

Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report

And

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report

Prepared by Ashford Borough Council on behalf of Rolvenden Parish Council

Consultation - August 2017

Final – November 2017

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1. Non-technical Summary

What is an SEA?

1.1 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required under European legislation for all plans which may have a significant effect on the environment. This particularly relates to plans which allocate development sites, including Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. An SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely significant effects of a draft Plan, and reasonable alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative environmental effects and maximising the positives.

1.2 The purpose of SEA is to provide a high level of protection of the environment and to integrate environmental mitigation into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.

1.3 Not every plan needs an SEA. To determine whether the neighbourhood plan requires an SEA it is necessary to screen the proposals in the plan to determine whether it is likely to result in significant environmental effects. Ashford Borough Council is legally required to determine whether a neighbourhood plan will require SEA. As part of this screening process it will be necessary to consult the SEA consultation bodies (Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency) to get their opinion on whether or not the plan is likely to result in significant environmental effects and therefore whether an SEA is required.

1.4 One of the basic conditions (condition 'f') for a neighbourhood plan is that it does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations. To meet this condition with regard to strategic environmental assessment (SEA), a neighbourhood planning group needs to have either a statement of reasons as to why SEA is not required, or, where an SEA is deemed necessary, an environmental report (and non-technical summary) which documents the findings of the SEA.

1.5 A neighbourhood plan should be screened as soon as there is sufficient information available to consider whether the proposed content of the plan or its likely intent (e.g. will it allocate development sites or not?) is likely to lead to 'significant effects' on the environment.

1.6 There are two potential outcomes to this screening: either the plan is not likely to result in any significant environmental effects and an SEA is not required, or the plan is deemed to be likely to result in significant environmental effects and that SEA scoping report (and potentially a full report) is required to be undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Group.

What is HRA?

1.7 A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a process which looks at the potential impact of proposals within a plan on internationally designated wildlife sites. For the purpose of the HRA, internationally designated wildlife sites are Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar wetland sites, often together referred to as 'Natura 2000' sites.

1.8 This initial screening stage of the HRA process involves consideration of the reasons for designation and the conservation objectives of each internationally designated wildlife site within a 'reasonable' distance of the particular Neighbourhood Plan Area and the potential impact of the proposals within the draft neighbourhood plan on these.

Consultation

1.9 This report details the screening process undertaken for the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan against the requirement for an SEA and HRA to be produced to accompany the Pre-submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

2.0 A copy of this report was sent to the three statutory consultees; Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England to obtain their views on its contents between 23rd August and 5th October 2017.

2.1 The full responses of this consultation are included at Appendix 2.

Screening Determination

2.2 The screening report concludes that:

- A scoping or full Strategic Environmental Assessment **is not required** to accompany the pre-submission version of the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan covering the requirements of the SEA Directive.
- A Habitats Regulation Assessment **is not required** to accompany the pre-submission version of the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan.

2.3 This formal screening opinion has been issued to Rolvenden Parish Council indicating the outcomes of the screening stage on Wednesday 29th November 2017.

2. The Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan Context

2.1 Rolvenden is a Parish in the Borough of Ashford, Kent. However, it also borders the county of East Sussex. The Parish includes the main village (known as Rolvenden), and the smaller hamlet of Rolvenden Layne. Its distance from the main town of Ashford is 16 miles, but is only 3 miles south of the smaller town of Tenterden. The parish has an area of 2,329 hectares (5,755 acres) and a population of 1,414 people (2011 Census).

2.2 The Rolvenden NP project is led by a Steering Group which includes local residents and other community stakeholders and is overseen by the Parish Council. The Steering Group first outlined a proposal for a Neighbourhood Plan for their village in early 2013. The Parish Council formerly requested that Ashford Borough Council designate the administrative area of Rolvenden Parish Council as a Neighbourhood Area on the in April 2013. Following a period of 6 weeks public consultation Ashford Borough Council approved the designation of the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Area on the 11th July 2013.

