation results were then used to create a set of planning policies which they believed reflected most of the major planning concerns in the community, this formed a consultation summary (2014) of the NP (as shown on the website <http://www.loxwood.org>).
- 1.3.6 After consultation, responses were acknowledged and used to prepare a 'submission draft' of the NP. This version of the plan was submitted for inspection by an independent examiner May 2014. A number of recommendations were made by the examiner and subject to those recommendations being incorporated into the NP, the examiner advised that the Loxwood NP should advance to Referendum.
- 1.3.7 Recommendations made by the examiner included explicitly stating a minimum number of new proposed homes for development and conformity to meet the Basic Conditions whilst not undermining the intention of the policies.
- 1.3.8 The results of the Referendum concluded a 97%<sup>3</sup> majority voted in favour of the adoption of the NP.

### Size

- 1.3.9 Loxwood is a small rural village with an estimated parish population of 1,473<sup>4</sup>. The parish has an area of 18.2km<sup>2</sup><sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Chichester District Council (2014) Available at: <http://www.chichester.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=23043>

<sup>4</sup> Officer for National Statistics (2011) Available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/search/index.html?newquery=loxwood>

<sup>5</sup> Natural England (2013) MAGIC. Available at: <http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

- 1.3.10 The proposed Loxwood NP covers the parish including its accompanying villages and hamlets. **Figure 1.1** shows the current parish and neighbourhood plan boundary.
- 1.3.11 The settlement boundary area is approximately 1km by 0.5km. The specific sites allocated for development are Land at Farm Close and Land at Nursery Site as shown in **Figure 1.2**.
- 1.3.12 Land at Farm Close has an approximate area of 7,800m<sup>2</sup> (0.78ha) whilst Land at Nursery Site is 21,305m<sup>2</sup> (2.13ha).



**Figure 1.1:** Neighbourhood Parish and Plan Boundary<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan (2013). Available at: [http://www.loxwood.org/Downloadable\\_Files/CLPlan/Neighbourhood%20Plan%20Final%20Version.pdf](http://www.loxwood.org/Downloadable_Files/CLPlan/Neighbourhood%20Plan%20Final%20Version.pdf)

