

SA Scoping Consultation Report

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1 Stage A Scoping Consultation Report

1.1 Government guidance, **Regulation 12(5) and 12(6) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004**, requires that a Scoping Report; covering stages A1-A4, is produced in order that the statutory consultees Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England have an opportunity to comment.

1.2 A five week consultation period on that document was undertaken during March to April 2022.

1.3 The responses to the consultation are summarised as follows:

1.4 Historic England

1.5 Historic England considered that Section 23: Key Issues for Sustainability underestimates the opportunities and challenges (the issues) and suggest a list of what could be included. It is also suggested that Section 24 – SA Objective and SA question relating to heritage could be reworded to be more in line with the language and emphasis of the NPPF.

1.6 Furthermore, it is questioned whether the evidence base is still relevant or whether it should be updated.

1.7 **Response to consultation comments - it is proposed to carry out a further Heritage Assessment of all of the proposed housing allocation sites to ensure that they are run through a more detailed sustainability assessment which can included the proposed questions and objectives from English Heritage. All of the evidence base will also be reviewed and considered as to how much of it requires updating and can be updated within the timescale and available resources.**

1.8 Natural England

1.9 Natural England's response included advice on which plans are relevant to the natural environment and should be considered, including biodiversity plans, shoreline management plans, river basin management plans, etc.

1.10 Suggestions for monitoring indicators were proposed for both biodiversity and green infrastructure.

1.11 Further topics for discussion were submitted in their response, including:

1.12 - Consideration to the Severn Estuary Visitor Surveys 2022;

1.13 - Malvern Hill SSSI report in relation to location of proposed new homes in relation to the SSSI/zone of influence;

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1.14 - Consideration of the Green infrastructure Framework – Principles and Standard for England.

1.15 **Response to consultation comments - the SA Stage B and the emerging local plan policies and practices will take into account all of the above advice and consideration during its next stages of development.**

1.16 **The Environment Agency**

1.17 The Environment Agency has not responded to this consultation.

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2.1 Responses received from Public Bodies:

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Historic England

FAO Anna Welsh, Planning Policy Officer, FODDC Anna.Welsh@fdean.gov.uk

8 April 2022

Forest of Dean District Local Plan - Draft Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report

Dear Anna, thank you for inviting consideration and comment on the scope of the Local Plan's Sustainability Appraisal.

Our comments are made within the context of [Historic England Advice Note 8 - Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment](#), prepared to support all those involved in the exercise of carrying out an SA and, in particular, the implementation of historic environment legislation, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). We hope you find this of use in addition to the following specific observations.

The planning system in England is based on the principle of sustainable development and heritage plays an increasingly important role in stimulating regeneration, informing sustainable growth, securing positive change, and helping to safeguard our historic places and heritage assets. Optimising the use of existing buildings, protecting historic landscapes are also examples where the historic environment is relevant to the response to our climate emergency.

The SA and Plan will need to demonstrate consideration of the following highlights, recognising the finite and irreplaceable nature of the nation's heritage assets and the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring:

1. The SA will need to be minded that the Plan must set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. (NPPF Para 185).
2. Great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets (NPPF Para 193);
3. Special regard must be given to desirability of preserving the setting of a listed building and special attention must be given to desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area in the exercise of planning functions (S66 & S72, Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990);



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4. The SA has a role to play by identifying which alternatives could offer opportunities to secure the protection and enhancement of assets as well as those which might have significant impacts in terms of their appropriate use and setting.
5. The SA should inform a spatial strategy which helps to limit adverse impacts on designated and non-designated heritage assets, including any potential archaeological.
6. The SA should appraise both policy and site options (when being considered) in terms of the potential for effects on the historic environment. It should identify those locations at which development would have the greatest potential to affect, both positively and negatively, the significance of heritage assets, as informed by heritage impact assessment work for the Local Plan.

Section 15 Heritage

The FODDC website refers to the evidence base which informed the current Local Plan. Is this evidence still relevant? Should it be referred to; is it up to date; does it need to be revisited?

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/our-current-local-plan/local-plan-evidence-base/evidence-base-documents/environment-and-nature/>

Section 23. Key issues for sustainability

This section includes single bullet point reference to the Heritage issues facing the FoD which is an underestimation of the opportunities and challenges (the issues). You might include reference to the positive opportunities for the historic environment associated with future development such as:

- Developing a stronger sense of place, and local distinctiveness;
- Promoting the innovative reuse of the existing building stock for social, cultural and or economic purposes;
- Delivering heritage-led regeneration opportunities;
- Supporting the vitality and viability of town centres; and
- Promoting heritage-based tourism.

