

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Lancaster City Council has prepared this screening report to support Aldcliffe with Stodday Parish Council in determining whether the contents of the proposed Aldcliffe with Stodday Neighbourhood Plan is likely to require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- 1.2 The requirement to undertake environmental assessment of plans and programmes was established in the EU Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive), transposed into English law in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations SEA is required where a plan or programme is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The assessment provides the main mechanism for ensuring that the environmental implications of decisions are considered before decisions are made and should be an integral part of plan preparation where potential for significant effects on the environment have been identified.
- 1.3 Under its 'duty to support' Lancaster City Council has been requested to determine whether, based on the preparation of the 2020 Draft Version of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Aldcliffe with Stodday Neighbourhood Plan requires a SEA.

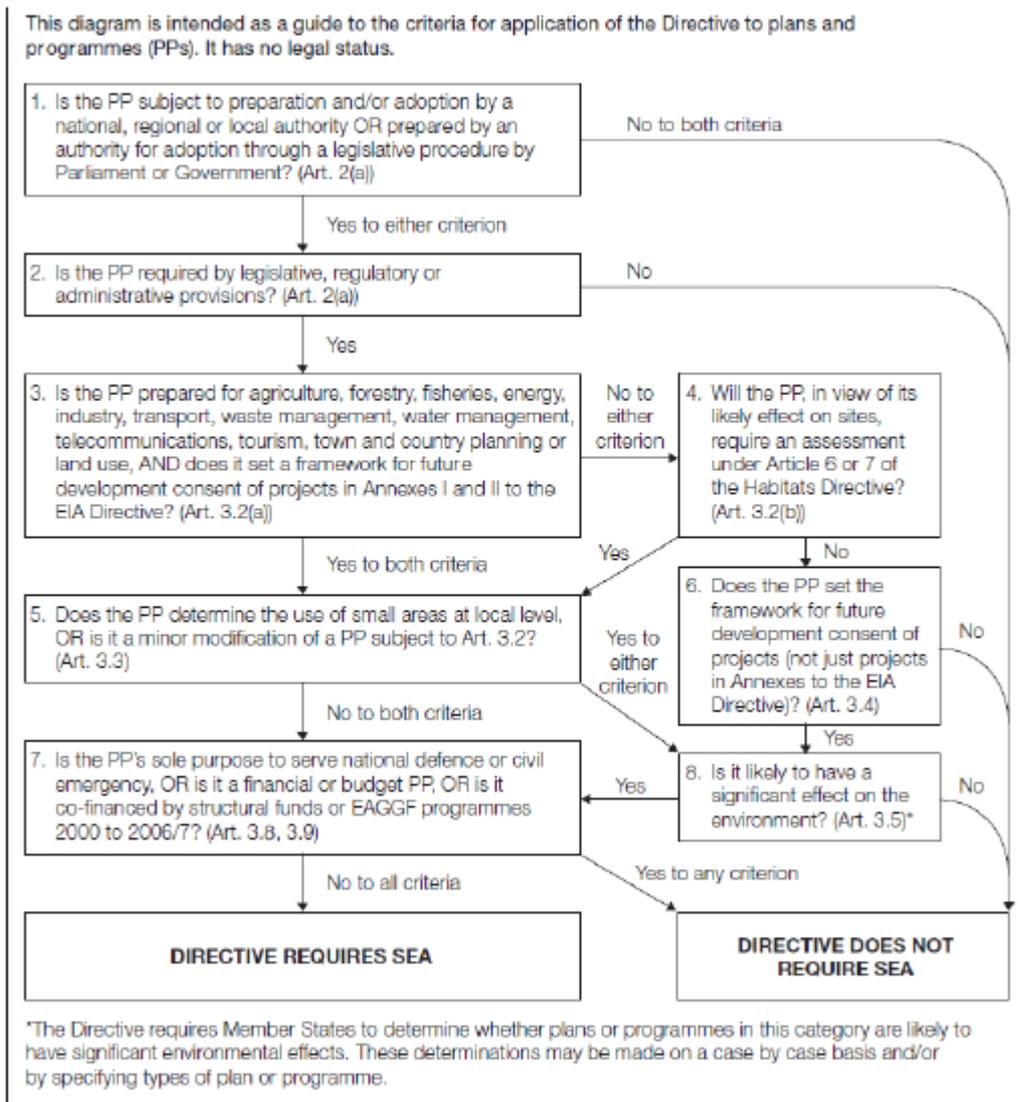
## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Neighbourhood Planning gives local communities the opportunity to prepare planning documents for their area, enabling them to shape the future of where they live and giving them greater ownership of the plans and policies that affect them. Introduced under the Localism Act in 2011 Neighbourhood Plans provide a new tier of planning policy.
- 2.2 Planning policy for the district is established in the Lancaster District Local Plan. This currently consists of policies contained in the now adopted Strategic Policies and Land Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD), the Development Management DPD, The Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) DPD and the Morecambe Area Action Plan`.
- 2.3 The Neighbourhood plan area for Aldcliffe with Stodday was formally designated on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018. This confirmed the Parish Council's commitment to preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and identified the proposed Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 2.4 Following on-going discussions with the city council Aldcliffe with Stodday Parish Council have prepared a Draft Neighbourhood Plan Document (August 2020). Lancaster City Council have used this information to undertake initial SEA screening of the Neighbourhood Plan.