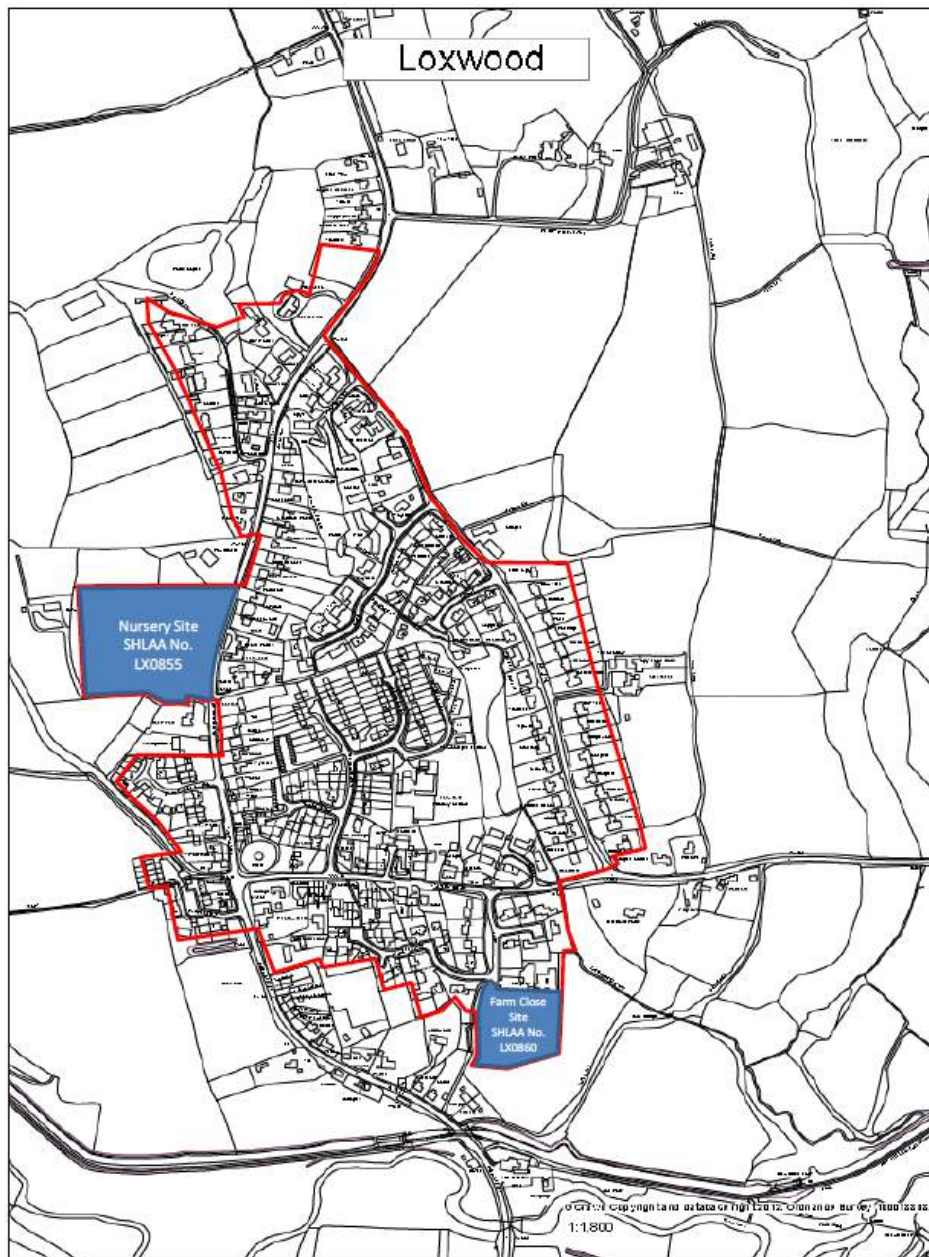


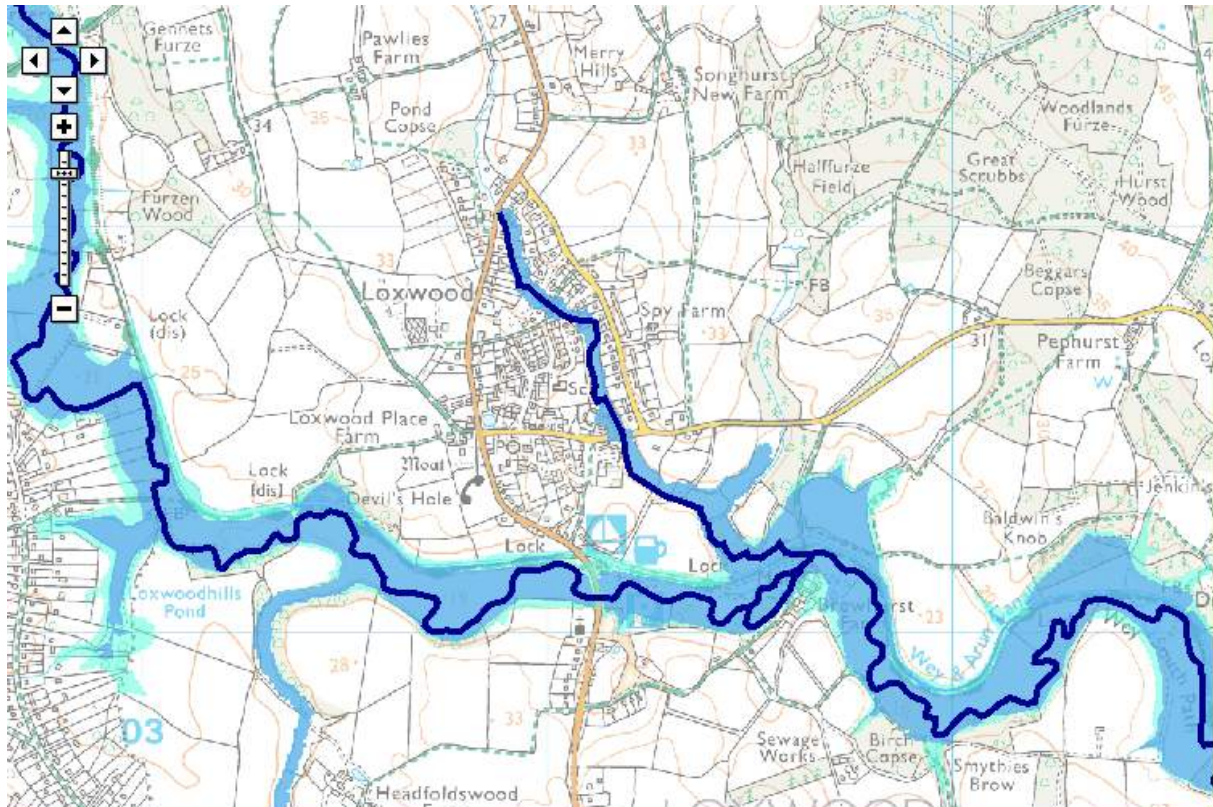
Figure 1.2: Loxwood Settlement boundary and allocated sites for development <sup>6</sup>