2.4 The Neighbourhood Plan is currently in preparation, and is due to commence consultation in late 2017. The current draft of the Rolvenden NP has the following vision and objectives:

Vision

Our vision for Rolvenden Parish is to continue to thrive by meeting identified local housing needs, sustaining the local economy and enhancing the strong social fabric whilst preserving the distinctive village character and the natural beauty of the surrounding landscape.

Objectives

Environment

Objectives

- To preserve and enhance the heritage of the area.
- To ensure development is well designed and responds to the heritage and distinctive character of the different areas of Rolvenden.
- To protect and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald landscape and the setting of the villages.
- To protect important open spaces within the villages.
- To maintain the distinctive locally valued views and visual connectivity of the villages with the surrounding countryside.

Housing

Objectives

- To enable local people to stay in, or return to, the villages by ensuring an additional supply and mix of housing which meets the needs of the Parish within the identified environmental constraints.
- To increase the supply of smaller and affordable homes.
- To make the best and effective use of brownfield sites and promote the development of small scale greenfield sites which are well related to the villages and their services and well integrated with the High Weald AONB.

Local Economy

Objectives

- To retain and enable the regeneration of well located existing business sites.
- To support new workspace, if required, at sites which are well integrated with the High Weald AONB.
- To retain and enable new tourist accommodation.
- To seek to retain the economic and social hub of Rolvenden village centre and enhance its appearance.
- To seek to retain the public house in Rolvenden Layne.

Leisure and Wellbeing

Objectives

- To ensure that sufficient community and leisure facilities are maintained to serve the Parish including new provision in association with new development.
- To protect and enhance public open spaces used for recreational purposes, including provision of a new shared pavilion at the Rolvenden sports fields.
- To protect the extensive network of footpaths serving the Parish.

Infrastructure

Objectives

- To ensure that new development is well connected to village facilities by a range of transport modes, including walking and cycling and, where appropriate, makes suitable provision towards new sustainable transport infrastructure.
- To ensure sufficient infrastructure capacity in relation to the primary school, community buildings and parking is provided in a timely manner, appropriate to the scale of new development.

The Neighbourhood Plan will contain the following policies:

Environment Policies:

- protection of the distinctive character of the identified character areas; including the heritage assets;
- protection of the important open spaces within the village envelopes;
- protection of the countryside (AONB) including the setting of the villages and important public views)

Housing Policies:

- allocation of Kingsgate Corner; Cornex Garage and Land to rear of Redwood housing sites (total capacity 24 dwellings); each allocation to have separate design and mitigation requirements
- infill development within the village envelopes of Rolvenden and Rolvenden Layne subject to protecting residential amenity and design policies in Environment section
- smaller homes to meet starter and retirement needs

Business (including Rolvenden Village Centre) Policies:

- protection, extension or alteration of village shops and public houses within defined Rolvenden Village Centre
- retention, intensification and regeneration of existing business sites
- support for new workspaces within the built up areas of Rolvenden and Rolvenden Layne; within existing business sites, as defined above or associated with the diversification of agricultural and other land-based industries

Leisure and Wellbeing Policies:

- protection of open spaces (extended sports pitches area (and enhancement of pavilion); children's play areas and allotments unless replacement provision of at least equivalent value to the local community is provided
- Protection of extensive network of footpaths.

2.5 The Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan steering group has indicated that the approximate parameters of development they are looking to secure through the plan process is residential development, up to 24 dwellings, on three small scale sites.

2.6 One of the NDP aims is to create a set of Local Design Guidelines to assist in the planning of future local development by identifying those character traits which create a 'sense of place'. Following detailed survey work of the local environment, heritage assets and landscape features, the Neighbourhood Plan will define 12 distinct character areas each with Distinctive Characteristics; Buildings of Note and Enhancement Measures which should be respected in any new development. Each housing allocation will have its own design and mitigation requirements. Open

spaces are to be designated and protected. The main design policy which applies to all proposals will seek development which protects and sensitively incorporates landscape features such as trees, hedges and ponds within the site; is well integrated into the landscape by existing and new landscape buffers; and will not result in unacceptable levels of light, noise, air or water pollution.

