

# Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Aylesbury South Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document

## SEA Screening Document

August 2021



**LEPUS** CONSULTING  
LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY, PLANNING & URBAN SUSTAINABILITY



Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Aylesbury  
South Masterplan  
Supplementary Planning Document  
**SEA Screening Document**

LC-718	Document Control Box
Client	Buckinghamshire Council
Report Title	Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Aylesbury South Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document
Filename	LC-718_Aylesbury_SPD_SEA_Screening_14_270821AS.docx
Date	August 2021
Author	AS
Reviewed	LB
Approved	ND

Photo: The Chiltern Hills AONB by Richard Gillin

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# Acronyms & Abbreviations

<b>AONB</b>	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GI</b>	Green Infrastructure
<b>HRA</b>	Habitats Regulations Assessment
<b>IRZ</b>	Impact Risk Zone
<b>LNR</b>	Local Nature Reserve
<b>LPA</b>	Local Planning Authority
<b>LPA</b>	Local Planning Authority
<b>LSE</b>	Likely Significant Effect
<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
<b>ODPM</b>	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
<b>PP</b>	Policy or Programme
<b>PPG</b>	Planning Policy Guidance
<b>SA</b>	Sustainability Appraisal
<b>SAC</b>	Special Area of Conservation
<b>SEA</b>	Strategic Environmental Assessment
<b>SPD</b>	Supplementary Planning Document
<b>SSSI</b>	Site of Special Scientific Interest
<b>VALP</b>	Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 This report

1.1.1 This Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening report has been prepared to determine whether the Aylesbury South Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) should be subject to an SEA, in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive)<sup>1</sup> and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations)<sup>2</sup>.

1.1.2 This SEA screening report is based on the proposed content of the SPD, which is currently in draft as per the information presented in the Aylesbury South (D-AGT 1) Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Statement version 1.1 dated 04 June 2021 as prepared by Buckinghamshire Council.

## 1.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment

1.2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessment legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC. This was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations). Detailed guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive'<sup>3</sup> and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) 'Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal' section<sup>4</sup>.

1.2.2 Under the requirements of the European Directive 2001/42/EC and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, certain types of plans that set the framework for the consent of future development projects must be subject to an environmental assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=en> [Date Accessed: 05/08/21]

<sup>2</sup> The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date Accessed: 05/08/21]

<sup>3</sup> ODPM (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf) [Date Accessed: 05/08/21]

<sup>4</sup> Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal> [Date Accessed: 05/08/21]

1.2.3 A previous SA was carried out for the VALP by AECOM<sup>5</sup> which considered the sustainability performance including assessment of policies within the VALP but did not assess the specific content of the SPD.

### 1.3 Aylesbury South Masterplan SPD

1.3.1 The Aylesbury South Masterplan SPD will provide a framework for the development of the proposed site D-AGT1 'South Aylesbury' allocated within the emerging Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). D-AGT1 is a strategic site which forms part of the proposed Aylesbury Garden Town, which is the focus for the majority of Aylesbury District's growth.

1.3.2 Site D-AGT1 is proposed to include the development of:

- At least 1,000 dwellings;
- One primary school;
- Multi-functional green infrastructure;
- Aylesbury South East Link Road (A413 to B4443 Lower Road);
- Local Centre; and
- Cycling and walking links.

1.3.3 The SPD takes the proposals from the VALP and outlines the aspirations of the area as well as responses and key issues that will influence the new development. The SPD will be a material consideration, which expands on policies set out in the VALP, to help guide the preparation and assessment of future planning applications within the site.

1.3.4 **Table 1.1** below presents the criteria for development at D-AGT1 as proposed within the VALP Proposed Submission Plan (November 2017) as Proposed to be Further Modified (October 2019)<sup>6</sup>.

**Table 1.1:** D-AGT1 South Aylesbury Site Allocation criteria as presented in the VALP as Proposed to be Further Modified

#### D-AGT1 South Aylesbury Criteria

- a. Provision of land for at least 1,000 dwellings at a density that takes account of the adjacent settlement character and identity, integrates new development with the existing built area of Aylesbury and responds positively to the best characteristics of the surrounding area
- b. Provision of 5 Gypsy and Traveller pitches
- c. Safeguarding the land required for the delivery of a dual carriageway distributor road between B4443 Lower Road and A413 Wendover Road to cross the railway line (the SEALR), with sufficient land for associated works including but not limited to earthworks, drainage and structures

<sup>5</sup> VALP SA report Available at: <https://www.aylesburyvaldc.gov.uk/sustainability-appraisal-sa> (Date Accessed: 25/08/2021)

<sup>6</sup> Aylesbury Vale District Council (2019) Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013-2033. Proposed Submission Plan (November 2017) as Proposed to be Modified (October 2019) (showing main and additional modifications). Available at: [https://www.aylesburyvaldc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/page\\_downloads/MASTER%20main%20mods%20VALP%20final\\_1.pdf](https://www.aylesburyvaldc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/page_downloads/MASTER%20main%20mods%20VALP%20final_1.pdf) [Date Accessed: 05/08/21]