Conversely one might also highlight the potential risks and consequences associated with poor planning which can result in:

- a loss or erosion of landscape/ townscape character;
- an adverse impact on the historic integrity and setting of historic settlements;
- a direct and or indirect impact upon individual heritage assets and their settings;
- traffic congestion, air quality, noise or light pollution and other problems affecting the historic environment.



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Section 24 Sustainability Appraisal Framework

Heritage	To protect historical features and cultural assets of the district. To maintain the built character of the district, including any distinct local vernacular design.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the policy promote development on sites on or adjacent to valued, protected and listed sites which does not overwhelm their heritage values? 2. Does the policy promote development is of a scale and density which is consistent with its surroundings? 3. Does the policy promote development within Conservation areas is consistent with existing character values? 	Direct
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To accord with the language and emphasis of the NPPF, you may wish to consider the following alternative.

	SA Objective	SA question	
Historic Environment	To conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings.	Would the proposal have a positive effect on the significance of affected heritage assets / the historic environment including historic townscapes or landscapes.	Direct

I hope my brief observations will inform a refined SA report and help to avoid or minimise any adverse effect on the historic environment created by the plan; optimise the potential benefits; and identify all appropriate mitigation, enhancement and monitoring for the historic environment and heritage assets.

Yours sincerely

Rohan Torkildsen
Partnerships Team Leader South West.
Historic Environment Planning Advisor South West.
Regions Group



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Date: 14 April 2022
Our ref: 385782



Local Plans Team
Forest of Dean District Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Local Plans Team,

Planning consultation: Forest of Dean Local Plan – Sustainability Appraisal Stage A Scoping Report

Thank you for your consultation on the above.

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.

Natural England welcomes the opportunity to comment at this stage of the Local Plan process. We have reviewed the consultation document and provide comments that are most relevant to our interest in the Natural Environment and issues that may benefit from further discussion. Previous advice regarding key environmental issues can also be found in our Preferred Options response.

SA Scoping

Natural England has not reviewed the plans listed. However, we advise that the following types of plans relating to the natural environment should be considered where applicable to your plan area.

- Green infrastructure strategies
- Biodiversity plans
- Rights of Way Improvement Plans
- Shoreline management plans
- Coastal access plans
- River basin management plans
- AONB and National Park management plans.
- Relevant landscape plans and strategies

As set out in [Planning Practice Guidance](#), you should be monitoring the significant environmental effects of implementing the current local plan. This should include indicators for monitoring the effects of the plan on biodiversity (NPPF para 117).

The natural environment metrics in the baseline information are largely driven by factors other than the plan's performance. They are thus likely to be of little value in monitoring the

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performance of the Plan. It is important that any monitoring indicators relate to the effects of the plan itself, not wider changes. Bespoke indicators should be chosen relating to the outcomes of development management decisions.

Whilst it is not Natural England's role to prescribe what indicators should be adopted, the following indicators may be appropriate.

Biodiversity:

- Number of planning approvals that generated any adverse impacts on sites of acknowledged biodiversity importance.
- Percentage of major developments generating overall biodiversity enhancement.
- Hectares of biodiversity habitat delivered through strategic site allocations.

Green infrastructure:

- Percentage of the city's population having access to a natural greenspace within 400 metres of their home.
- Length of greenways constructed.
- Hectares of accessible open space per 1000 population.

Further topics for discussion

Severn Estuary SPA & functionally linked land

There is ongoing 2-stage evidence gathering commission funded by all six of the Gloucestershire Local Planning Authorities and Natural England, focussing on the recreational disturbance theme around the Severn Estuary SPA and functionally linked sites further up the River Severn/Severn Vale. Consideration should be given to the on-going evidence around the Severn Estuary Visitor Surveys 2022.

Recreation - Malvern Hills SSSI

The Malvern Hills contain one of the largest areas of semi-natural vegetation in the West Midlands supporting a mosaic of habitats including semi-natural acid grasslands, scrub and broadleaved deciduous woodland. Nationally restricted plant, bird and invertebrate species occur on the site and contribute to locally important faunal and floral assemblages.