### Location

- 1.3.13 Loxwood parish is located in the northeast of Chichester District of West Sussex, England adjacent to the border with Surrey. It falls 5.5km outside the boundary of the South Downs National Park and is comprised of the village of Loxwood and hamlets of Alford Bars to the north and Roundstreet Common to the south.
- 1.3.14 Loxwood is located 7.5km northwest of the town of Billingshurst, 8.1km south of Cranleigh and 14.2km east of Haslemere. The B2133 runs through the village with good links to the A281 and A272. The Wey and Arun Canal passes through east/west through the southern part of the village.



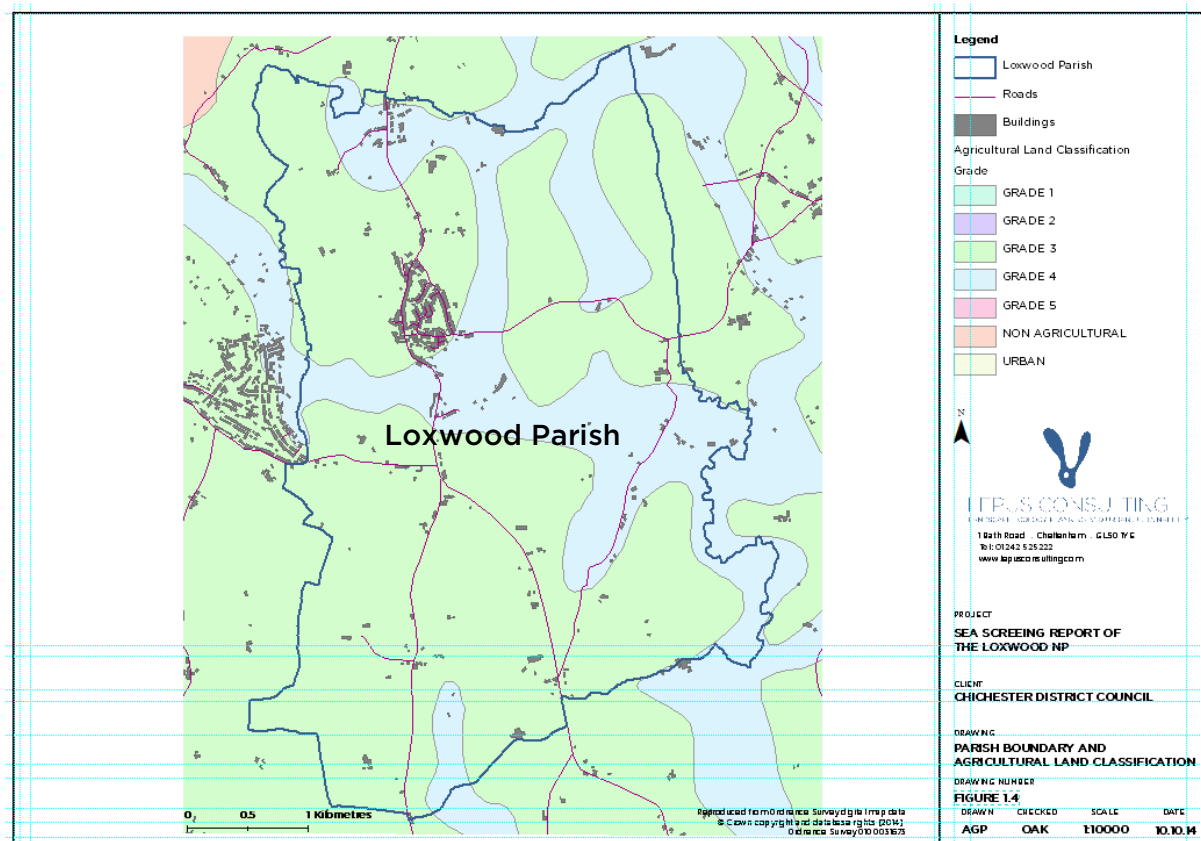
- 1.3.15 In combination with the parishes of Kirdford, Wisborough Green, Plaistow and Ifold together with a small part of Lynchmere parish, Loxwood parish forms the northern part of the Plan Area in the CDC Saved and Emerging Local Plans.<sup>6</sup>
- 1.3.16 The village has few amenities which include a village shop and post office, two pubs, a butchers and hairdressers. Local facilities include an infant and junior school, medical centre, village hall, car servicing garage, Loxwood Sports Association and a church and chapel.



