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mediation of space · making of place

Silkstone

Neighbourhood Development Plan

**Habitats Regulations Assessment
Screening Assessment**

Kirkwells

The Planning People

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kirkwells Planning Consultants has prepared this screening report on behalf of Silkstone Parish Council to support the Parish Council in determining whether or not the contents of the proposed Silkstone Neighbourhood Plan are likely to require a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA).
- 1.2 Habitats and species of European nature conservation importance are protected by the European Directive (92/43/EEC) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna (The Habitats Directive)¹. The Habitats Directive establishes a network of internationally important sites designated for their ecological value. These sites are often referred to as Natura 2000 sites or European sites and comprise Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites. This is translated into UK law via the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.
- 1.3 Under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (and Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations), an assessment is required where a plan or project may give rise to significant effects upon a European site.
- 1.4 The overarching aim of HRA is to determine, in view of a site's conservation objectives and qualifying interests, whether a plan or project, either in isolation and/or in combination with other plans would have a significant adverse effect on a European site. If the screening concludes that a significant adverse effect is likely, then Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken to determine whether there will be adverse effects on site integrity.
- 1.5 There are three European sites within a 15 km radius of the neighbourhood area boundary. Further information on these designations is provided below.

2. HRA process

- 2.1 The requirements of the Habitats Directive comprise four distinct stages:

Stage 1: Screening.

This is the stage which initially identifies the likely impacts upon a European site of a project or plan, either alone or in-combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts may have a significant effect on the integrity of the site's qualifying habitats and/or species. Where a significant effect is identified the assessment moves onto stage 2.

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment.

This provides the detailed consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's conservation objectives and its structure and function. This is to determine whether or not there will be adverse effects on the integrity of the site. This stage also includes the development of mitigation measures to avoid or reduce any potential impacts.

¹ The UK has left the European Union and equivalent legislative provisions have been written into UK law.

Stage 3: Assessment of alternative solutions.

This examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan or project that would avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the European site, should avoidance or mitigation measures be unable to cancel out adverse effects.

Stage 4: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain.

In such circumstances it must be demonstrated that the development is necessary for imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

2.2 This report focuses on **Stage 1** of the process.

3. Screening

Relevant Natura 2000 Sites

3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan area (shown on Map 1 in the Plan) does not include any European sites.

3.2 Government guidance states that significant effects may be incurred even in cases where the area of the plan is some distance away. As a precautionary measure, this screening report has assessed European sites within 15km of the neighbourhood area.

3.3 There are 2 Natura 2000 designations partly within Barnsley's boundary and within the Peak District National Park. They are:

- Special Protection Area (SPA) – Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) (part in Barnsley)
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – South Pennine Moors (part in Barnsley).

3.4 There is one site in the Wakefield Council area:

- Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – Denby Grange Colliery Ponds.

3.5 The locations of all these sites in relation to the Silkstone Neighbourhood Area are shown in the following screenshots from the Magic website².

² MAGIC <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

Figure 1: Screenshot from Magic showing location of Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) SPA