We would draw the Local Authority's attention to recreational impacts that have become apparent regarding the Malvern Hills SSSI. A report has been commissioned by the South Worcestershire Local Authorities to consider recreational pressure on Malvern Hills SSSI as a result of housing developments in the area

The report, undertaken by Footprint Ecology, details the ecological impacts from recreational pressure and a visitor survey outlining a zone of influence, with respect to the postcode locations of visitors. Mitigation priorities/ themes have been set out based on the number of houses proposed in the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP). However, these costed mitigation proposals are for the SWDP area only.

Based on the data showing the origin of statistically meaningful numbers of visitors (total 81%) 24% of these 'direct from home' visitors to the SSSI currently live in LPAs outside the SWDP area. The visitor survey shows 3% of visitor postcodes originating from the FoDDC area (visits direct from home). A screenshot of relevant table below and a copy of the report is provided.

It may therefore be necessary for Forest of Dean District Council to consider the location of proposed new homes within their LPA area and in relation to the SSSI/zone of influence, in

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order to decide whether further mitigation is needed (over and above that required for the SWDP). It is proposed that some further evidence gathering will be required to understand what further mitigation may be required.



Table 9: Number (%) of interviewees from different local authorities by month, for all interviewees and just for those visiting directly from home. Local authorities are ranked by the total number of interviewees.

Local authorities	All interviewees				Visiting directly from home only	
	Dec	Apr	Total	Cumulative total	Total	Cumulative total
Mahvern Hills	76 (44%)	65 (34%)	141 (38%)	141 (38%)	141 (41%)	141 (41%)
Herefordshire	30 (17%)	21 (11%)	51 (14%)	192 (52%)	49 (14%)	190 (50%)
Worcester	20 (11%)	19 (10%)	39 (11%)	233 (63%)	39 (11%)	229 (62%)
Wychavon	7 (4%)	10 (5%)	17 (5%)	248 (67%)	16 (5%)	245 (62%)
Birmingham	5 (3%)	9 (5%)	14 (4%)	262 (71%)	13 (4%)	258 (66%)
Tewkesbury	5 (3%)	5 (3%)	10 (3%)	272 (74%)	10 (3%)	268 (70%)
Forest of Dean	3 (2%)	6 (3%)	9 (2%)	281 (76%)	9 (3%)	277 (68%)

2.73 Few interviewees were recorded visiting from across the Welsh border. The travel restrictions in December may have accounted for the lack of Welsh visitors in December, but even in April, just 4 interviewees were from Wales (accounting for 2% of interviewees in that month).

Green & blue infrastructure

We would draw your authority's attention to the Green Infrastructure Framework - Principles and Standards for England. This will help provide an understanding of the district's green infrastructure (GI) resource and extent to which sufficient informal recreation space exists for both existing residents/workers and also cater for planned growth. This can help signal the need for mitigation measures to help protect the Forest of Dean area and ensure that nature recovery there is practical and realistic.

Evidence

Please see Annex A for our advice on sources of local plan evidence on the natural environment.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Underdown
Planning for a Better Environment Team

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Annex A

Sources of local plan evidence on the natural environment

The following sources of evidence may be useful in ensuring local plans are evidence based, in line with paragraph 165 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and assist in meeting Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) requirements. A range of additional locally specific evidence is also likely to be needed to underpin plan preparation.

General natural environmental evidence

[National Character Areas](#) (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. NCA profiles contain descriptions of the area and statements of environmental opportunity, which may be useful to inform proposals in your plan.

Natural England has also published downloadable [natural capital maps](#). These are a suite of ten maps, of different aspects of natural capital, contributes to our understanding of where our natural capital is.

The [Magic](#) website will provide you with much of the nationally held natural environment data for your plan area in downloadable GIS format. Specific data sets are listed under the environmental topics below.

[Local environmental record centres](#) may hold a range of additional information on the natural environment, principally ecological.

The following local organizations may also hold environmental information where applicable: Local Nature Partnerships, Wildlife trusts, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and [Nature Improvement Areas](#).

Evidence relating to the significant environmental effects of the current local plan should be available (in line with SEA legislation), as should suitable biodiversity evidence for any plan adopted after the NPPF came into effect (27 March 2012), usually through the current plan's Annual Monitoring Report.

Landscape

The [Magic](#) website provides data on the extent of protected landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

National Park/Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans may also be a source of useful evidence. These are usually found on these organisations websites.