**Figure 1.3:** Risk of flooding from rivers and sea<sup>7</sup>

- 1.3.17 The land surrounding Loxwood contains areas of agricultural land, classified as grade 3 (good to moderate) and grade 4 (poor) is shown in **Figure 1.4**. Grade 1 agricultural land is the most productive type. The allocated sites for housing are located are on grade 3 areas and not valuable agricultural land.

<sup>7</sup> Environment Agency (2014). Available at: [http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiybyController?x=503500.0&y=131500.0&topic=floodmap&ep=map&scale=9&location=Loxwood,%20West%20Sussex&lang=\\_e&layerGroups=default&distance=&textonly=off](http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiybyController?x=503500.0&y=131500.0&topic=floodmap&ep=map&scale=9&location=Loxwood,%20West%20Sussex&lang=_e&layerGroups=default&distance=&textonly=off)



**Figure 1.4:** Agricultural land classifications

- 1.3.18 The roads in the village are frequently used as a shortcut in order to avoid the A272 and A281 and the residents of the village are keen to introduce traffic calming measures in order to reduce the traffic levels.

### Nature

- 1.3.19 The NP is a land-use plan, prepared for town and country planning and land-use and sets out a framework for future development consents within the Loxwood NP area. The NP is the lowest tier in the planning hierarchy and must conform to plans in the upper tiers such as the Chichester District Council Local Plan, as well as National Policy such as the NPPF.

- 1.3.20 At this stage of the plan process the neighbourhood plan includes a summary of 11 policy themes which are as follows:

- Housing allocation together with community benefit on defined housing sites.
- Definition of the Settlement Boundary for the village of Loxwood.
- Introduction of a street lighting policy.
- Measures to address potential flood risk and sewerage problems.
- Development of a policy for the rural area which defines support for the expansion of existing businesses, agriculture and new business start-ups.
- Housing density, the built vernacular and house extensions are addressed in a way that seeks to protect the built heritage of the parish.

- A policy on traffic calming is introduced which sets out a strategy for dealing with speed through the village of Loxwood and with the identified safety risks for pedestrians.
- Internet and broadband connectivity is addressed seeking to make sure that any new development is configured to maximise the ability to connect to the local network.
- The Wey and Arun Canal Trust vision of a through navigable route from the Wey to the Arun Rivers is supported.
- New retail/business start-ups are supported provided it can be established that such new enterprises are viable, support the local economy and are not detrimental to the local environment.
- A green policy is introduced which seeks to ensure that any new housing and/or extension meet the highest standards of design and energy usage together with the use of green technologies.