### D-AGT1 South Aylesbury Criteria

- d. Provision of new access points into the development parcels from the B4443 (Lower Road) and A413 (Wendover Road). No vehicular access to or from the South East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR) will be permitted to serve the development parcels.
- e. Provision for public transport into the town and to surrounding areas
- f. Existing vegetation should be retained where practicable, including existing woodlands and hedgerows. Existing public rights of way need to be retained and integrated into the development within safe and secure environments as part of a wider network of sustainable routes, to directly and appropriately link the site with surrounding communities and facilities
- g. Proposals must retain and enhance existing habitats where practicable, including the creation of linkages with surrounding wildlife assets and green corridors linking development with the wider countryside and surrounding communities.
- h. Provision and management of 50% green infrastructure to link to other new development areas and the wider countryside as part of a high quality built and semi-natural environment
- i. The development should be designed using a landscape-led approach including consideration of the long-distance views of the AONB and the field pattern and landscape features on the site
- j. Detailed modelling will be required to confirm 1 in 20, 100 and 1,000 year extents and 1 in 100 year plus climate change extents on the ordinary watercourse (see SFRA Level 2)
- k. Surface water modelling should be undertaken to define the level of surface water risk and the risk areas/flow paths. Climate change should be modelled using the +40% allowance (February 2016) for rainfall intensity. A surface water drainage strategy should ensure that the development does not increase flood risk elsewhere. Opportunity to mitigate against potential surface water flooding of Stoke Mandeville Hospital
- l. Risk of overtopping or breach of the Aylesbury Arm (Grand Union Canal) should be modelled
- m. The development should be designed using a sequential approach. Flood Zones 2 and 3, and 3a plus climate change (subject to a detailed flood risk assessment) should be preserved as green space as shown in the policies map as the area of 'not built development'. Built development should be restricted to Flood Zone 1
- n. Drainage designs should 'design for exceedance' and accommodate existing surface water flow routes, with development located outside surface water flood area
- o. Provision of a buffer between the new development and Stoke Mandeville to maintain the setting and individual identity of the settlement of Stoke Mandeville
- p. Provision of land, buildings and car parking for a combined primary school, including playing field provision, and a contribution to secondary school provision
- q. Provision of land, buildings and car parking for a new local centre, including retail
- r. Provision of financial contributions towards off-site health facilities
- s. Provision of community buildings, including temporary buildings if necessary
- t. Provision of and contribution to infrastructure as appropriate.
- u. Retention of the Grade II listed Magpie Cottage within an appropriate setting

1.3.5 The SPD will be a Masterplan which expands upon the policy contained within the VALP and provides a framework to help guide the preparation and assessment of future planning applications within proposed site D-AGT1.

1.3.6 It incorporates the requirements of various plans and policies, including:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2021:

- Planning Practice Guidance;
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006): Biodiversity Duty (sections 40 and 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006);
- HM Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' (2018);
- Upcoming Environment Act (likely to be enacted Spring 2021): building on the Environment Bill (2019);
- Biodiversity Action Plan: Forward to 2020 for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes;
- Vision and Principles for the Improvement of Green Infrastructure in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (2018) and the accompanying Green Infrastructure opportunities mapping (2018);
- Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2018) and Strategy (2009);
- Transport schemes under Policy T2 Protected Transport Schemes shown in the upcoming VALP (2013-2033);
- Policies D2 and S4 support infrastructure delivery which is stated in the upcoming VALP (2013-2033); and
- Other relevant Local Plan policies.

1.3.7 The plans and policies set out above require that development proposals protect the natural environment including internationally, nationally and locally designated biodiversity sites, and seek to ensure that ecological networks and Green Infrastructure (GI) assets are protected and enhanced, alongside delivering the required growth. The plans and policies above will help form decisions on site development for D-AGT1 with considerations to the local area.

1.3.8 The site boundary for D-AGT1 is shown in **Figure 1.1**. The site comprises approximately 95ha of largely undeveloped land and lies to the south east of Aylesbury Town.



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## 1.4 Consultation

- 1.4.1 The SPD is subject to public consultation, which provides an opportunity for the public and local organisations to comment on the SPD. After consultation, responses are taken into account and, if relevant, are used to prepare an updated version of the SPD.
- 1.4.2 The updated version is then adopted by the Council, following the formal adoption procedure for an SPD<sup>7</sup>.

## 1.5 Relationship with the Local Plan

- 1.5.1 The SPD is a planning document, produced at the local level to provide more detail, advice or guidance on local policies. This SPD sets out the agreed strategy for mitigating the impact of new development on the environment, by ensuring that the Masterplan is comprehensive in regard to the delivery of future development and its implications within Buckinghamshire Council, arising as a consequence of the VALP.
- 1.5.2 The purpose of the SPD is to provide further guidance and information for the development of the strategic allocated site D-AGT1 which has been proposed in the emerging VALP. The strategy for mitigation includes retaining and enhancing on-site GI and habitats, providing improved transport links including walking and cycle paths as well as public transport infrastructure, and a requirement to carry out detailed modelling with regards to flood risk and water management. The SPD does not seek to introduce any new policies.
- 1.5.3 Should the SPD be significantly refined in the future, a re-screening of any significant amendments should be undertaken for the purposes of the SEA screening processes.