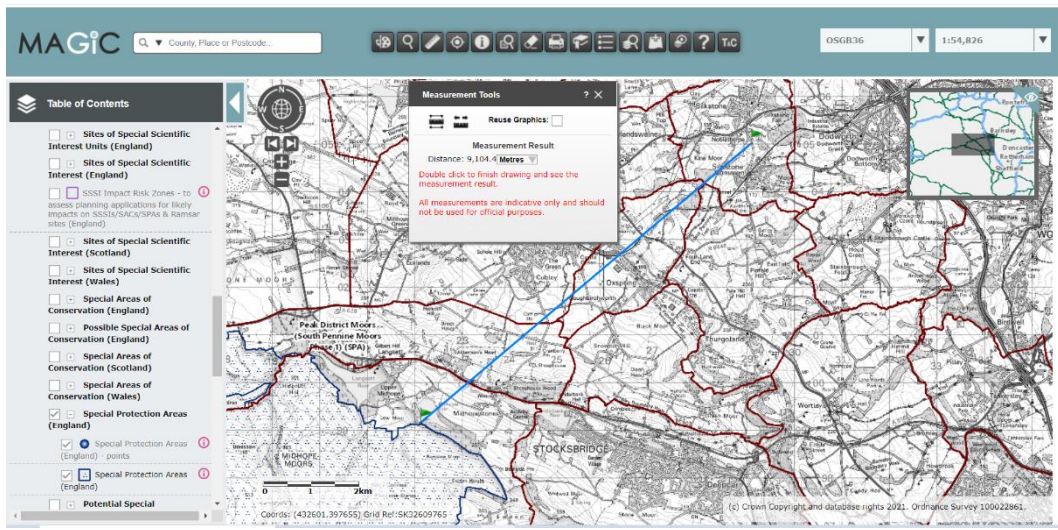


Figure 2: Screenshot from Magic showing location of South Pennine Moors SAC

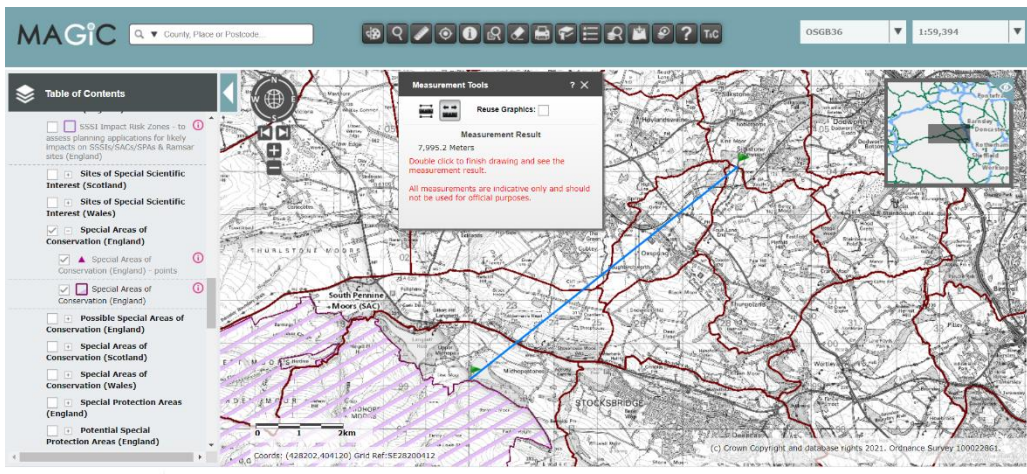
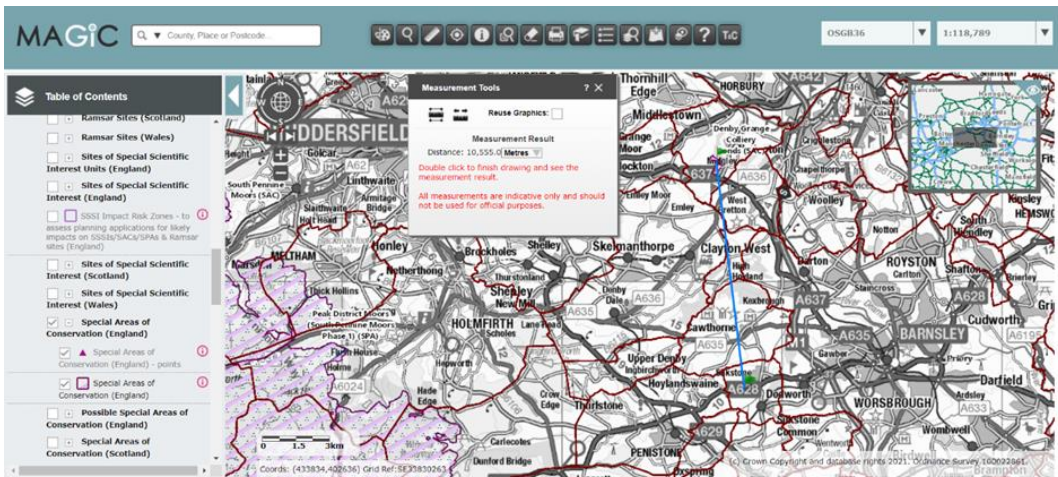


Figure 3: Screenshot from Magic showing location of Denby Grange Colliery Ponds SAC