## 2 The Screening Process

### 2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment screening

2.1.1 The process for determining whether or not an SEA is required is called screening. In order to screen, it is necessary to determine if a plan will have significant environmental effects using the criteria set out in Annex II of the Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations. A determination cannot be made until the three statutory consultation bodies have been consulted: The Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage.

2.1.2 Within 28 days of making its determination<sup>8</sup>, the plan makers must publish a statement, setting out its decision. If they determine that an SEA is not required, the statement must include the reasons for this.

### 2.2 The screening process

2.2.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires Neighbourhood Plans to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. Chichester District Council is currently at the examination stage of preparing its latest Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with this document once it is adopted. If it rejected or delayed, then the NP would need to conform with the current Local Plan (1999)<sup>9</sup>

2.2.2 The Local Plan was subject to a Sustainability Appraisal which combined to assess the plan for significant effects under the SEA Directive as well. Mitigation measures were suggested where relevant.

2.2.3 **Figure 2.1** (ODPM, 2005), shows the application of the SEA process to plans and programmes. The sequential approach in the flow diagram can be used to screen the Loxwood NP.

2.2.4 Table 2.1 uses the questions presented in Figure 2.1 to establish whether there is a need for SEA for the Loxwood NP.

<sup>8</sup> See provision 11(1) of the The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 No.1633

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.chichester.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5080>

