

North West Hatfield Masterplan SPD
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats
Regulations Assessment (HRA)
Screening report
Statement of Reasons

This statement has been produced to comply with Regulation 9(3) and Regulation 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).

The SEA Regulations implement the requirements of EU Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

Under the terms of the Regulations certain types of plans and programmes including those prepared and adopted by any authority at national, regional, or local level, must be subject to an assessment of whether or not they are likely to have significant environmental effects.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) requires an assessment of the likely significant effects of plans or projects on European wildlife sites. This is known as Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA). Where a HRA is required, a SEA will also be required.

The environmental assessment must be undertaken during the preparation of the plan or programme in order to inform its development and must be completed and reported on prior to the adoption of the plan or programme.

Where the responsible authority, having taken account of the available evidence and the views of the consultation bodies, determines that a plan or programme does not require environmental assessment (i.e., that it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects), a statement of reasons must be prepared, and published.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council produced a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Initial Screening Report for the North West Hatfield Masterplan SPD. This was subject to consultation with the three statutory consultees (Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency).

The responses received from the three statutory consultees did not raise any matters or issues that changed the Council's opinion that SEA/HRA would not be required for the North West Hatfield Masterplan SPD. The consultation responses are included as Appendices to the Screening Opinion document.

Therefore, the Council's Screening Opinion concluded that the Masterplan SPD does not require a SEA or a HRA.

The reasons for this are:

- The North West Hatfield site has been through the site selection process and the type and volume of development to be provided at the site is defined by Policies SADM 26 and SP 22 of the adopted Local Plan.
- The Local Plan was subject to a combined Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the environmental impact was found to be acceptable subject to the mitigation measures which are embedded into the Local Plan 2016 (Adopted 2023).
- A Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) for the Local Plan assessed the impact of development in Welwyn Hatfield on the four international designated European sites and concluded that the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan would not have any significant environmental effects on any of these sites.
- The proposed SPD does not alter the quantum of development to be provided at North West Hatfield but further expands on the design guidance and principles set out in Policy SP 22 of the adopted Local Plan.
- The area of land covered by the proposed SPD is consistent with that identified by Policy SP 22 of the adopted Local Plan.
- The proposed SPD does not alter or disapply any of the policies set out for the protection of the environment or communities in the adopted Local Plan.
- The environmental effects associated with the North West Hatfield site as allocated in the Local Plan (as previously assessed through the Local Plan preparation and examination process) would not be significantly altered as a result of the adoption of the SPD.
- The SPD therefore does not require environmental assessment under the provisions of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 or the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.