



Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2028 Strategic Environmental Assessment Adoption Statement:

July 2018

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Rother District Council made the [Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan](#) part of the Development Plan at Full Council on 9 July 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 \(SEA\) \(revised as requested by Examiner post hearing\)](#) for the Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan sets out the baseline information about the Parish of Salehurst and Robertsbridge as the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Plan identifies the environmental issues affecting the plan area.
- 2.2 Additionally, the Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan SEA has been informed through detailed [Evidence Base Documents](#) which identify 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 Salehurst and Robertsbridge 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 Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/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 Salehurst and Robertsbridge 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 2016, Salehurst and Robertsbridge 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.
- 3.3 The baseline for the SEA was also informed by the Sustainability Appraisal of Rother District Council's Core Strategy, with those environmental objectives of greatest relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan selected.
- 3.4 Upon examination of the Neighbourhood Plan in 2017, including a hearing, the Examiner Mr John Slater had careful regard to the SEA and requested that further work be undertaken on the SEA in order to be more explicit on the assessment, clearly comparing the alternatives including the preferred approach and how these were assessed against the baseline environmental characteristics of the area. The revisions were to clearly identify the significant positive and negative effects of each alternative.
- 3.5 In accordance with the Examiner's requirements the submitted SEA was revised to ensure consistency in the scoring of all the sites and, for completeness, includes a Sustainability Appraisal of those sites as well as a Sequential Test to address comments from the Examiner and other representations made. It outlines the reasons the alternatives were selected, the reasons the rejected options were not taken forward and the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in the light of the alternatives. The SEA includes a revised conclusion on the overall social, environmental and economic impact of the different alternatives, including those selected as the preferred approach in the SRNP
- 3.6 The revised Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan as described above was subject to a further 28 day consultation in November 2017.

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

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 respective 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.
- 4.3 The SEA was consulted upon alongside the Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan for six weeks at the Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 stage (26 September to 7 November 2016), and for a further six weeks alongside the Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 16 Submission Consultation (10 February to 24 March 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. Significantly, in 2017 the Examiner sought specific revisions to the SEA which have been incorporated into the revised SEA dated 31 October 2017.

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 or allocating other sites
- 5.3. In respect of the revised SEA the Examiner concluded that “*whilst parties may have issues with the contents of the Environmental Report I am satisfied that the basic conditions regarding compliance with European legislation are met*”

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

- 5.4 The final Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan has been ‘made’ in line with recommendations of the Examiner which stated as follows:
“I can confirm that my overall conclusions are that the Plan, if amended in line with my recommendations, meets all the statutory requirements including the basic conditions test and that it is appropriate, if successful at referendum, that the Plan, as amended, be made.” He also recommended that the referendum area be Salehurst and Robertsbridge Parish.
- 5.5 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 2004⁴, the Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to on-going monitoring. This will be carried out by jointly Salehurst and Robertsbridge 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.

7 Further Information

- 7.1 The Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Plan, the SEA and related documents can be viewed online at <http://www.rother.gov.uk/Salehurst-and-Robertsbridge-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.

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/regulation/17/made>