- 3.4 The Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors) Special Protection Area (SPA) and the South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC) are about 9km west and south west from an approximate midpoint of the neighbourhood area and 8km from the neighbourhood area boundary.
- 3.5 The area is of European importance for several upland breeding species including birds of prey and waders. The area is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for European dry heaths, blanket bogs and Old Sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles.
- 3.6 The adopted Barnsley Local Plan was subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening³. This concluded that, overall, the majority of the policies and proposed sites within the Local Plan would not result in any harm to European Sites. By concentrating development in existing settlements and proposed environmental and habitat protection allocations, the Local Plan will help to protect the integrity of the Special Area of Conservation/Special Protection Area. The Appropriate Assessment identified key vulnerabilities/key environmental conditions which may be affected by the Local Plan as being a loss of habitat and increased housing numbers which may lead to more visitor or recreational disturbance and the possibilities of increased traffic and its effect on air pollution. These are considered in more detail in relation to the specific Local Plan proposals.
- 3.7 One of the main issues for the Local Plan is any potential loss of feeding areas for birds outside the site boundary in the west of the borough. Whilst there is not a clear radius where effects may occur, a distance of 5 km from the boundary of the sites is considered to be a sensible area to consider. The areas of land which are important for the birds are likely to be the upland grasslands close to the SPA/SAC, and watercourse/ wetland features.
- 3.8 There are no sites allocated for development in Silkstone neighbourhood area in either the Barnsley Local Plan or Silkstone Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.9 Denby Grange Colliery Ponds SAC lies approximately 10.5km north of an approximate midpoint of the neighbourhood area, within the Wakefield Council area.
- 3.10 Denby Grange Colliery Ponds SAC is considered by Wakefield Council in their Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report for the Publication Draft of the Local Plan 2036⁴. A buffer zone of 2km has been established by WMDC around the SAC in consultation with Natural England. This site relates to Great Crested Newts which are unlikely to travel in excess of 1km, therefore a 2km buffer zone is adequate for this particular SAC. The closest point the Barnsley borough boundary comes to the SAC boundary is 2.5km so no impacts from Barnsley's Local Plan (or therefore Silkstone NDP) are likely.
- 3.11 Table 1 below provides an assessment of the likely significant effects the NDP might have on the two identified European sites.

³ Barnsley Local Plan Habitat Regulations Assessment, 2016)

⁴ <https://www.wakefield.gov.uk/localplan2020/local-plan-2036-publication-draft-plan-habitat-regulations-screening-report-october-2020.pdf>

Table 1: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

Site	Citation and Environmental conditions to support site integrity	Possible impacts arising from NDP	Is there a risk of a significant effect?	Possible impacts from other, trends plans, etc.	Is there a risk of significant 'in combination'
Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) Special Protection Area	<p>The site is an extensive tract of moorland and moorland-fringe habitat. It includes most of the unenclosed moorland areas of the north, eastern and south-western Peak District, where it also extends into enclosed farmland of wet rushy pasture, hay meadows and small wetlands in the valley bottoms. The moorland habitats include extensive tracts of blanket bog and dry heath, which together with wet heath, acid grassland, small flushes, gritstone edges and boulder slopes, streams and moorland reservoirs, fringing semi-natural woodland and enclosed farmland, represents the full range of upland vegetation characteristic of the South Pennines. The site supports several important species assemblages, including higher plants, lower plants and insects, as well as breeding birds. Many physical features are of geological interest.</p> <p>Qualifying Features: A098 Falco columbarius; Merlin (Breeding) A140 Pluvialis apricaria; European golden plover (Breeding) A222 Asio flammeus; Short-eared owl (Breeding)</p>	<p>None likely.</p> <p>The site is located about 9km outside of the Neighbourhood Area boundary.</p> <p>It is more than 5km in distance from the neighbourhood area boundary which is considered to be an appropriate buffer.</p> <p>No effects envisaged.</p>	No effects envisaged	None likely	No
South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation	<p>This site covers the key moorland blocks of the Southern Pennines from Ilkley Moor in the north to the Peak District in the south. The moorlands are on a rolling dissected plateau formed from rocks of Millstone Grit at altitudes of between 300m – 600m and a high point of over 630m at Kinder Scout. The greater part of the gritstone is overlain by blanket peat with the coarse gravely mineral soils occurring only on the lower slopes. The moorlands as a whole support a breeding bird community of national and international importance.</p> <p>The site is representative of upland dry heath which covers extensive areas, occupies the lower slopes of the moors on mineral soils or where peat is thin, and occurs in transitions to acid grassland, wet heath and blanket bogs. The upland heath of the South Pennines is strongly dominated by Calluna vulgaris – Deschampsia flexuosa heath and C. vulgaris – Vaccinium myrtillus heath. More rarely C. vulgaris – Ulex gallii heath and C. vulgaris – Erica cinerea heath are found. On the higher,</p>	<p>None.</p> <p>The site is located about 9km outside of the Neighbourhood Area boundary.</p> <p>It is more than 5km in distance from the neighbourhood area boundary which is considered to be an appropriate buffer.</p>	No effects envisaged	None likely	No