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<sup>7</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. Part 5 Supplementary Planning Documents. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/2204/part/5/made> [Date Accessed: 05/08/21]

## 2 SEA Screening

### 2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment

2.1.1 SEA seeks to ensure that environmental considerations are part of the process of preparing certain plans and programmes. The objective of the SEA Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes, with a view to promoting sustainable development. It helps to ensure that, in accordance with the Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

2.1.2 The process for determining whether or not an SEA is required is called screening. In order to screen, it is necessary to determine if a plan will have significant environmental effects using the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule I of the SEA Regulations. Regulation 9(2)(b) states that a determination cannot be made until the three statutory consultation bodies have been consulted: The Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England.

2.1.3 A specific time limited consultation period with the three statutory bodies is not prescribed in law but a period of three weeks is considered appropriate. Following receipt of consultation comments, the Councils may then finalise the screening determination. Regulation 11 (1) states that within 28 days of its determination, the local planning authority must send a copy of the determination, setting out its decision to the consultation bodies. Where the Local Planning Authority (LPA) has determined that an SEA is not required, the determination must include the reasons for this. The determination should also be shared with the public.

### 2.2 The screening process

2.2.1 Paragraph 008 (Revised 06/03/2014) of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) 'Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal' section states:

*"Supplementary planning documents do not require a sustainability appraisal but may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already have been assessed during the preparation of the relevant strategic policies."*

2.2.2 Paragraph 047 of this PPG (Revised 22/07/2019) also states

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*“An appropriate assessment, under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), identifies whether a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This assessment must determine whether significant effects on that site can be ruled out on the basis of objective information.*

*If the conclusion is that the plan is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site then an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan for the site, in view of the site’s conservation objectives, must be undertaken. If the plan is determined to require an appropriate assessment then it will normally also require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.”*

2.2.3 **Figure 2.1** presents a diagram prepared by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (2005). This shows the application of the SEA process to plans and programmes. The sequential approach in the flow diagram can be used to screen the Aylesbury South Masterplan SPD.

2.2.4 **Table 2.1** uses the questions presented in **Figure 2.1** to establish whether the Aylesbury South Masterplan SPD is likely to require an SEA or not.

