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Please ask for: Charlotte Hardy

Our Ref: F/SEA

Dear Louise

Ford Neighbourhood Development Plan (FNDP) Environmental Assessment Request Screening

Thank you for your screening opinion request received on 3rd June 2015.

The Council fully supports the community's initiative to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan. Neighbourhood planning aims to give people greater ownership of plans and policies that affect their area. The government is clear that the intention of Neighbourhood Development Plans should be to set out policies on the development and use of land in a neighbourhood area and that the local planning authority has a duty to support production of the plan.

Our duty in respect to this aspect is to screen the expected contents of the Plan and the environmental information outlined, to determine whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and/or assessment under any other relevant European legislation is required. This letter addresses whether an environmental assessment of the Ford Neighbourhood Plan is required and as such if it meets one of the basic requirements: not to breach, and otherwise be compatible with, EU and Human Rights obligations.

These comments only relate to the need for either a Strategic Environmental Assessment (2001/42/EC) or an assessment under the Birds Directive (92/43/EEC). They are based solely on the information submitted and/or provided to this authority. In this instance these are the Opinion Request Form, the Ford Neighbourhood Plan (FNP) Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and content of email correspondence from 8-9th June 2015.

ADC Conclusion and Comments

As part of good planning practice, ADC have highlighted and provided guidance in terms of addressing this aspect and these comments follow in that vein.

On the basis of the documents mentioned above and consultation with the relevant statutory agencies for the purpose of Regulation 9(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, the following determination can be made.

It is felt, on the basis of the information contained in the FDP Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and content of email correspondence from 8-9th June 2015 that an environmental assessment of the Plan will be required for the following reasons:

- The Neighbourhood Development Plan will be allocating sites;
- There are areas within higher flood risk and it should be shown this has been considered for allocations;
- There are a number of historic features, including the Airfield itself, within the Parish and a rigorous assessment is needed towards potential effects;
- There is potential for the presence of protected species and early reference to and consideration of biological records is required, to identify where issues may be acute.

In our opinion an environmental assessment is required of this neighbourhood plan for the reasons stated above.

It is also determined following consultation with the statutory body, under the requirements of Regulation 61(2) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, that a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA), will not be required, on the basis of the submitted information, as the site is located beyond the zone of influence of the designated site at Pagham Harbour. However, though beyond the zone of influence set for recreational disturbance, it should be shown that the potential impacts on the water network and any linked impacts have been considered regarding allocations, to ensure that there would be no detrimental impacts to the overall features of the designated site.

Further additional information for consideration

1. It is recommended that the neighbourhood group consider the content of the part of the SA of the Arun Local Plan 2011-2031 covering Ford, especially focusing on Option B.
2. When further details are available regarding any necessary changes to the treatment works to accommodate the suggested numbers, this will defer to the section in the Arun Local Plan which states that "Large scale developments taking place outside Zone B and close to its boundary will be considered on a case by case basis to determine any potential effects on Pagham Harbour, and the need for any avoidance or mitigation measures" should there be a chance of negative impact on this site.
3. Though the commitment to undertake a Phase 1 Habitat Survey is welcomed, care is needed regarding rural sites, where there are old or derelict structures and which include (or are close to) features such as mature trees, ponds, ditches and field boundaries, where protected species may be present. Their protection should be one of the central considerations and reference should be made in the plan itself to the need for similar surveys of windfall sites known/likely to be used by protected species.

These comments are intended to provide as much direction as possible but if there are any further questions or queries please do come back to us and we will endeavour to help. *

Ultimately, any decisions over the eventual contents of the FNP rest with the Ford Neighbourhood Group. However, if the contents of the Plan is revised and/or there is a material change in the environmental characteristics in the locality (e.g. any additional nature conservation or other environmental designations), then the comments contained in this letter would need to be reconsidered again to take account of the changes.

Yours sincerely,

Charlotte Hardy
Senior Environmental Assessment Officer