

**Sedlescombe Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2028
Strategic Environmental Assessment Adoption Statement:**

April 2018

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Rother District Council made the [Sedlescombe Neighbourhood Plan](#) part of the Development Plan at Full Council on 23 April 2018 following a favourable outcome at Referendum.
- 1.2 This statement has been prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 Regulation 16 (1)¹, which requires a statement to be produced on adoption of a plan or programme, to detail:
1. How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
 2. How the environmental report has been taken into account;
 3. How opinions expressed through public consultation have been taking into account;
 4. The reasons for choosing this plan or programme as adopted, in light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
 5. The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

2 How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan

- 2.1 The [Final Strategic Environmental Assessment Report](#) (SEA) for the Sedlescombe Neighbourhood Plan sets out the baseline information about the Parish of Sedlescombe as the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Plan identifies the environmental issues affecting the plan area.
- 2.2 Additionally, the Sedlescombe Neighbourhood Plan SEA has been informed through a detailed [State of the Parish Report](#) which identifies key plans, policies, and guidance, which have influenced the content of the Neighbourhood Plan. The issues identified informed the setting of environmental objectives, which the objectives for the Sedlescombe Neighbourhood Plan were assessed against. These objectives have helped ensure that the most sustainable location options were identified. The identification of environmental issues also helped shape the policy requirements for each site that is allocated or identified in the Sedlescombe Neighbourhood Plan.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/regulation/16/made>

3 How the Environmental Report has been taken into account

- 3.1 The SEA has contributed to the development of the Sedlescombe Neighbourhood Plan in that it provides a distinct assessment, specifically against environmental objectives, independent of the plan objectives, of the site options for possible allocation, and of the policies which make up the Plan itself.
- 3.2 In 2013, Sedlescombe Parish Council prepared the SEA alongside the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. The SEA process began with a request for a Screening Opinion, which the Parish Council sent to Rother District Council. Upon receiving advice from the Statutory Consultees, Rother District Council confirmed that the Neighbourhood Plan would need an SEA. The Parish Council prepared an SEA, which was consulted upon at both Regulation 14 and 16 stages of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations². Statutory Environmental Bodies and other key consultees were invited to make representations. Upon examination of this initial Neighbourhood Plan in 2015, the Parish chose to withdraw the Neighbourhood Plan, as the Examiner's modifications would have changed the plan from the vision and objectives that the Plan sought to achieve.
- 3.3 The current Neighbourhood Plan was prepared in 2016 by the Parish Council. Rother District Council confirmed that the new Plan would not have to be re-scoped, as the baseline information had not changed. However, a new SEA would have to be prepared and consulted upon at each stage.
- 3.4 The baseline for the SEA was informed by the Sustainability Appraisal of Rother District Council's Core Strategy, with those environmental objectives of greatest relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan selected.
- 3.5 Draft policies found within the Pre-Submission (Regulation 14) and the Submission (Regulation 16) Neighbourhood Plan were accompanied by, and supported by, an SEA. The SEA assesses each Plan objective and Plan policy against the SEA objectives, and in some cases, the option of having no policy.

4 How opinions expressed through public consultation have been addressed

- 4.1 Key Environmental Bodies: The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 2001 requires that authorities referred to in article 6(3)³ shall be consulted when deciding upon the scope and the level of detail in the SEA. In England, the key bodies are: Environment Agency; Historic England; and Natural England. These bodies were all consulted by Rother District Council when screening/scoping the Neighbourhood Plan prior to Regulation 14. They were also consulted during representative public consultations throughout the Neighbourhood Plan process.
- 4.2 Public Participation: Article 6(2) of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive requires the public to have an early and effective opportunity within appropriate timeframes to express their opinion on the draft plan or programme, and the accompanying Environmental Report, before the adoption of the plan or programme or its submission to the legislative procedure.

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/637/regulation/14/made>

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042>

4.3 The SEA was consulted upon alongside the Sedlescombe Neighbourhood Plan for six weeks at the Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 stage (15 July to 12 September 2016), and for a further six weeks alongside the Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 16 Submission Consultation (28 November 2016 to 23 January 2017). Responses to comments made to the SEAs are embraced within the Consultation Statement. Changes were made to the draft SEA as a consequence of consultation. In addition, the Examiner also considered the SEA and refers to it in his Report.

5 The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as ‘made’, in the light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with

5.1 Paragraph 12(2b) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 requires environmental reports to examine reasonable alternatives for the plan or programme while taking account of the objectives and the scope of the plan or programme. This statement is required to set out the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as ‘made’ in light of other reasonable alternatives.

5.2 At both stages of the neighbourhood planning process, policies were assessed against alternatives such as not having a Neighbourhood Plan or not allocating sites.

5.3 The final Sedlescombe Neighbourhood Plan has been ‘made’ in line with recommendations of a suitably qualified Independent Examiner. Although representations were raised during the Regulation 16 Consultation regarding the final SEA, the Examiner responsible for determining if the Plan meets basic conditions found that the final SEA was not defective⁴ and that the Neighbourhood Plan, with appropriate modifications, met all the ‘basic conditions’ and could proceed to referendum.

5.4 Subsequent to the Examination but prior to the making of the Neighbourhood Plan, recent monitoring of Nitrogen deposition on Ashdown Forest prompted Rother District Council to undertake further HRA Screening of the Plan’s policies to determine whether the resultant development may contribute to a likely significant effect on a Special Area of Conservation, even though well removed. The screening found that the impact of all likely developments in the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be imperceptible in terms of annual average daily traffic (AADT) movement, and, hence, could be screened out. Hence, no further HRA or SEA assessments were required.

6 The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme

6.1 The SEA process does not finish with the publication of the document. Under Regulation 17 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulation 2004⁵, the Sedlescombe Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to on-going monitoring. This will be carried out by jointly Sedlescombe Parish Council and Rother District Council. The latter will monitor the continuing suitability of the Neighbourhood Plan’s policies, including in terms of significant environmental effects, through its Local Plan Monitoring Report.

⁴ <http://www.rother.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=29248&p=0> P. 27 Paragraphs 90-91

⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/regulation/17/made>

7 Further Information

- 7.1 The Sedlescombe Neighbourhood Plan, the SEA and related documents can be viewed online at <http://www.rother.gov.uk/Sedlescombe-Neighbourhood-Plan>
 - 7.2 Additionally, hard copies of the documents are available to view at Rother District Council Offices at Town Hall, Bexhill between the hours of 8:30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday and 8:30am to 4:30pm Friday.
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