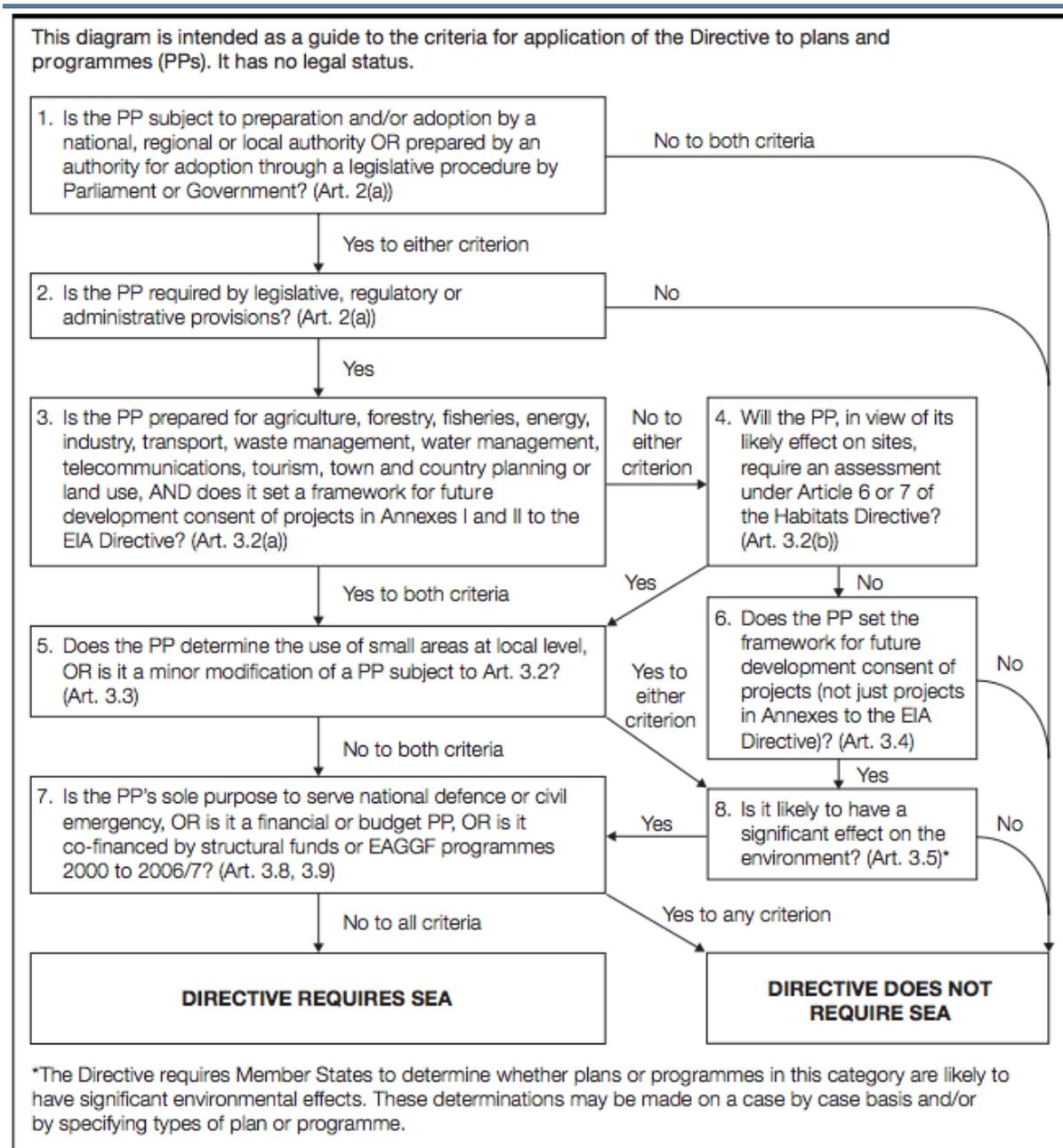


Figure 2.1: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes (source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) <sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup>Tyldesley, D., and Chapman, C. (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook (October) (2018) edition UK: DTA Publications Limited. Available at: [www.dtapublications.co.uk](http://www.dtapublications.co.uk)

**Table 2.1:** Establishing whether there is a requirement for SEA.

Stage	Y/N	Reason
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))	Yes	The SPD is prepared by, and will be adopted by, the local authority (Buckinghamshire Council).
Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	The SPD is prepared under the Town and Country Planning Regulations 2012. The SPD is a requirement of emerging VALP Planning Policy 'D-AGT1 South Aylesbury'. Once adopted, in collaboration with the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan, it will provide a detailed guide for development of the D-AGT1 site.
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 to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	No	The SPD is being prepared to inform the design principles of the D-AGT1 allocation. The VALP establishes the development framework and sets the requirement and high-level specification for the SPD. The SPD will form a material consideration which will be considered by the Local Planning Authority when determining any future planning applications for the area.
Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	Yes	The requirement for Appropriate Assessment of land at the SPD location was identified by Buckinghamshire Council in an HRA screening report (June, 2021).
Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	No	The SPD provides further guidance and information to the expected time of development delivery for the proposed 1,000 homes, new primary school, local centre, Green Infrastructure and cycling and walking links for the South Aylesbury site. The SPD will provide further guidance on the design principles to be applied at the D-AGT1 site as stated in the VALP.
Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment (Art 3.5)?	Yes	Likely significant effects have been identified for biodiversity, climate change, cultural heritage and landscape.

## 2.3 Relevance to the SEA Directive

2.3.1 Question 8 within the ODPM guidance flowchart (see **Figure 2.1**) refers to whether the SPD would have a significant effect on the environment. The criteria from Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 can be used to consider the relevance of the Plan to the SEA Directive. **Sections 2.5 – 2.12** consider the likely environmental effects of the plan.

**Table 2.2: South Aylesbury Masterplan and the SEA Directive**

Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of Regulations)	Response
<b>The characteristics of plans and programmes</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 South Aylesbury Masterplan SPD sets a framework by providing detail regarding the site allocation D-AGT1 'Aylesbury South' as set out in the emerging VALP. The SPD will form a material consideration for the nature and operating conditions of the development.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The SPD provides additional guidance and details regarding site D-AGT1 as set out in the VALP. It does not create new policies.
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	There are opportunities to integrate environmental considerations within the South Aylesbury Masterplan. The SPD aims to conserve important aspects of the built and natural environment. The SPD includes measures to improve local facilities and allow for sustainable growth, as well as preserving the rural character of the Neighbourhood Area whilst protecting open spaces and the natural environment is very important to the council (see <b>Appendix A</b> ).
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	The potential characteristics and effects of the SPD, which include consideration of existing environmental problems, have been screened in sections 2.4 – 2.12 of this document.
(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 SPD is a land use plan and sets the framework for future development consents within the VALP.
<b>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected</b>	
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	The potential characteristics and effects of the SPD have been screened in sections 2.4 – 2.12 of this document.
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects	
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects	
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	

Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of Regulations)	Response
(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</li> <li>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values</li> <li>(iii) intensive land-use</li> </ul>	
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status	

## 2.4 Likely Significant Effects

2.4.1 Drawing on the answers to the questions presented in the ODPM flowchart, it can be concluded that the SPD should be screened into the SEA process (see **Table 2.1**). The following paragraphs explore which components of the SPD might be likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment.

2.4.2 A summary of the baseline conditions and a screening assessment of the potential effects of the SPD against each of the topics set out in Annex I (f) of the SEA Directive is presented in the following sections.