Most areas have local landscape character assessments. These are tools to help understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify the features that give it a sense of place. It can help to inform, plan and manage change in the area.

Data on tranquillity is held by [CPRE](#). They also hold mapping data on [light pollution](#) .

Biodiversity and geodiversity

The most relevant layers on [Magic](#) for you to consider are Ancient Woodland, Local Nature Reserves, Priority Habitat Inventory, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (including their impact risk zones), Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar Sites (including, where relevant, marine designations).

You may also wish to draw on more detailed information on specific [Sites of Special Scientific Interest](#) and the [Conservation Objectives](#) and [Site Improvement Plans](#) for

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Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas.

[Priority habitats and species](#) are those listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006 and UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). Larger areas of priority habitat will usually be mapped either as **Sites of Special Scientific Interest** on the Magic website or as **Local Wildlife Sites** or **Local Geological Sites**. Local wildlife site data is usually held by local planning authorities themselves as is local geological site data. Local Environmental Record Centres and local wildlife and geoconservation groups are also a source of information on Local Sites.

Natural England maintains the **Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land Inventory** (a priority habitat dataset currently not integrated into the Priority Habitat Inventory on [Magic](#)) and is available on request from Natural England via email; NaturalEnglandGIDataManagers@naturalengland.org.uk.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) identify the local action needed to deliver UK targets for habitats and species. They also identify targets for other habitats and species of local importance and can provide a useful blueprint for biodiversity enhancement in any particular area. **Local Geodiversity Action Plans (LGAPs)** identify agreed local action for geodiversity, a list of active LGAPs can be found at [UK Geodiversity Action Plan](#).

Some areas have identified **Biodiversity Opportunity Areas** or similar for spatially targeting biodiversity restoration work.

Protected species are those species protected under domestic or European law. [Local environmental record centres](#) are likely to hold much of the available data on such species.

Air quality

[APIS](#) holds data on air pollution in particular in relation to protected nature conservation sites.

Access

The [Magic](#) website holds the following access related data: **National Trails**, **Public Rights of Way** (on the Ordnance Survey base map), **Open Access Land** (the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 layer), together with national and local nature reserves, country parks and the [England Coast Path](#).

Locally held data will include the definitive **Public Rights of Way**, and may include **Rights of Way Improvement Plans** where they exist, and any locally mapped open space audits or assessments.

Natural England's work on [Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards \(ANGSt\)](#) may be of use in assessing current level of accessible natural greenspace and planning improved provision.

Green infrastructure

Green infrastructure strategies may comprise or contain useful evidence sources where they exist.

Soils

A provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) map is on [Magic](#), and the GIS layer 'Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile Land' is available on request from Natural England via email; NaturalEnglandGIDataManagers@naturalengland.org.uk.

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Some areas already have detailed ALC maps. The coverage of existing detailed MAFF post 1988 ALC surveys is shown on [Magic](#). The MAFF post 1988 ALC survey reports and maps themselves are available from [Natural England](#) or from [Gov.UK](#) .

Our publication [Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land](#) may also be of help.

General mapped information on soil types and Agricultural Land Classification is available (under 'landscape') on the [Magic](#) website and also from the [LandIS](#) website, which contains more information about obtaining soil data.

Climate change

The [Climate Change Adaptation Manual](#) provides evidence to support nature conservation in a changing climate.

The [National Biodiversity Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Model](#) provides a spatially explicit assessment of the relative vulnerability of priority habitats. The data files can be accessed here: [National Biodiversity Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment data](#).

The [LWEC Climate Change Impacts Report Cards](#) present the latest evidence on how climate change is affecting different aspects of our environment, economy and society.

Coastal and Marine issues

The following may be of help:

- [Catchment flood management plans](#) (considers all types of inland flooding, from rivers, groundwater, surface water and tidal flooding).
- [Shoreline management plans](#) (considers flooding from the sea).
- Any estuary or harbour management plans that are held locally.
- [River basin management plans](#) (covers entire river systems, including river, lake, groundwater, estuarine and coastal water bodies).
- [Coastal Erosion Maps](#) .
- The Marine Management Organisation has a [marine planning evidence base](#) which supplies a range of information on marine planning.
- There may be specific Heritage Coast information held locally, such as a management plan.

Water Quality and Resources and Flood Risk Management

The Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on [information sources for the water environment](#).