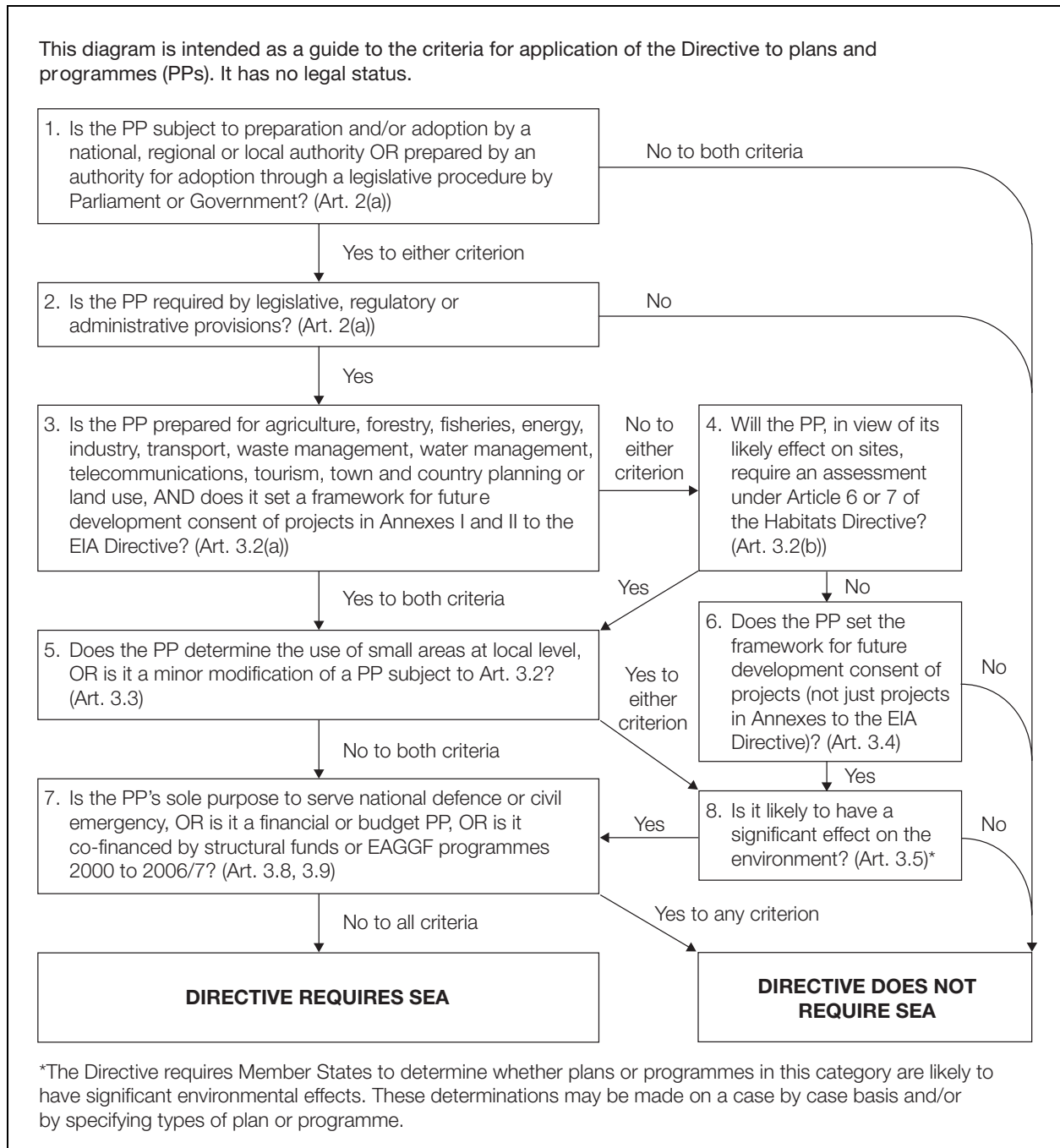


Figure 2.1: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes (ODPM, 2005)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> ODPM (2005) A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-directive-guidance>

**Table 2.1:** Establishing whether there is a need for SEA

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) 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))	<b>Yes</b>	The plan constitutes a NP, which will be adopted by a local authority i.e. Chichester District Council if it receives 50% or more affirmative votes at a referendum.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	<b>No</b>	Communities and neighbourhoods have a right to produce a NP, however it is not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative purposes. If the NP is adopted it would become part of the statutory development plan, meaning it should continue to be screened under the SEA Directive.
3. Is the PP 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))	<b>Yes</b>	The NP is a land-use plan and sets the framework for future development consents within the Loxwood NP area. Due to the neighbourhood quality of the plan, development projects contained in Annex I is unlikely. It is possible the NP could contain infrastructure projects, which are listed in Annex II of Directive 97/11/EC, such as urban development projects, which may be subject to EIA if they are considered as having significant effects on the environment.
4. Will the PP, 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))	<b>No</b>	It is unlikely that the NP will require assessment under the Habitats Directive. An HRA was prepared for the CDC Local Plan that included the area of Loxwood. The HRA did not identify adverse affects associated with Loxwood.
5. Does the PP 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)	<b>Yes</b>	The NP identifies sites for specific uses such as housing.
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)	<b>Yes</b>	The NP sets policies which planning application within the Loxwood NP area must adhere to.
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)	<b>No</b>	The NP has other purposes.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	<b>No</b>	See <b>Section 2.3.</b>

## 2.3 Determination of significant effects

2.3.1 The criteria from Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) can be used to determine the likely significance of effects. Question 8 within the ODPM guidance (see **Figure 2.1**) refers to whether the NP would have a significant effect on the environment. **Table 2.2** discusses the likely effects of the NP.

**Table 2.2:** Criteria and response of screening

Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of Regulations)	Relevance in context of this screening report
The characteristics of plans and programmes	
(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	As shown in <b>Section 1.2</b> , the Loxwood NP will establish the development control framework for Loxwood village and surrounding environs.  The NP is prepared for town and country planning and land use and sets out a framework for future development in Loxwood parish. The nature of the NP includes housing, open space, infrastructure and employment.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The NP is the lowest tier in the planning hierarchy and must conform to plans in the upper tiers rather than influence them. In this case the NP must conform to plans including the Chichester Local Plan, the National Planning Policy and European Directives.
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	The NP has relevance in this section; there are opportunities for integrating environmental considerations within Loxwood.  Policy 2 of the NP demonstrates willingness to incorporate sustainable development into all aspects of development.  Policy 6 is devoted to designating Local Green Spaces (LGS) and Policy 9 and 10 detail that new development should be in character with the local building and countryside surroundings and use local resources to do so.  Policy 17 ensures that all new developments or building extensions should conform to a minimum of Level 4 (from 2013 to 2016) and Level 5 (from 2016) in the Code of Sustainable Homes.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	Key issues taken from the Scoping Report of Chichester Local Plan and derived from the Loxwood NP which are relevant to the plan include:  1. <b>Housing.</b> Due to a growing