Site	Citation and Environmental conditions to support site integrity	Possible impacts arising from NDP	Is there a risk of a significant effect?	Possible impacts from other, trends plans, etc.	Is there a risk of significant 'in combination'?
	<p>more exposed ground <i>V. myrtillus</i> – <i>D. flexuosa</i> heath becomes more prominent. The smaller area of wet heath is characterised by cross-leaved heath <i>Erica tetralix</i> and purple moor grass <i>Molinia careulea</i>. The site also supports extensive areas of acid grassland largely derived from dry and wet heath. In the cloughs, or valleys, which extend into the heather moorlands, a greater mix of dwarf shrubs can be found together with more lichens and mosses. The moors support a rich invertebrate fauna, especially moths, and important bird assemblages.</p> <p>This site also contains areas of blanket bog, although the bog vegetation communities are botanically poor. Hare's-tail cottongrass <i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i> is often overwhelmingly dominant and the usual bog-building <i>Sphagnum</i> mosses are scarce. Where the blanket peats are slightly drier, heather <i>C. vulgaris</i>, crowberry <i>Empetrum nigrum</i> and bilberry <i>V. myrtillus</i> become more prominent. The cranberry <i>Vaccinium oxycoccus</i> and the uncommon cloudberry <i>Rubus chamaemorus</i> is locally abundant in bog vegetation. Bog pools provide diversity and are often characterised by common cottongrass <i>E. angustifolium</i>. Substantial areas of the bog surface are eroding, and there are extensive areas of bare peat. In some areas erosion may be a natural process reflecting the great age (up to 9000 years) of the South Pennine peats.</p> <p>Around the fringes of the upland heath and areas of bog are blocks of old sessile oak woods, usually on slopes. These tend to be dryer than those further north and west, such that the bryophyte communities are less developed (although this lowered diversity may in some instances have been exaggerated by the effects of 19th century air pollution). Other components of the ground flora such as grasses, dwarf shrubs and ferns are common. Small areas of alder woodland along stream-sides add to the overall richness of the woods.</p> <p>The moorland also supports a range of flush and fen habitats associated with bogs, cloughs, rivers and streams. Although generally small scale features they have a specialised flora and fauna, which makes a great contribution to the overall biodiversity of the moors. Acid flushes are the most common type and these include transition mires and quaking bogs characterised by a luxuriant carpet of bog mosses <i>Sphagnum</i> spp., rushes and sedges.</p>	No effects envisaged.			

Site	Citation and Environmental conditions to support site integrity	Possible impacts arising from NDP	Is there a risk of a significant effect?	Possible impacts from other, trends plans, etc.	Is there a risk of significant 'in combination'
	<p>Qualifying habitats: The site is designated under article 4(4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I: • Blanket bogs* • European dry heaths • Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix. (Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath) • Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles. (Western acidic oak woodland) • Transition mires and quaking bogs. (Very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface)</p>				
<p>Denby Grange Colliery Ponds SAC</p>	<p>This water body in Yorkshire, created by coal-mining activity, has consistently yielded high counts of great crested newt Triturus cristatus in recent years. The pond is surrounded by replanted ancient woodland, with adjacent anthropogenic habitat associated with the previous mining activities. A large new pond was created recently to help support the population, which was previously reliant on a single breeding site.</p> <p>Qualifying features: Great crested newt Triturus cristatus.</p>	<p>None.</p> <p>The site is located Over 10km from the Neighbourhood Area boundary and is outside the Borough.</p> <p>No effects envisaged.</p>	<p>No effects envisaged.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>No</p>

- 3.12 The Silkstone Neighbourhood Plan policies and proposals are written to be in conformity with those in the adopted Barnsley Local Plan which has been subject to Appropriate Assessment.
- 3.13 This confirms that most policies and proposals would not result in significant environmental effects on the Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) Special Protection Area and South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation, except in the case of housing allocations within the 5km buffer zone. None of these allocations fall within the Silkstone Neighbourhood Plan area. There are no site allocations in the Silkstone Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore concluded that no further work will be required in order to comply with the Habitat Regulations.
- 3.14 A Table is provided in Appendix 1 which provides an Assessment of Silkstone NDP policies and their general conformity to the adopted Barnsley Local Plan.

