

Our ref: CNDP Review
Please ask for: Julia Edwards
Direct dial no: 01424 787518
Date: 30 January 2025



Lorna Ford
Chief Executive

Town Hall
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN39 3JX

Gilly Lowe
Clerk to Crowhurst Parish Council

Dear Ms Lowe,

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Opinion for the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan Review

The examiner of the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan Review has advised that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening opinion of the reviewed plan is required in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

A SEA was produced by the Parish Council in 2018 in response to the Council's screening opinion of 24 January 2017 which set out the reasons for the SEA requirement, as below:

1. The CNP will allocate sites and form part of the 'development plan' and thereby exert a direct and substantial influence over development proposals coming forward in the period.
2. The characteristics of the area covered by the CNP (as set out in Schedule 1(2) of the regulations).
3. The CNP needs to consider important environmental factors, notably the area is wholly within the High Weald AONB, which enjoys the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty, as well as the proximity of heritage assets, flood risk areas, a ground water source protection zone, a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) and other environmental assets.

The SEA (2018) considered the Rother District Council Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, as applicable to the SEA process of Neighbourhood Plans within the district, and in particular the following objectives from the Sustainability Appraisal Framework, as advised in the Council's screening opinion:

- 7: Improve accessibility to services and facilities for all ages across the District
- 9: Improve efficiency in land use and encourage the prudent use of natural resources

- 10: Reduce road congestion and pollution levels and ensure air quality continues to improve by increasing travel choice and reducing car usage
- 11: Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases
- 12: Minimise the risk of flooding and resulting detriment to people and property
- 13: Maintain, improve and manage water resources in a sustainable way
- 14: Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity
- 15: Protect and enhance the high quality natural and built environment

The SEA report, prepared by Crowhurst Parish Council, provided an environment assessment under the SEA Directive which assessed whether the plan had significant effects on the environment, by implementation of its policies and proposals. A large part of the parish is located within the High Weald National Landscape as well as having other designated assets such as SSSIs and BAP Habitats. It also contains many listed buildings and a scheduled ancient monument which, combined with the landscape designations, present a significant environmental asset. The SEA states that the Plan aims to preserve and enhance the parish whilst seeking to deliver the homes and infrastructure the village requires to be sustainable.

An HRA was undertaken in 2018 of RDC's Development and Site Allocation Plan (DaSA). The DaSA detailed "development management" policies and allocated specific sites suitable for development in order to meet the Local Plan Core Strategy's targets for the quantum of housing and employment to the end of the Plan period (2028). The HRA also covered the Neighbourhood Plans that were in preparation in the district, including Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan, which allocated sites to meet the Core Strategy's development requirements.

The objective of the HRA (DaSA/Neighbourhood Plans) was to identify if any particular site allocations and policies have the potential to cause an adverse effect on Natura 2000 or European designated sites (Special Areas of Conservation, SACs, Special Protection Areas, SPAs, and Ramsar sites designated under the Ramsar convention), either in isolation or in combination with other plans and projects, and to determine whether site-specific mitigation measures are required.

Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan had not allocated sites when the HRA was published however the assessment considered the Core Strategy requirement of 30 dwellings for the parish. As the village lies a considerable distance from any designated site, the development was considered not likely to have a significant effect on European sites.

The CNP review, submitted to RDC at Regulation 15 in October 2024 covers the parish area, designated as the Neighbourhood Plan Area in November 2017. Updates to the Plan include a new Design Guide, a new dark skies policy, a new policy on renewable energy, an additional green space and certain policies have been strengthened in line with the Climate and Ecological Emergency declared by Crowhurst Parish Council in 2019. Site allocations have been brought forward from the original Plan and the quantum of proposed development remains at 30 dwellings, in accordance with the Crowhurst Parish housing target set out in the Rother Core Strategy 2014.

In view of the above, RDC, as the competent authority, does not consider that the Crowhurst Neighbourhood Plan Review will alter the SEA or HRA outcomes and will not incur additional impacts on the environment or the European designated sites, therefore we do not consider that a review of either the 2018 SEA or HRA Report is required.

Please contact the Neighbourhood Planning officer, Julia Edwards, if you have any questions on the above.

Yours sincerely,

H. Harrison

Holly Harrison
Planning Policy Team Leader