3. Strategic Environmental Assessment and Neighbourhood Plans

3.1 The SEA Directive aims to integrate environmental considerations into the preparation of plans and secure a high level of protection for the environment as well as promoting sustainable development.

3.2 This Screening Report seeks to determine whether or not a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required for the Rolvenden neighbourhood Plan in accordance with European¹ and National² legislation.

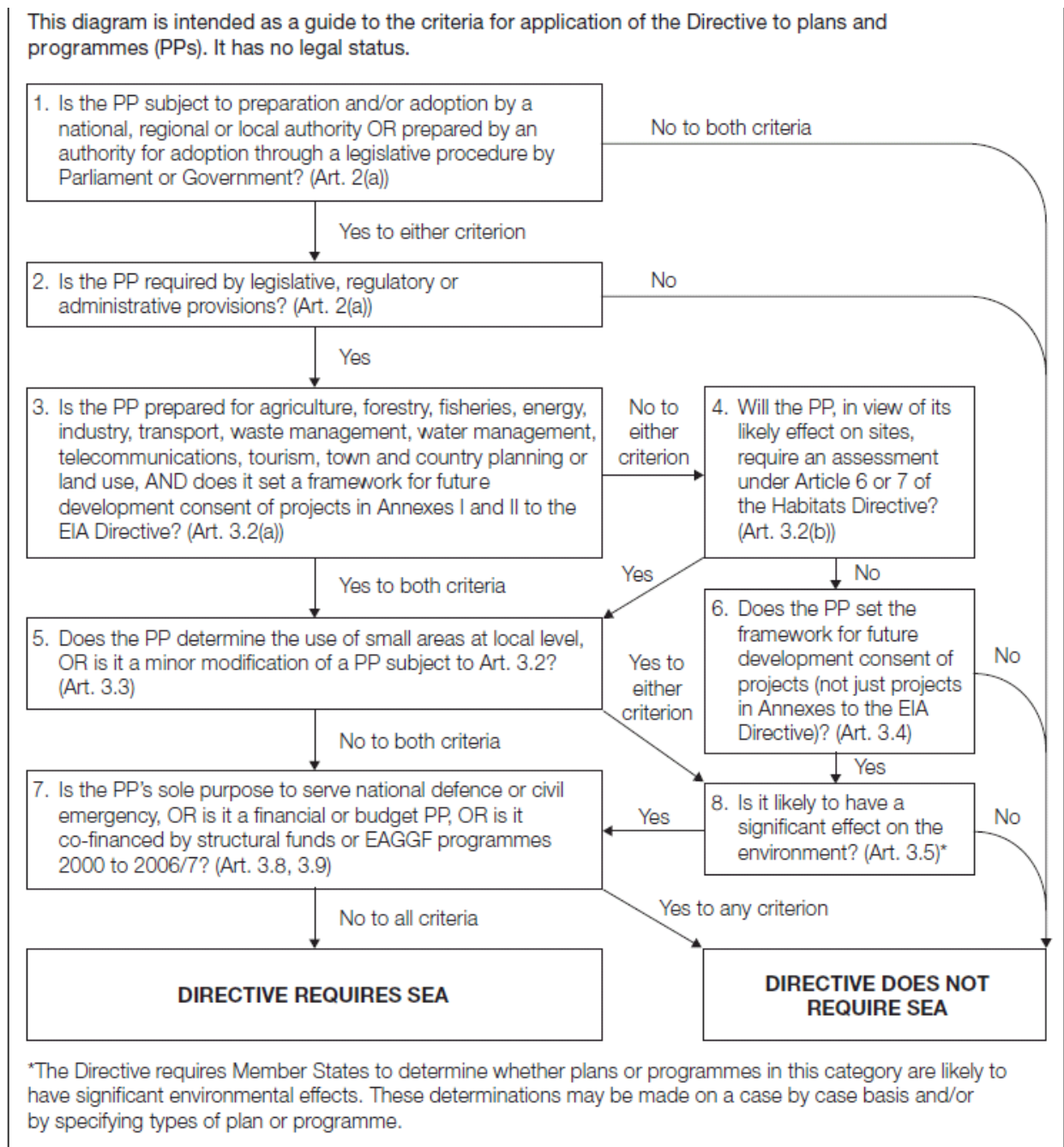
3.4 To establish if a neighbourhood plan needs to be accompanied by a full SEA, a “screening” assessment is required against a series of criteria set out in the SEA Directive. A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive³ sets out in a diagrammatic form the series of criteria (reproduced on the next page – Figure 1).