4. Consultation Responses

- 4.1 The draft screening report was subject to a five week consultation with Natural England and other consultation bodies Historic England and Environment Agency (alongside the draft SEA screening report).
- 4.2 Natural England's complete response is provided in Appendix 3.
- 4.3 Natural England advised:

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

Natural England agrees with the report's conclusions that the Silkstone Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European Site, either alone or in combination and therefore no further assessment work would be required.

- 4.4 Historic England did not respond to the consultation on the HRA draft Screening Assessment but provided broad comments in relation to the emerging Draft Plan and to the SEA Screening Assessment.
- 4.5 Environment Agency did not respond.
- 4.6 Silkstone Parish Council undertook a pre-submission consultation and publicity of the Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with Regulation 14 of Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) from 28th February 2022 until 11th April 2022. The Plan was updated and revised following consideration of the responses to the Regulation 14 public consultation. The submission version of the Plan (May 2022) has formed the basis of this updated screening opinion. Most amendments to the NDP were minor in nature but one Policy (Former Policy H3) was deleted following objections from a community group and local residents.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The policies of the Barnsley adopted Local Plan have been subject to HRA. The screening assessment concluded that there would be no likely significant effect on the Natura 2000 network, either alone or in combination with other local plans.

- 5.2 Due to the scale of growth envisaged within the NDP and the fact that the European sites identified are located some distance away, it is considered that no further appropriate assessment work is required for the NDP.
- 5.3 Under its 'duty to support', Barnsley Council reviewed the draft HRA Screening Assessment and agreed that, based on the preparation of the November 2021 Draft Version of the NDP, the NDP does not appear to require a detailed Habitats Assessment Report.
- 5.4 Natural England concurred with this view.

Appendix 1 Assessment of Silkstone NDP Policies and their General Conformity with the adopted Barnsley Local Plan

Silkstone NDP Policies	Barnsley Strategic Policies	General Conformity
<p>Policy H1 Criteria for New Housing Development in Silkstone Parish</p> <p>Policy H2 Residential Development in Rear Gardens</p>	<p>Under Local Plan Policy LG2 Location of Growth Silkstone and Silkstone Common are identified as villages. Villages are the third tier for development and the supporting text sets out that there will be a slower pace and scale of growth in villages and rural areas. Villages will be expected to deliver approximately 5% of the overall housing requirement figure through housing allocations or windfall sites.</p>	<p>The Silkstone NDP conforms to the new Local Plan by directing new windfall development to sites within the settlement boundaries of the 2 villages. The Policy also refers to development which may be acceptable in the Green Belt. Smaller homes are promoted following consultation responses and development should be of high quality design. Development in rear gardens should not have an unacceptable impact on the character of the area.</p> <p>There are unlikely to be any significant environmental effects that have not already been considered in the Sustainability Appraisal / SEA of the emerging new Local Plan.</p>
<p>Policy NE1 Protecting and Enhancing Local Landscape Character</p>	<p>Local Plan Policy D1 Design sets out that Development is expected to be of high quality design and will be expected to respect, take advantage of and reinforce the distinctive, local character and features of Barnsley, including: Landscape character, topography, green</p>	<p>The landscape character policy in the NDP is consistent with the policy in the adopted Local Plan. However, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to go further by providing more detailed local requirements for future developments. NDP Policy NE1 describes local</p>

