

Classification: OFFICIAL

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Screening opinion for the Chalfont St Giles Neighbourhood Plan

September 2018

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Introduction

1. The Local Authority is the “competent authority” under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, and needs to ensure that neighbourhood Plans have been assessed through the Habitat Regulations process. This looks at the potential for significant impacts on nature conservation sites that are of European importance, also referred to as Natura 2000.
2. This Screening Assessment relates to the Chalfont St Giles Neighbourhood Development Plan that will be in general conformity with the higher level strategic plan (the adopted Chiltern District Local Plan, Chiltern District Core Strategy). The Authority will use this screening to determine whether the Chalfont St Giles Neighbourhood Development Plan is likely to result in significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites and therefore whether an ‘Appropriate Assessment’ is required.
3. The neighbourhood development plan area is the same as that covered by the administrative area of Chalfont St Giles Parish. See combined Parish and Neighbourhood Area map in Appendix 1.

http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/media/2682/Chalfont-St-Giles-Parish-Map/pdf/Plan_map.pdf?m=635267750521900000

Legislative Basis

4. Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive provides that:

“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [European] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.”

Assessment

5. There are no SAC sites within the plan area. Within a 5km buffer of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) area boundary there is one Special Area of Conservation so it is deemed reasonable to assess whether there will be likely significant effects as a result of the proposals in the Chalfont St Giles Neighbourhood Plan. This SAC is Burnham Beeches, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).
6. Parts of the Chalfont St Giles NP area are within the Chilterns AONB. There are two identified SSSI’s called Froghall Brickworks (0.3 hectares in size) and Hodgemoor Wood (103 hectares in size) that are located north-west of Chalfont St Giles on the edge of the Chalfont St Giles Neighbourhood Plan boundary.
7. There are a number of Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland sites located within the Chalfont St Giles Neighbourhood Plan boundary. These are:

- a. Bow Wood;
 - b. Pollards/Bailey Woods;
 - c. Crosslane Wood;
 - d. Philipshill Wood;
 - e. Welders House Wood;
 - f. Crutches Wood;
8. The majority of the Plan area is located within the Green Belt.
9. It is not considered that the Chalfont St Giles Neighbourhood Development Plan will result in likely significant effect for the following reasons:
- a. The Chalfont St Giles Neighbourhood Development Plan does not allocate any sites for development within the parish, and other development within the parish will be limited in the form of rural exception sites and infill development of sites;
 - b. The Plan area has access to many available green spaces for the public to use and enjoy. The access to existing green spaces and to the wider Chilterns AONB all around the Parish means that any increased pressure for recreation (walks etc.) would be dispersed.
 - c. The Chilterns Conservation Board will continue to manage public enjoyment of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty using “The Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019: A Framework for Action” or its replacement, thereby relieving pressure on the Chilterns AONB by spreading the footfall in a wider area.
 - d. The rural exceptions site policy is aligned with the adopted Core Strategy Policy CS9 that aims to minimise the impact of the development of small sites within the AONB using a variety of conditions to bring about appropriate rural exception schemes;
 - e. The Buckinghamshire County Council and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (NEP) have worked with the Local Enterprise Partnerships and health and wellbeing boards have developed the Buckinghamshire Green infrastructure Strategy across the District to ensure that communities have access to high quality green spaces and green infrastructure.

Conclusion

10. The Chalfont St Giles Neighbourhood Development Plan is considered unlikely to have significant environmental impacts on any Natura 2000 sites alone or in combination with other plans and projects, and an Appropriate Assessment for the Chalfont St Giles Neighbourhood Development Plan is not required.

Consultation arrangements

11. This draft screening opinion will be shared with Natural England for consultation.

Natural England response

Dear David,

Thanks for sending through the HRA screening request for Chalfont St Giles. We have reviewed the screening, and agree with your conclusion that an Appropriate Assessment is not required.

It is our opinion that, due to the lack of any development site allocation within the parish and the sufficient distance of the Neighbourhood Plan area from Burnham Beeches SAC, it is unlikely that the Plan will have an environmental effect on the site.

If you have any questions in regards to the above, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards,

Eleanor

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