## 2.5 Biodiversity, flora and fauna

2.5.1 The closest European designated biodiversity site to the Aylesbury D-AGT1 site is Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), located at its closest point approximately 4.2km south-west from the site. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process has been carried out parallel to the preparation of the VALP to inform the plan-making process to ensure that potential impacts arising from the VALP in relation to this SAC and other European sites have been suitably addressed and mitigated.

2.5.2 An HRA Screening exercise has been completed by Buckinghamshire Council<sup>9</sup>. The screening process identified likely significant effects arising from recreational pressure associated with D-AGT1. Consequently, the Council proposes to prepare an Appropriate Assessment of the SPD.

<sup>9</sup> Aylesbury South (D-AGT 1) Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document. Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Statement. Last updated: 04 June 2021 Version: 1.1 – 04 June 2021

- 2.5.3 There are several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the surrounding area, in particular to the south east along the Chiltern Hills. The closest SSSI to D-AGT1 is Weston Turville Reservoir SSSI, approximately 2.1km to the south east, with Bacombe and Coombe Hills SSSI approximately 3.7km to the south. Site D-AGT1 is located within Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) which do not indicate the proposed site uses as a threat to nearby SSSIs.
- 2.5.4 The site is located approximately 4.4km from the nearest Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Bacombe Hill. There are no nearby National Nature Reserves.
- 2.5.5 A number of stands of ancient woodland can be found towards the south east of Aylesbury Vale, including 'Hale Wood' and 'Aston Hill Coppice/Buckland Hoo', situated over 3km from Site D-AGT1.
- 2.5.6 Site D-AGT1 does not coincide with any known sites of national or local importance for biodiversity, however there is a small section of deciduous woodland priority habitat adjacent to the north of the site boundary, close to Stoke Mandeville Hospital.
- 2.5.7 The site comprises undeveloped land which is primarily agricultural in nature although hedgerow boundaries to fields and pockets of scrub would be expected to provide some ecological value.
- 2.5.8 The proposed development at Site D-AGT1 must be in accordance with VALP policies including Policies NE1 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) and NE8 (Trees, hedgerows and woodlands) which seek to protect and enhance designated sites, protected habitats/species and GI, and deliver biodiversity net gain.
- 2.5.9 The site allocation as proposed within the VALP includes requirements to ensure "*existing vegetation should be retained where practicable, including existing woodlands and hedgerows*" and "*proposals must retain and enhance existing habitats where practicable, including the creation of linkages with surrounding wildlife assets and green corridors*". However, the SPD does not contain any policies with more specific guidance relating to the site. The proposed "*provision and management of 50% green infrastructure to link to other new development areas*" could potentially help to provide a high quality ecological network, ensuring habitat connectivity to the wider area is retained and improved. The SPD could be enhanced through inclusion of more specific detail regarding the proposed GI and how the existing non-designated biodiversity assets (e.g. hedgerows) would be incorporated into this scheme.

2.5.10 The proposed development should also have regard to future outputs of the Buckinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy<sup>10</sup>, as advocated in the emerging Environment Bill.

2.5.11 **Drawing on the findings of the Council’s HRA screening exercise, the SPD would be expected to result in significant effects on biodiversity as a consequence of recreation pressure at the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC.**

## 2.6 Population and human health

2.6.1 The population of Buckinghamshire is approximately 547,060 people<sup>11</sup>, with Aylesbury representing one of the main towns within the Unitary Authority.

2.6.2 Site D-AGT1 lies to the south east of Aylesbury, and as such, new residents would be expected to have generally good access to local services and facilities within the town. The nearest supermarket to the D-AGT1 site is Asda, located approximately 400m to the north west of the site, and a Sainsburys Local approximately 1km to the north. These local facilities may need to expand or a new supermarket provided to be able to cope with the influx of population that the 1,000 new houses will ultimately bring. However, the proposed development includes “*provision of land, buildings and car parking for a new local centre, including retail*”. This could potentially help to ensure that new residents have good access to local shops and services on site, reducing the need to travel further afield.

2.6.3 Stoke Mandeville Hospital is the nearest NHS hospital providing an Accident and Emergency service, 250m minimum distance from the proposed site and a GP clinic (Bedgrove Surgery) is approximately 1km away. These services will need to be monitored and potentially increased in capacity to be able to facilitate the new population increase. The proposed development at site D-AGT1 will include “*provision of financial contributions towards off-site health facilities*” which would be expected to address this however the timescale for delivery of any new or expanded healthcare facilities is uncertain.