Silkstone NDP Policies	Barnsley Strategic Policies	General Conformity
	<p>infrastructure assets, important habitats, woodlands and other natural features; Views and vistas to key buildings, landmarks, skylines and gateways; and Heritage and townscape character including the scale, layout, building styles and materials of the built form in the locality.</p>	<p>landscape character around Silkstone and identifies significant local features and views which are locally important and which should be protected.</p> <p>There are unlikely to be any significant environmental effects that have not already been considered in the Sustainability Appraisal / SEA of the emerging new Local Plan.</p>
Policy NE2 Wildlife	<p>Policy BIO1 Biodiversity and Geodiversity sets out that development will be expected to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geological features of the borough by various measures.</p> <p>Local Plan Policy GI1 Green Infrastructure seeks to protect, maintain, enhance and create an integrated network of connected and multi-functional Green Infrastructure assets including those that enhance biodiversity.</p>	<p>The wildlife policy in the NDP is consistent with Local Plan Policies BIO1 and GI1.</p> <p>However, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to go further by providing more detailed local requirements for future developments, including references to specific habitats and wildlife species which occur locally.</p> <p>There are unlikely to be any significant environmental effects that have not already been considered in the Sustainability Appraisal / SEA of the emerging new Local Plan.</p>
Policy LGS1 Local Green Spaces	<p>Local Green Space would be considered to fall under Green Infrastructure as protected in Local Plan Policy GI1.</p>	<p>The NDP identifies a number of Local Green Spaces which should be protected. The identification and protection of Local Green Spaces is a relatively new power set out in the NPPF.</p> <p>The NDP policy is consistent with the policy in the Barnsley Local Plan. However, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to go further by identifying specific Local Green Spaces that should be protected.</p>

Silkstone NDP Policies	Barnsley Strategic Policies	General Conformity
		<p>There are unlikely to be any significant environmental effects that have not already been considered in the Sustainability Appraisal / SEA of the emerging new Local Plan.</p>
<p>Policy BH1 Conserving and Enhancing Heritage Assets on the Local List</p>	<p>Local Plan Policy D1 Design requires development to consider heritage, townscape and landscape character including the scale, layout, building styles and materials of the built form and Policy HE1 The Historic Environment supports proposals which conserve and enhance the significance and setting of the borough's heritage assets, paying particular attention to those elements which contribute most to the borough's distinctive character and sense of place. Policies HE3 Development affecting Historic Buildings and HE4 Developments affecting Historic Areas or Landscapes require that developments: respect historic precedents of scale, form, massing , architectural detail and materials; and respect views and important landscape elements.</p>	<p>The Local Plan seeks to ensure development contributes positively to the local historic environment and heritage assets. The NDP goes further than the Local Plan by drawing out relevant detail relating to context and design, drawn from Design Codes and further, more up to date work by the NDP group.</p> <p>Candidate local heritage assets are also identified.</p> <p>There are unlikely to be any significant environmental effects that have not already been considered in the Sustainability Appraisal / SEA of the emerging new Local Plan.</p>
<p>Policy D1 Sustainable Design</p>	<p>Policy CC2 Sustainable Design and Construction Expects development to minimise resource and energy consumption through the inclusion of sustainable design and construction features, where this is technically feasible and viable.</p>	<p>The NDP goes further in terms of promoting a range of sustainable design techniques wherever possible in new development, in recognition of the climate emergency.</p> <p>The NDP is likely to have a more positive environmental effect than the Local Plan.</p>
<p>Policy D2 Promoting High Quality Design and</p>	<p>Local Plan Policy D1 Design requires development to consider heritage,</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan emphasises that new residential development</p>

Silkstone NDP Policies	Barnsley Strategic Policies	General Conformity
Responding to Local Character	townscape and landscape character including the scale, layout, building styles and materials of the built form.	<p>should respect character and local distinctiveness.</p> <p>There are unlikely to be any significant environmental effects that have not already been considered in the Sustainability Appraisal / SEA of the emerging new Local Plan.</p>
Policy R1 Supporting Suitable Improvements to Local Recreation and Community Facilities	<p>Local Plan Policy GS1 Green Space protects recreational areas generally. The Council will work with partners to improve existing green space to meet the standards in the Green Space Strategy.</p> <p>Green Spaces are green open areas which are valuable for amenity, recreation, wildlife or biodiversity and include types such as village greens, local open spaces, country parks, formal gardens, cemeteries, allotments, woodlands, recreation grounds, sports pitches and parks.</p>	<p>The NDP Policy is consistent with the policy in the Local Plan. However the NDP policy provides local detail by identifying specific improvements to local recreational facilities which would be supported.</p> <p>There are unlikely to be any additional significant environmental effects arising from the NDP policy.</p> <p>There are unlikely to be any additional significant environmental effects arising from the NDP policy.</p>
Policy RD1 Supporting Rural Diversification and Tourism	<p>Cultural Provision promotes tourism and advises that tourist related development in rural areas will be protected and encouraged to support and diversify the local economy, subject to the requirements of Policy E6 Rural Economy. Policy E6 Rural Economy encourages a viable rural economy by allowing development which supports appropriate diversification.</p>	<p>The Silkstone NDP supports the provision of facilities for small scale business and proposals linked to diversification of the rural economy.</p> <p>This is consistent with the Local Plan which seeks to encourage the creation of new enterprises to support employment locally, including farm based diversification.</p> <p>Given this general conformity, there are unlikely to be any significant environmental effects that have not already been considered in the Sustainability Appraisal /</p>