	<p>population, Loxwood requires an increase in housing of sustainable and affordable design by a minimum of 60 homes.</p> <p>2. <b>Environment.</b> Chichester district has many national and some European designated sites. Loxwood has none but wishes to increase their protected areas of community and biological importance as Local Green Space in accordance with paragraph 77-78 of the NPPF.</p> <p>3. <b>Local economy.</b> Whilst providing housing, a number of small shops will help to support the growing population.</p> <p>4. <b>An enriched and active community.</b> Protection of recreational space for parish residents will be provided as part of the designation of Local Green Space,</p>
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	<p>The NP is a land-use plan and sets the framework for future development consents within the Loxwood NP area.</p> <p>The NP sets policies which planning applications within the Loxwood NP area must adhere to.</p>
<b>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected</b>	
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	<p>No significant effects are anticipated on Biodiversity, Population, Human Health, Flora, Fauna, Soil, Air, Climatic Factors, Material Assets, Cultural Heritage and Landscape in Loxwood Parish.</p> <p>Although the proposed residential sites are not located within flood zones 2 and 3, due to the anticipated nature of an increase of demand to the sewage network and close proximity to the Wey and Arun Canal of the Farm Close Site, monitoring will be essential to ensure that sewage levels are kept safe at all times.</p>
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects	<p>Housing proposals are in keeping with the aspiration of the Chichester Local Plan and the proposals of the NP. No cumulative effects are expected as a result.</p>
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects	<p>All effects of the NP are considered to be entirely local and the majority will fall within the settlement boundary of Loxwood village.</p>
(d) the risks to human health or the	<p>Southern Water has identified wastewater</p>



environment (for example, due to accidents)	management capacity issues in the area; new housing will need to demonstrate that capacity is not exacerbated to avoid the risk of environmental impacts on water quality and biodiversity. As acknowledged in section 18.8.5 of the Loxwood NP, <i>“any large-scale new connection to the existing system will need to be justified by a rigorous analysis. Where there is insufficient capacity in the local network, a connection should be made at the nearest point of adequate capacity as advised by Southern Water.”</i>
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	Loxwood is a small village in the rural district of Chichester. It is the largest village located within the Loxwood Parish and is linked with B2133 that acts as commuter route to the A281 and A272. Due to minimal employment opportunities within Loxwood Parish, residents out commute. The indirect spatial extent of the plan may extend beyond the immediate area of the plan but due to the small population, significant effects are not projected
(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:  (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage  (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values  (iii) intensive land-use	(i) Loxwood does not have significant a historic environment that is likely to be harmed by adoption of the NP and proposed development. It is not a tourist area but benefits from the Wey and Arun Canal in the south of the parish, which may bring infrequent visitors along this historic route.  (ii) Policy 8 concerns environmental quality and seeks to ensure waste water treatment will not exceed environmental quality for water.  (iii) The Loxwood NP has areas of moderate to low agricultural productivity with areas of grade 3 and grade 4 all situated within the parish (Figure 1.4) The location of housing in Loxwood NP is concentrated within the village itself.
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status	The land surrounding Loxwood does not have any nationally important landscape designations such as AONB. No land is allocated as greenbelt and small-scale developments are unlikely to disrupt the integrity of the landscape value in this rural area.  Additionally, the agricultural grade of land surrounding Loxwood and within its parish is of grade 3 and 4 classifications. Development on this land will reduce agricultural land in the parish, which will be reversible but is unlikely to cause a significant adverse effect reduction in agricultural activity, especially when considering the small-scale nature of the