<sup>10</sup> Natural Environment Partnership (2021) Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Available at: <https://bucksmknep.co.uk/nature-strategy/overview/> [Date Accessed: 06/08/21]

<sup>11</sup> ONS (2021) Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (Mid-2020). Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland> [Date Accessed: 06/08/21]

- 2.6.4 The South Aylesbury Masterplan includes the development of a new primary school within the D-AGT1 site, which would be likely to ensure that new residents have good access to primary education. The Masterplan however, does not include the development of a new secondary school to facilitate the new population brought to this area. Aylesbury High School, Aylesbury Grammar School, The Mandeville and Pebble Brooke School are all secondary schools within a 2.5km radius of the proposed site however the capacity of these schools is not known. The proposed development at site D-AGT1 includes “*contribution to secondary school provision*” which could potentially help to ensure sufficient secondary school places can be created to support the new development. Furthermore, Policy S1 of the VALP states that development will provide “*access to facilities including healthcare, education, employment, retail and community facilities*” and Policy T5 requires “*the provision of a travel plan to promote sustainable travel patterns for work and education related trips*”.
- 2.6.5 The VALP Policies D-AGT1 – D-AGT6, which deal with specific Aylesbury Garden Town urban extensions, as well as the over-arching Policy D1 ‘Delivering Aylesbury Garden Town’, include a vision that reflects wide-ranging community objectives.
- 2.6.6 The SPD seeks to deliver extensive multi-functional GI, which would be expected to incorporate space for outdoor recreation and exercise, which is known to be beneficial for mental and physical wellbeing. The site is well connected to the existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network, and a local cycle route passes adjacent to the site along Wendover Road. The SPD aims to promote active travel, such as walking or cycling, which would help to encourage not using personal vehicles, and could consequently result in further benefits through improving the air quality and human health.
- 2.6.7 Therefore, the SPD would not be expected to result in significant effects on population and human health.

## 2.7 Transport and accessibility

- 2.7.1 Whilst not an Annex 1(f) topic in itself, transport and accessibility interact with a number of the topics such as population and human health, material assets and climatic factors.
- 2.7.2 Site D-AGT1 is located in close proximity to existing transport infrastructure. Stoke Mandeville Station is located approximately 200m to the south east of the site, and Aylesbury Station approximately 2km to the north west, situated on the main line to London Marylebone. There are several bus stops surrounding the site and it is anticipated that current bus routes would be expected facilitate the requirement to ensure “*provision for public transport into the town and to surrounding areas*”.

- 2.7.3 The new garden community will be, minimum, 2.5km from the centre of town. Development will increase the need for public transport and overall traffic, however, its location with respect to the town will also present opportunities to prioritise more sustainable transport. VALP Policy T1 states that “*the council will assist in delivering the pedestrian, cycle public transportation and public realm improvements to deliver the Aylesbury Garden Town initiative*” and Policy T3 states that the council will actively support proposals identified in the Aylesbury Transport Strategy. Policy T7 promotes and encourages sustainable travel choices through increased walking, cycling and public transport routes connecting the new garden communities with the town and beyond, which should be planned around a user hierarchy that places pedestrians and cyclists at the top. Consideration should also be given to disability discrimination requirements.
- 2.7.4 The South Aylesbury Masterplan will also safeguard land for the development of a new link road between the A413 to B4443 Lower Road which seeks to ease road congestion. Provisions for this link road, means to ensure safe and suitable access into the site and promotion of sustainable transport modes as an alternative to the private car should be considered as part of a Transport Assessment and Transport Statement for the site, with due regard to the Buckinghamshire County Wide Transport Modelling and Aylesbury Transport Study. Transport schemes that will be integral to supporting the growth of Aylesbury Vale will be secured under Policy T2 Protected Transport Schemes and T3 Supporting Local Transport Schemes. Proposals within the site allocation would also be expected to conform with the NPPF and Policies T4 and T5 relating to transport provision for new development in addition to policies T7 and T8 relating to walking, cycling and electric vehicle infrastructure provision.

## 2.8 Soil, water and air

- 2.8.1 The proposed site D-AGT1 comprises approximately 95ha of previously undeveloped land. The majority of the site is situated on Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Grade 3 land, with a small section of ‘Urban’ land to the north west. Development at this site could potentially result in the loss of a significant area of ‘best and most versatile’ agricultural land if the provisional Grade 3 land is found to be Subgrade 3a<sup>12</sup>. The proposed multi-functional GI on site could potentially include community assets such as allotments to make the most of the Grade 3 soil in the area, however, the large scale of development proposed would be expected to result in a loss of ecologically and/or agriculturally valuable soil, to some extent.

<sup>12</sup> Natural England (2009) Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35012> [Date Accessed: 06/08/21]