Silkstone NDP Policies	Barnsley Strategic Policies	General Conformity
		SEA of the Barnsley Local Plan.
Policy T1 Improving Access and Sustainable Travel	Local Plan Policy T1 Accessibility Priorities sets out how the Council will facilitate sustainable transport links to and from existing and proposed employment, interchange, community and leisure and tourism facilities in the borough, including provision for car parking.	<p>The Local Plan recognises the importance of local infrastructure.</p> <p>This policy is in conformity with the Local Plan, subject to green belt policies and is likely to result in environmental benefits.</p> <p>Given this general conformity, there are unlikely to be any significant environmental effects that have not already been considered in the Sustainability Appraisal / SEA of the Barnsley Local Plan.</p>

Appendix 2: UK Designated Sites

The Plan area includes part of a UK designated site - Pye Flatts Meadows SSSI which is one of the 3% of wildflower meadows remaining in Britain, and various areas of woodland including ancient woodland.

Figure 1: Screenshot showing location of Pye Flatts Meadow SSSI (partially within the area)⁵

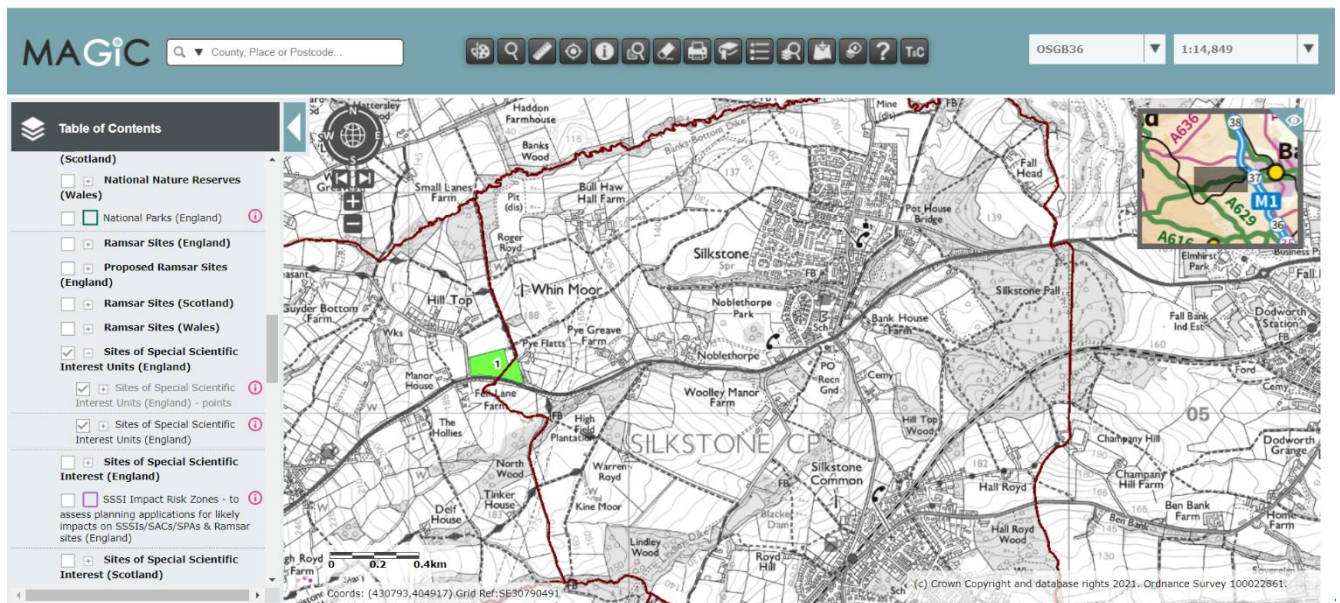
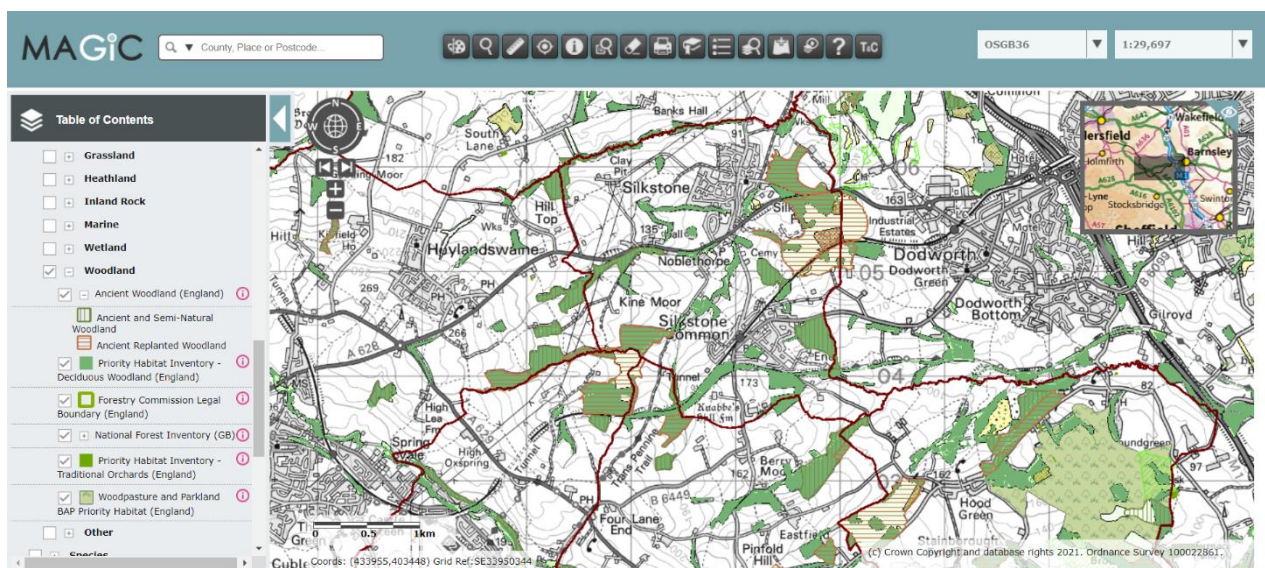


Figure 2: Screenshot showing locations of Woodland, including Ancient Woodland⁶



⁵ Screenshot from MAGIC <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

⁶ Screenshot from MAGIC <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

Appendix 3: Natural England's Response to the Draft Screening Report

Date: 23 November 2021
Our ref: 375071
Your ref: Silkstone Neighbourhood Plan

Louise Kirkup
Kirkwells

BY EMAIL ONLY



Hombeam House
Crewe Business Park
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T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Kirkup

Silkstone Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA screening

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 19 November 2021 which was received by Natural England on 19 November 2021

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils) are concerned, that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

Neighbourhood Plan

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in light of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), is contained within the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#). The guidance highlights three triggers that may require the production of an SEA, for instance where:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that in our view the proposals contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies / proposals within the plan. It remains the case, however, that the responsible authority should provide information supporting this screening decision, sufficient to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected.

Notwithstanding this advice, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all potential environmental assets. As a result the responsible authority should raise environmental issues that we have not identified on local or national biodiversity action plan species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites or local landscape character, with its own ecological and/or landscape advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local landscape and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by this plan, before determining whether an SA/SEA is necessary.

Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA/SA screening stage, should the responsible authority seek our views on the scoping or environmental report stages. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

Natural England agrees with the report's conclusions that the Silkstone Neighbourhood Plan would not be likely to result in a significant effect on any European Site, either alone or in combination and therefore no further assessment work would be required.

For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Jacqui Salt
Consultations Team

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