

Your ref: [ ]  
Our ref: Robertsbridge and Salehurst  
Please ask for: Norman Kwan  
Direct dial no: n/a  
Date: 15<sup>th</sup> June 2016



Karen Ripley  
Robertsbridge and Salehurst Parish Council [ ]

**Dr Anthony Leonard**  
**Executive Director of Business Operations**

Town Hall  
Bexhill-on-Sea  
East Sussex TN39 3JX

Dear Karen,

### **SEA Screening Opinion For Robertsbridge and Salehurst Neighbourhood Plan**

Thank you for your request for an SEA screening opinion, together with supporting information documents.

Rother District Council (as the responsible authority) must determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects.

RDC has consulted with the statutory environmental bodies (SEBs) – Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England as part of this process and passed them the Parish Council's submitted material. The EA have responded to state that they "*no longer comment on screening opinions*". At the time of writing, Natural England have not yet responded. Historic England are of the view that SEA is required and their response is attached.

In the light of this, as well as our own interpretation of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, I would advise as follows on the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment: In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the Robertsbridge and Salehurst Neighbourhood Plan (RSNP) is likely to have significant effects on the environment and, hence, that a SEA should be undertaken. I have set out the reasoning below in relation to the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects, as contained in Schedule 1 of the above Regulations:

1. The RSNP will form part of the 'development plan' and thereby exert a direct and substantial influence over development proposals coming forward in the period
2. The RSNP has a key role in integrating social, economic and environmental considerations in meeting its obligation to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
3. The RSNP needs to consider a number of nationally or locally important environmental factors, notably:



- a) The area is wholly within the High Weald AONB, which enjoys the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.
- b) There are many key features of the AONB within the Parish, including historic field boundaries, historic routeways, etc .
- c) There are significant heritage constraints, including two conservation areas, significant numbers of listed buildings, unlisted buildings of architectural interest, and archaeological notification areas. There are potential direct impacts where sites contain, or lie within these assets, as well as indirect impacts through development in the setting of assets.
- d) There are swathes of land along the course of the Rivers Rother and Darwell and their tributaries, including central areas of the village and sites under consideration for development, are within Flood Zones 2 and 3.
- e) The Rother and Darwell Valleys are also identified within the 'Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods Biodiversity Opportunity Area' which overlaps with sites under consideration for development. BAP Priority Habitats include ponds, watercourses and floodplain grazing marsh. There are numerous records of protected, BAP and rare species.

It should be noted that RDC has already produced an 'SA Scoping Report for the Development and Site Allocations DPD' available [here](#). On page 29-32 of the link there is a 'Framework', which as the Scoping Report states, *'is also considered relevant and applicable to Neighbourhood Plans produced within the District'*.

I trust this information is useful.

Kind Regards,



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