## **3 SEA Screening**

- 3.1 The draft Neighbourhood Plan has been assessed using guidance provided in the Department of the Environment 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (September 2005) (Figure 1). This describes the process through which plans and programmes should be assessed.

Figure 1 – Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes



3.2 The city council has followed this process with the findings of the assessment described in table 1.

**Table 1** – SEA Assessment

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (ART. 2 (a))	Y	The Neighbourhood Plan is not a Development Plan Document, however if the document received 50% or more 'yes' votes through a referendum it will be adopted by Lancaster City Council.

<p>2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions (ART. 2 (a))</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>Communities have a right to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan, however they are not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative purposes to produce one. The Plan however if adopted would form part of the Development Plan and as such it is considered necessary to answer the following questions to determine further if SEA is required.</p>
<p>3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, and does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II of the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2 (a))</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared for town and country planning and land use and will when adopted set out a framework for future development in the Neighbourhood Plan designated area. This could potentially include uses detailed in Annexes I and II of the EIA Directive.</p>
<p>4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effects on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art 3.2 (b))</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The location of three European sites within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary together with the proximity of other European sites within 15km indicate that there could be potential for the plan to have a significant adverse effect on a European site.</p> <p>The strong focus of the Plan on the environment, lack of allocations and existence of higher level Local Plan policies are considered to make this unlikely. This is confirmed in the initial HRA screening of the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>
<p>5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, or is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan has potential to determine the use of small areas at a local level, whether that is through the</p>

		application of detailed criteria or the allocation of land.
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (ART 3.4)	Y	The Neighbourhood Plan contains policies through which planning applications within the designated area will be determined.
7. Is the PP's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, or is it a financial or budget PP, or is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/07? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	N	N/A
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art 3.5)	N	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan will need to be in full conformity with national planning policy and general conformity with local planning policy. This includes policies contained in the Local Plan.</p> <p>Provided that the Neighbourhood Plan remains in conformity with these documents it is considered unlikely that there will be any significant effects emerging from the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>It is noted that no allocations are proposed within the Neighbourhood Plan area with only very limited levels of development supported.</p> <p>The remaining policies within the Plan are criteria based and place a strong focus on protecting the environment and the historic environment.</p> <p>Given the nature of the plan, the strong focus on environmental designations, wider environment and heritage assets and existence of higher-level policies within</p>

		<p>the Lancaster District Local Plan officers would conclude that the Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment. Confirmation on this is requested from the three statutory bodies.</p> <p>The need to consider cumulative impacts is currently absent. The document should be expanded to ensure that cumulative impacts are fully considered.</p>
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3.3 Further analysis on the likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to Schedule 1 of the Regulations is provided below.

Table 2- Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

<b>SEA Requirement</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</b>	
(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	The Neighbourhood Plan has potential to determine the use of small areas at a local level, whether that is through the application of detailed criteria or the allocation of land.
b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The Plan sits in a hierarchy and must be in conformity with strategic policies in the development plan. It is unlikely to influence other plans and programmes.
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	The Neighbourhood Plan will promote sustainable development. It has a strong focus on environmental protection and ensuring natural and built assets are protected. This includes protection of heritage assets.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	There are no environmental problems relevant to this plan.
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The Neighbourhood Plan has no relevance to the implementation of Community legislation.
<b>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to</b>	
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(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	The Neighbourhood Plan covers an 11-year plan period and seeks to meet residents' needs balanced with the protection of the wider natural and historic environment. The need to maintain the historic nature, biodiversity and

	<p>landscape of the Parish is given a strong focus. The Plan places a strong emphasis on protecting the environmental qualities, historic assets and local community of the area.</p> <p>The strong environmental and historic focus make it unlikely that significant effects will occur.</p>
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects	<p>Whilst promoting limited development, the absence of allocations and strong environmental focus together with protective criteria make it unlikely that negative significant environmental effects will occur either individually or cumulatively with other development and decisions. The Plan must also be in conformity with the Lancaster District Local Plan. This will ensure the protection of environmental assets.</p> <p>To ensure compliance with SEA regulations it is recommended that reference to the need to consider the cumulative impacts of potential proposals be included.</p>
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects	There are no transboundary effects. The Plan applies to the Neighbourhood Plan only.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	The Plan poses no risk to human health.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	Effects are considered to be limited to the Neighbourhood Plan area only.
(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to - (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use; and	<p>Whilst there is potential for impacts to environmental and heritage assets the wording of the plan and strong focus on protection make this unlikely. The Plan is very much focussed on ensuring that the special qualities of this area are protected.</p> <p>The plan contains specific policies for the protection of these assets including their setting.</p>
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	The Plan is very much focussed on ensuring that the special qualities of this area are protected.

#### 4 Screening Outcome

4.3 Initial internal screening of the Neighbourhood Plan concludes that it is unlikely that the Neighbourhood Plan would result in a significant environmental effect. The strong focus of the

Neighbourhood Plan on the protection of the environment, heritage assets and lack of allocations make it unlikely to result in significant effects.

- 4.4 In order to ensure compliance with the SEA regulations it is recommended that additional reference be made within the plan to the consideration of cumulative impacts when considering proposals.
- 4.5 Subject to the above amendments the council is satisfied that the Plan is unlikely to result in significant effects.
- 4.6 The views of the three statutory bodies is requested before this can be confirmed.