¹ Directive 2001/42/EC – Known as the SEA Directive

² The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulation 2004 ‘The Regulations’.

³ ODPM September (2005) ‘Practical guidance on applying European Directive 2001/42/EC’

Figure 1: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes



Source: Annex II of the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC

3.5 Using the step by step guide at Figure 1 an initial assessment of the effect of a Neighbourhood Plan has been undertaken and is recorded below in Table 1:

Table 1: Screening Neighbourhood Plans

Screening Stages	Answer	Reasons
1. Is the PP 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 preparation of and adoption of the NP is allowed under The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The preparation of the NP is subject to the following regulations: The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012. Once the plan is prepared, it will be subject to Examination and Referendum, if successful it will be adopted by Ashford Borough Council as the Local Planning Authority.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	Whilst the provision of a Neighbourhood Plan is optional, it will form part of the Development Plan for the Ashford District if adopted and used when making decisions on planning applications. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive.
3. 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))	Yes	The NP is being prepared for town and country planning and land use. The NP will therefore provide a framework for future development consent of development projects in Annex II of the EIA Directive including Infrastructure projects 10(b) Urban-development projects).

Screening Stages	Answer	Reasons
4. Will the Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2(b))	Yes	A neighbourhood plan can potentially impact on an internationally designated site and therefore additional screening is required in this regard (part of this report)
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Yes	The NP determines small sites at local level
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)	Yes	The NP is to be used for determining future planning applications.
7. Is the Plan's sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art. 3.8, 3.9)	No	N/A to Neighbourhood Planning.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	?	NDP could potentially have an effect on the environment. However, whether this is significant depends on the specific proposals within each NDP. This requires individual assessment of the NDP, and its aims and potential site allocations (see section 4)

4. Rolvenden SEA Screening Assessment

- 4.1 At this stage of Neighbourhood Plan preparation the draft vision and objectives and policy themes of the neighbourhood plan as outlined in Chapter 2 of this report have been used to undertake this screening assessment.
- 4.2 If it is found that the information used to undertake this screening report is changed in a significant manner at the Regulation 14 stage, such as quantum or locations of development, then an additional screening exercise will be required.
- 4.3 This part of the report is to deal specifically with Question 8 of the SEA Directive guidance. The criteria for this assessment is taken from Article 3.5 of the SEA Directive:

Figure 2: Criteria for determining likely significance of effects on the environment (from Article 3.5 of the SEA Directive)

1. The characteristics of neighbourhood plans, having regard, in particular, to
 - the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
 - the degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
 - the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
 - environmental problems relevant to the plan,
 - the relevance of the plan for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or waste protection).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to
 - the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
 - the cumulative nature of the effects,
 - the trans boundary nature of the effects,
 - the risks to human health of the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
 - the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
 - the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
 - intensive land-use,
 - the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

