

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Determination Statement



NORWICH
City Council

Norwich Over the Wensum Neighbourhood Plan

This determination statement has been produced by Norwich City Council as the “responsible authority”, to meet the requirements of Regulations 9 and 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The regulations implement European Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the affects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

SEA & HRA Screening Assessment of Norwich Over the Wensum Neighbourhood Plan

Norwich Over the Wensum (NOW) neighbourhood forum are in the process of preparing a neighbourhood plan for their designated neighbourhood area. SEA and HRA screening assessments were undertaken for the draft version of the neighbourhood plan, and a subsequent draft report was produced in October 2024. This was a preliminary draft screening assessment, subject to consultation with the statutory bodies.

Consultation with Statutory Bodies

The draft screening report detailing the results of the initial screening assessments of the draft plan and the preliminary conclusion by the council, that the plan could result in likely significant environment effects, was circulated to the statutory bodies; the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England. The statutory bodies were invited to provide comments on the screening report within a 5-week consultation period.

Responses were received from all three consultation bodies, however Natural England’s response was received outside of the 5 week consultation period. Details of the responses can be found in the Appendices of the Screening Report.

In summary:

- The Environment Agency does not disagree with the conclusion that the submission of a full SEA and HRA Appropriate Assessment will be required and provided additional advisory comments of environmental constraints within the neighbourhood area.
- Historic England concurs with the Council’s view that a SEA will be required.
- Natural England advised on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation that significant effects are unlikely. However, the response then advises that Natural England does not hold certain information such as the location of significant populations of protected species or locally specific data on environmental assets, and that the plan may have

environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA. Natural England then advises that advice is sought from local advisors/local sources of information before determining whether SEA is necessary.

The council requested clarification from Natural England on their view that significant effects would be unlikely, however a further response was not received.

The council considers that the screening report contains locally specific information that Natural England have outlined they do not hold. On this basis, and that both other statutory consultation bodies either concur or do not disagree with the preliminary screening opinion, the council considers that this preliminary opinion still stands.

Conclusion

Based on the assessment undertaken in the SEA & HRA screening report and consideration of the responses received from the consultation bodies, the council considers that the neighbourhood plan could have significant environmental effects. Therefore, a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment are required.

Norwich City Council, February 2025