	<p>proposed development areas in the NP.</p> <p>There are no designated sites of local, national or European importance located within the NP area. However the NP wishes to designate Local Green Spaces to protect areas of community and biological importance.</p>
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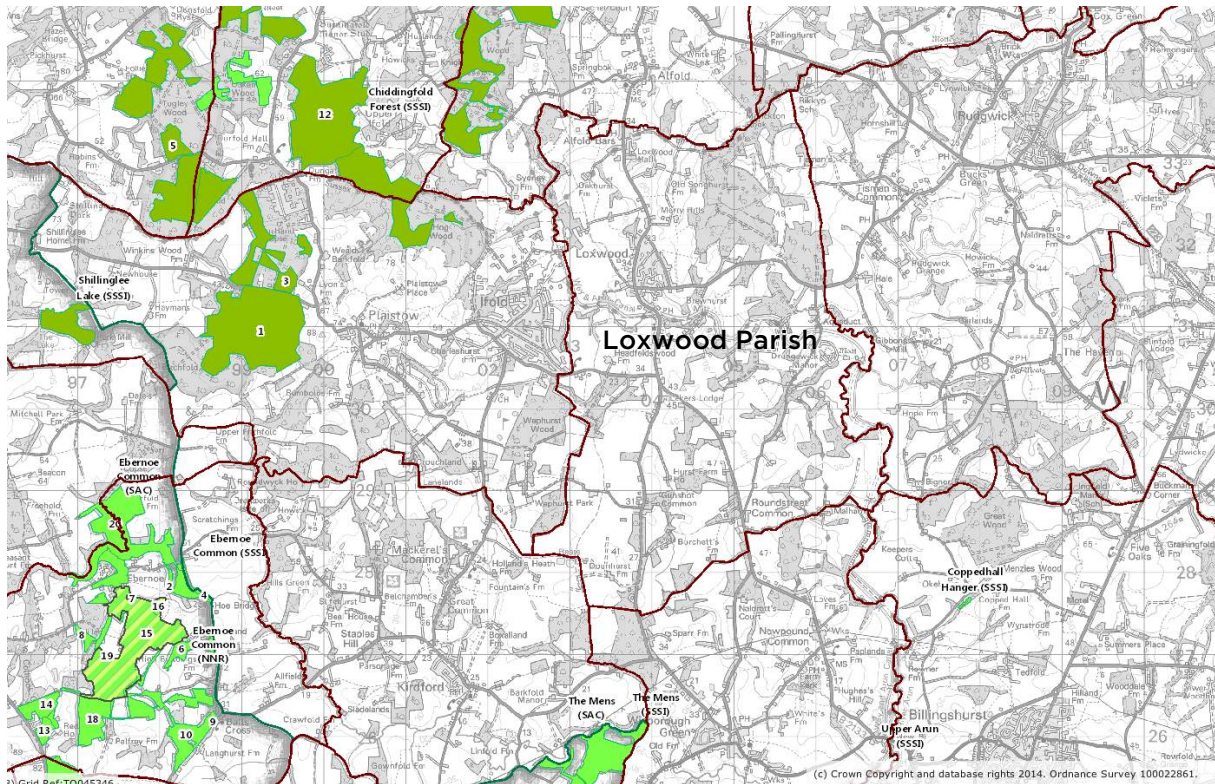


Figure 2.2: Statutory biodiversity designations neighbouring Loxwood Parish<sup>11</sup>

## 2.4 Screening outcome and reasons for determination

2.4.1 The Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan will conform to the strategic influence of the Chichester Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan will influence where housing should be located as well as influence design across the plan area. Both of these factors can be significant environmental determinants.

2.4.2 This screening report has explored the likelihood of potential adverse effects arising through the Loxwood NP on the local environment. In determining the requirement for an environmental assessment under the SEA Directive, results of the screening process indicate that there is sufficient information about the size, nature and location of likely proposals in the NP. Whilst there are no specific environmental policies in the NP, the environment and sustainability is considered in the majority of polices. No significant environmental impacts are likely to occur.

<sup>11</sup> Natural England (2013) MAGIC. Available at: <http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

- 2.4.3 In accordance with topics cited in Annex 1(f) of the SEA directive, likely significant effects on the environment are not expected to include biodiversity, flora, fauna, population, human health, soil, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.



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