Table 2: Screening Assessment for Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan against Criteria in Figure 2.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Screening Assessment
<p>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.</p>	<p>The Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan is intending to deliver small –scale modest housing growth within the villages. The Neighbourhood Plan sits within the wider framework of the NPPF; Core Strategy; Tenterden and Sites DPD; ‘saved’ Local Plan policies; together with the emerging Local Plan policies. Consequently the projects for which this NP helps to set a framework are localised in nature. Overall, the likelihood of significant effects on the environment is minimised.</p>
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan must take into account the National Planning Policy Framework and the plan should be in general conformity with the Council’s adopted strategic Local Plan policies. In addition, the NP is prepared in the context of the emerging Local Plan and supporting evidence. A Neighbourhood Plan does not influence other plans.</p>
<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan is required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore the likelihood of significant effects on the environment is minimised. The Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan contains a number of draft objectives which seek to promote sustainable development. These objectives influence the plan’s policies for protection of the distinctive character of the identified character areas including heritage assets; protection of open spaces; protection of the countryside (AONB) including the setting of the villages and important public views; protection against unacceptable levels of light, noise, air or water pollution and limited housing with specific design and mitigation requirements. In this way, the NP has integrated environmental considerations with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>
<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.</p>	<p>The environmental impact of the proposals within the NP is likely to be minimal due to the scale of development proposed. Given the location of the two villages in the Plan area, the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan will not have any impact on flood risk or air quality.</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Screening Assessment
The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).	The Neighbourhood Plan has to be in conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan and National Policy Guidance. The Local Plan has had regard to European Community legislation on the environment and therefore this legislation will not be relevant for the Neighbourhood Plan.
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	Small scale development is proposed within the NP area and therefore some element of environmental change will take place. However, the NP will contain a number of policies which seek to protect and enhance the environment and secure the retention and enhancement of local employment; services and facilities. The Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to result in significant negative environmental impacts.
The cumulative nature of the effects.	<p>The cumulative effects of proposals within the NP are unlikely to be significant on the local environment.</p> <p>The emerging Local Plan 2030 has been subject to a full Sustainability Appraisal, which addresses cumulative matters in more detail.</p>
The trans-boundary nature of the effects.	Rolvenden is adjacent to the district boundary with Tunbridge Wells Borough. However, as the proposals in the NP will be of a small scale it is unlikely that there will be significant trans-boundary effects.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	No risks to human health have been identified nor have risks to the environment. The policies within the Plan seek to protect the environment.
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The geographic area and population of the plan area are relatively small in relation to the wider Borough and the effects of the plan will be relatively localised. The scale of development proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan is small-scale and therefore the potential for environmental effects is also likely to be localised to this settlement/parish. It is very unlikely that the effects of the proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan will be extensive or have any spatial impact.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Screening Assessment
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; • exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; • intensive land-use. • the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status. 	<p>The parish contains the following designations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (High Weald) - covers the whole parish, • 1 Scheduled monument to the south of the Layne settlement, • Numerous Listed buildings, mainly located within the 2 settlements along the main highway routes, • Great Maytham Historic Park and Garden which lies between the 2 settlements, • A local Wildlife Site at Rolvenden Churchyard and others located on parish edge, • 2 Conservation areas; Rolvenden and Rolvenden Layne, • Areas known to be of archaeological interest, and areas with archaeological potential <p>These environmental, landscape and heritage characteristics of the parish are mapped in Appendix 2</p> <p>In relation to the Natural Environment, the area around the settlements is generally farmland with nearby local designations such as Ancient Woodland. However the Parish is wholly within the High Weald AONB. Two small housing allocations are proposed at the edge of Rolvenden and Rolvenden Layne:</p> <p>Land to rear of Redwood, Tenterden Road, Rolvenden With a capacity of approximately 10 dwellings and Kingsgate Corner, Maytham Road / Frensham Road, Rolvenden Layne with a capacity of 4 dwellings. Neither site represents large scale development and both will have specific design and mitigation requirements appropriate to their location within the AONB. Neither of the sites is within an area designated of nature conservation value or Ancient Woodland.</p> <p>In relation to the Historic and Cultural Heritage of the area, there are a number of listed buildings within the two settlements, mainly located along the main high street/ highways, which are also covered by Conservation Area designations. Between these 2 settlements and CA designations is the Great Maytham Historic Park and garden designation, and south of the Layne settlement is the Lowden Farm Medieval Moated Site and adjacent Hythe Scheduled monument. One of</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Screening Assessment
	<p>the allocated housing sites is within the High Street adjoining listed buildings and within the Conservation Area. The area comprises a single storey 1960's plain brick building with an asbestos cement roof and cracked concrete forecourt with corrugated iron and cement structures and block of 1960's standard concrete garages to the rear. The allocation represents an opportunity to enhance the Conservation Area and the setting of listed buildings.</p> <p>No Neighbourhood Plan proposals impact on the Historic park and Garden or designated archaeological sites.</p> <p>No areas around the main settlements are located within Floodzone 2 or 3.</p> <p>Conclusion: Overall the Plan will seek to achieve sustainable development through the implementation of a number of policies relating, in particular, to high quality design appropriate to distinctive local characteristics; protection and enhancement of heritage assets and their setting (including Buildings of Note); protection and sensitive incorporation of landscape features such as trees, hedges and ponds within sites; conservation and enhancement of the AONB and ensuring integration of development into the landscape .</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan also offers an opportunity to enhance the Natural Environment and the Heritage of the area through the proposals and policies being considered such as local design guidelines.</p> <p>In addition, the neighbourhood plan area sits within the broader development plan for the borough and is at present covered by Core Strategy and Tenterden and Rural Site environment Policies. Development proposals coming forward would be required to be in accordance with the all adopted policies, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS11 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation • CS19 Development and Flood Risk • CS20 Sustainable Drainage • GP12 Protecting the countryside and managing change