- 2.8.2 The A413 road runs in a north-south direction linking Aylesbury and Wendover. It is located to the west of the SPD area, adjacent to the site. Development within 200m of a main road could potentially lead to an adverse impact on the health of site end users due to increased levels of air pollutants<sup>13</sup>. There is likely to be scope within the site to ensure new residents are situated away from sources of air pollution, such as roads and railways, through careful design and layout and the use of GI buffers, which should be detailed in the SPD.
- 2.8.3 There are no obvious main watercourses which pass through the site. There is a narrow linear water feature running approximately north-south across the middle of the SPD area. The nearest watercourse is Stoke Brook, situated approximately 440m to the south west.
- 2.8.4 This site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1, and as such would not be expected to direct any development towards areas at risk of fluvial flooding. Some areas of the site (notably the north east along Wendover Road, and the northern corner in proximity to Stoke Mandeville Hospital) coincide with areas identified as being at low, medium and high risk of surface water flooding.
- 2.8.5 The site allocation within the VALP (see **Table 1.1**) states that “*detailed modelling will be required to confirm 1 in 20,100 and 1,000 year extents and 1 in 100 year plus climate change extents on the ordinary watercourse*”, and requires a surface water drainage strategy. All proposals for new development should demonstrate that existing flood risk will not be increased downstream and ideally limit runoff to the greenfield rate or better. In line with the requirements of the NPPF and emerging VALP policies, development should incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to mitigate long term and flash flooding.
- 2.8.6 Policy I5 of the VALP states “*planning applications must demonstrate that adequate capacity is available at wastewater treatment works in time to serve the development*”. There are no site-specific policies to expand on how the capacity upgrades will cope with this increase in water usage or how sustainability in water use will be promoted within site D-AGT1, which would potentially be provided through the SPD.
- 2.8.7 The development of 1,000 new houses, a primary school and a new link road would potentially have an adverse impact on air quality. This should be mitigated wherever possible during construction and occupancy using GI and good planning practises. This is stated in policy NE6 in the VALP.

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<sup>13</sup> The Department for Transport in their Transport Analysis Guidance consider that “*beyond 200m from the link centre, the contribution of vehicle emissions to local pollution levels is not significant*”.

Department for Transport (2019) TAG unit A3 Environmental Impact Appraisal. Available at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/webtag-tag-unit-a3-environmental-impact-appraisal-december-2015> [Date Accessed; 06/08/21]

2.8.8 NE6 within the VALP also considers light pollution that new developments might cause, how they might be mitigated and the protection of wildlife corridors from this light.

## 2.9 Climatic factors

2.9.1 Although the site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1 (see **Section 2.8**), it is likely that flood risk will become more prevalent in future years due to higher flood plain levels and climate change introducing more extreme weather events including higher volumes of rainfall. Multi-functional GI should be used within this development as a buffer for current and future flood risk. It is expected that the requirements of VALP and national policies, alongside the delivery of 50% GI on site, would help to ensure that significant adverse impacts regarding flood risk do not arise.

2.9.2 The proposed new link road between the A143 to B4443 Lower Road could potentially cause some negative impacts in terms of climatic factors, such as an increase in local air pollution. The SPD would be expected to facilitate active travel through the provision of new routes and multi-functional GI. Promoting active travel, such as walking or cycling, as well as improving the provision of public transport links into Aylesbury, would help to encourage new residents to use more sustainable travel modes compared to personal vehicles, and in turn, result in an improvement to the air quality.

2.9.3 The introduction of 1,000 new dwellings will inevitably cause an increase in energy consumption, pollution and traffic during both the construction and occupancy stages, to some extent.

2.9.4 VALP Policy D1 states that “*new garden communities should be designed to be resilient places that allow for changing demographics, future growth and the impacts of climate change by anticipating opportunities for technological change including renewable energy measures*”. In line with Policy C3, development would be expected to utilise sustainable design and construction measures and seek to use decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources for energy where feasible. The SPD would benefit from inclusion of more specific guidance with regards to sustainable energy, water consumption and how the proposed development will be adaptable to climate change.

2.9.5 **The screening assessment concludes that the SPD is likely to lead to significant effects on climate change.**

## 2.10 Material assets

- 2.10.1 The material assets topic considers social, physical and environmental infrastructure; transportation and accessibility has been addressed separately above. This sub-section should be read alongside 'Population and human health', which details health and social infrastructure implications of the SPD; 'Climatic factors', which considers transport infrastructure in terms of sustainable transport; 'Soil, water and air', which considers water infrastructure and agricultural land classification; the 'Biodiversity, flora and fauna' sub-section, which considers environmental infrastructure; and the Transport and Accessibility sub-section.
- 2.10.2 The South Aylesbury Masterplan SPD sets out to build a new primary school and a local centre within this new development. This would be expected to provide some local employment opportunities and improved access to education and local facilities for the area.
- 2.10.3 Policy I3 in the VALP seeks to retain existing local community facilities and consider the development of new facilities. The SPD has proposed a new local community centre which will need to follow the regulations set out in the VALP.
- 2.10.4 As discussed in **Section 2.7**, the site is well-served by existing transport infrastructure and would provide new public transport, pedestrian, cycle and road links alongside the development. The proposed development also seeks to deliver 50% GI on site leading to a high-quality local environment with multi-functional open space with likely benefits to both people and wildlife.
- 2.10.5 Overall, the SPD is not expected to lead to any likely significant effects on material assets.

## 2.11 Cultural Heritage

- 2.11.1 Stoke Mandeville is situated to the south of the proposed site and is currently relatively unconstrained, in that there is no designated conservation area; however, there are several Grade II Listed Buildings within and surrounding the settlement, including a cluster along the B4443 running north to Aylesbury, which represents the western edge of the proposed scheme. This includes the 'Stoke Cottage', 'Lone Ash' and 'Bell Cottage and Tudor Cottage'. One Grade II Listed Building, 'Magpie Cottage', lies within the southwest corner of the site D-AGT1 itself. No other designated heritage assets are located within the vicinity of the site.