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Screening Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EN9 Setting and entrances of towns and villages • EN10 Development on the edge of existing settlements • EN16 Development in conservation areas • EN23 Sites of archaeological importance • EN28 Historic parks and gardens • EN30 Nature conservation sites • EN31 Important habitats • EN32 Important trees and woodland • Policy TRS17 - Landscape character & design • Policy TRS18 - Important Rural Features <p>The emerging draft Ashford Local Plan 2030 will replace the policies above and includes the following draft policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENV1 Biodiversity • ENV3 Landscape Character and Design • ENV5 Protecting important rural features • ENV6 Flood Risk • ENV9 Sustainable Drainage • ENV13 Conservation and Enhancement of Heritage Assets • ENV14 Conservation Areas • ENV15 Archaeology <p>Once applied to developments within The Rolvenden NP area, these policies will ensure no proposals which would create significant negative effects on the environment are permitted.</p>

4.4 It should be noted that Ashford Borough Council have undertaken borough-wide and Area specific SEAs as part of the adoption of the current development plan documents for the Rolvenden Parish in the Core Strategy (2008) and Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD (2012). These previously completed SEAs have been taken into account in undertaking this screening assessment. In addition, a recent borough-wide SEA has been undertaken on the emerging Local Plan to 2030, a borough-wide development plan document which identifies the addition of 40 new dwellings within the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan area during the plan period.

Screening Assessment Conclusion

4.5 The assessment finds no significant negative effects will occur as a result of the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan. The assessment also finds that the aims and objectives of the NP are in conformity with the adopted and/or emerging local plan policies which have a full SA/SEA which identified no significant effects will occur as a result of the implementation of policies contained within them. It is concluded that a full SEA is **not required** at this time.

4.6 However, once the Regulation 14 Neighbourhood Plan is published if it is changed in a significant manner a new SEA screening process may be undertaken to re-assess this conclusion on whether a full SEA will be required.

5. HRA Screening Assessment

4.1 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) refers to the appropriate assessment required for any plan or project to assess the potential implications for European wildlife sites. The HRA therefore looks at whether the implementation of the plan or project would harm the habitats or species for which European wildlife sites are designated. These Internationally Designated sites are often known as ‘Natura 2000’ sites and include:

- Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)

4.2 In addition to SPA’s and SAC’s sites, Ramsar sites are designated under the Ramsar Convention (Iran 1971 as amended by the Paris Protocol 1992). Although they are not covered by the Habitats regulations, as a matter of Government policy, Ramsar sites should be treated in the same way as the other European wildlife sites.

4.3 The first stage of the HRA process is a “screening” exercise where the details of nearby internationally designated sites are assessed to see if there is the potential for the implementation of the Plan to have an impact on the site. Therefore, the following paragraphs will screen the potential impact of the proposals for the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan on these sites within 20km of the Neighbourhood Area Boundary.