2.11.2 Policy BE1, Heritage assets, in the VALP aims to protect the unique character, quality and diversity across the Vale. Any changes or developments must meet the criteria stated in BE1 to preserve and enhance the historic environment. If a development is thought to cause substantial harm to, or loss of, a designated heritage asset including its setting, then the council will not support this development. The proposed development at Site D-AGT1 should ensure the “*retention of the Grade II listed Magpie Cottage within an appropriate setting*” however the SPD could usefully add further clarity to this statement to ensure that the cottage and its setting are protected and enhanced in line with its historic significance.

2.11.3 **It is not clear as to whether or not the SPD is likely to lead to significant effects on heritage resources. On the basis of the precautionary principle, cultural heritage should be screened into the SEA process.**

## 2.12 Landscape

2.12.1 Site D-AGT1 lies within the National Character Area (NCA) ‘Upper Thames Clay Vales’. Key characteristics of this NCA include “*low-lying clay-based flood plains ... gently undulating topography ... fields are regular and hedged*”<sup>14</sup>.

2.12.2 The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is located approximately 2.3km to the south east of the site, at its closest. The settlement of Stoke Mandeville lies between the proposed site and the AONB.

2.12.3 VALP Policy NE4, landscape character and locally important landscape, aims to ensure that the local landscape is maintained. Any development must recognise the individual character and distinctiveness of particular landscape character areas set out in the Landscape Character Assessment and must follow the relevant policies set out in the VALP.

2.12.4 The Round Aylesbury Walk long distance path is one of three walks that circumnavigate Aylesbury. The path is located to help provide open views of the countryside and high quality open air recreational experiences. The SPD is likely to adversely affect the recreational experience associated with the path.

2.12.5 As stated in the previous SA, Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan<sup>15</sup>, completed in 2018, the main concern was the potential results that the expansion of Aylesbury to the south and southeast, may cause for the Chilterns AONB. The completed SA examined the ‘cumulative effects’ of growth at Aylesbury and concluded:

<sup>14</sup> Natural England (2014) NCA Profile: 108 Upper Thames Clay Vales (NE570). Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5865554770395136> [Date Accessed: 06/08/21]

<sup>15</sup> AECOM (2018) Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan. Available at: [https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/page\\_downloads/VALP%20-%20SA%20Report%20170918.pdf](https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/page_downloads/VALP%20-%20SA%20Report%20170918.pdf) [Date Accessed 05/08/21]

*“There would be direct visual effects on the AONB as a result of the cumulative development sites. The visual extent of the cumulative development sites, combined with the existing development at Aylesbury and nearby settlements, would be readily apparent. However, development across the sites will be predominantly low-rise and incorporate substantial mitigation planting, reducing the impact on views across the low-lying vale landscape from the elevated viewpoints within the AONB. The key characteristics of views across the wider landscape would be fundamentally unchanged, in that they would remain expansive across the settled vale landscape. It is considered unlikely that there would be significant cumulative residual landscape and visual effects on the AONB”.*

2.12.6 The proposed development will aim to maintain the setting and individual identity of Stoke Mandeville, through the provision of a buffer. Whilst maintaining the character of the area, the long-distance views across the site to the Chiltern AONB should be maintained as much as practicable by building low lying dwellings. Green corridors, cycle and footpaths should be used to reduce traffic flow, noise, sound and air pollution that may affect the surrounding landscape quality and character. A carefully planned and well-managed GI network, as advocated by the VALP, would be expected to minimise intrusion on the nationally important landscape of the Chiltern Hills AONB.

2.12.7 **It is not clear as to whether or not the SPD is likely to lead to significant effects on landscape: either the AONB or the Round Aylesbury Walk long distance path. On the basis of the precautionary principle, landscape should be screened into the SEA process.**

## 3 Conclusion

### 3.1 SEA screening outcome

3.1.1 This SEA screening report has evaluated the likelihood of any significant effects arising against the criteria set out in the SEA Regulations.

3.1.2 It can be concluded that the emerging AGT1 Aylesbury South Masterplan SPD is likely to have a significant environmental impact on the surrounding area and will therefore require an SEA in relation to:

- Biodiversity;
- Climate Change;
- Cultural Heritage; and
- Landscape.

3.1.3 Furthermore, the requirement for an appropriate assessment of the SPD as identified by the Council consequently triggers the requirement for an SEA under Regulation 5(3) of the SEA Regulations.

### 3.2 Next steps

3.2.1 This report will be subject to consultation with Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England at a date to be determined by the Councils. Their comments will be presented in **Appendix A**. Future development proposals will need individual assessments.

### 3.3 Screening determination

3.3.1 Following receipt of any comments received from the statutory consultation bodies, the Councils will make the screening determination. It will then make the findings available to the statutory bodies and the public, within 28 days of completing the determination.

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# Appendix A: Consultation Responses

*To be completed following consultation with the statutory consultees.*

DRAFT

Ecological Services

Green Infrastructure

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Sustainability Appraisal



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