4.4 The following International designated sites are located within 20km of the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Area boundary. Distances are approximate. See Map 3 in Appendix 1 for mapping.

Table 3: Distance to International Designated Sites

SAC	SPA	Ramsar Sites
Hastings Cliffs – 17km	Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay – 9km	Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay– 9km
Dungeness – 19km		

4.5 Of the 3 designated sites identified in table 3, the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA and RAMSAR are the closest at around 9km away with the two SACs at Hastings Cliff and Dungeness at 17km or more away.

4.6 The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) states that the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA and RAMSARs main importance is the breeding and wintering waterbirds, birds of prey, passage warblers and breeding seabirds in addition to the site’s complex network of wetland types and habitat.

4.7 The Dungeness SAC is primarily selected because of the Annual vegetation of drift lines and perennial vegetation of stony banks, in addition to this it hosts a large Great Crested Newt population.

4.8 The Hastings Cliffs SAC supports woodland and scrub habitats with an unusual 'Atlantic' bryophyte flora. Closer to the sea the maritime influence stunts the trees, but other bryophytes become important here, with one species, *Lophocolea fragrans*, at its only south-east England locality. The clay cliff slopes are eroding and support a range of habitats from bare ground and flushes to maritime grassland and scrub, reflecting the successional development of vegetation following cliff-falls

(source: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites>)

4.9 It should be noted that the current adopted development plans, Ashford Borough Core Strategy was subject to HRA during its production, as was the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD, which both covered the Rolvenden parish area. The Appropriate Assessment for the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD concluded that the potential significant effects identified, are either assessed as not having a significant impact on the European sites or are mitigated by the approach set out within Core Strategy, the Tenterden & Rural Sites DPD and other related documents (including the High Weald AONB Management Plan and the Ashford Integrated Water Management Study).

4.10 The Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan is intending to deliver small-scale growth which has no potential to cause a significant effect on a European site a distance of 9km away.

4.11 A more recent 2017 Habitats Regulation Assessment has been undertaken for the draft Local Plan to 2030, which assumes for new development of up to 40 dwellings within the Rolvenden parish during the plan period. The 2017 HRA concluded the following:

'On the basis of the findings of this Assessment, it is concluded that an adequate policy framework is in place to ensure that the Ashford Local Plan 2030 will not lead to a Likely Significant Effect on European sites either alone or in combination with other projects and plans and that an Appropriate Assessment is not therefore required'.

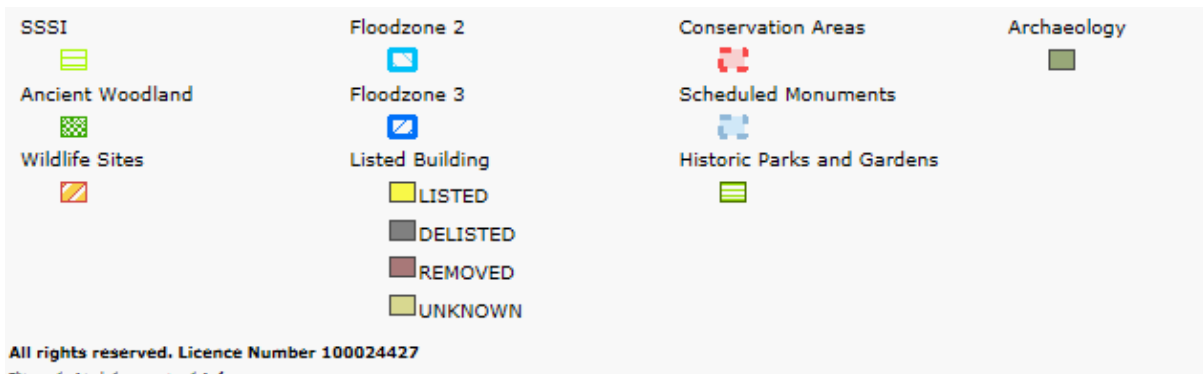
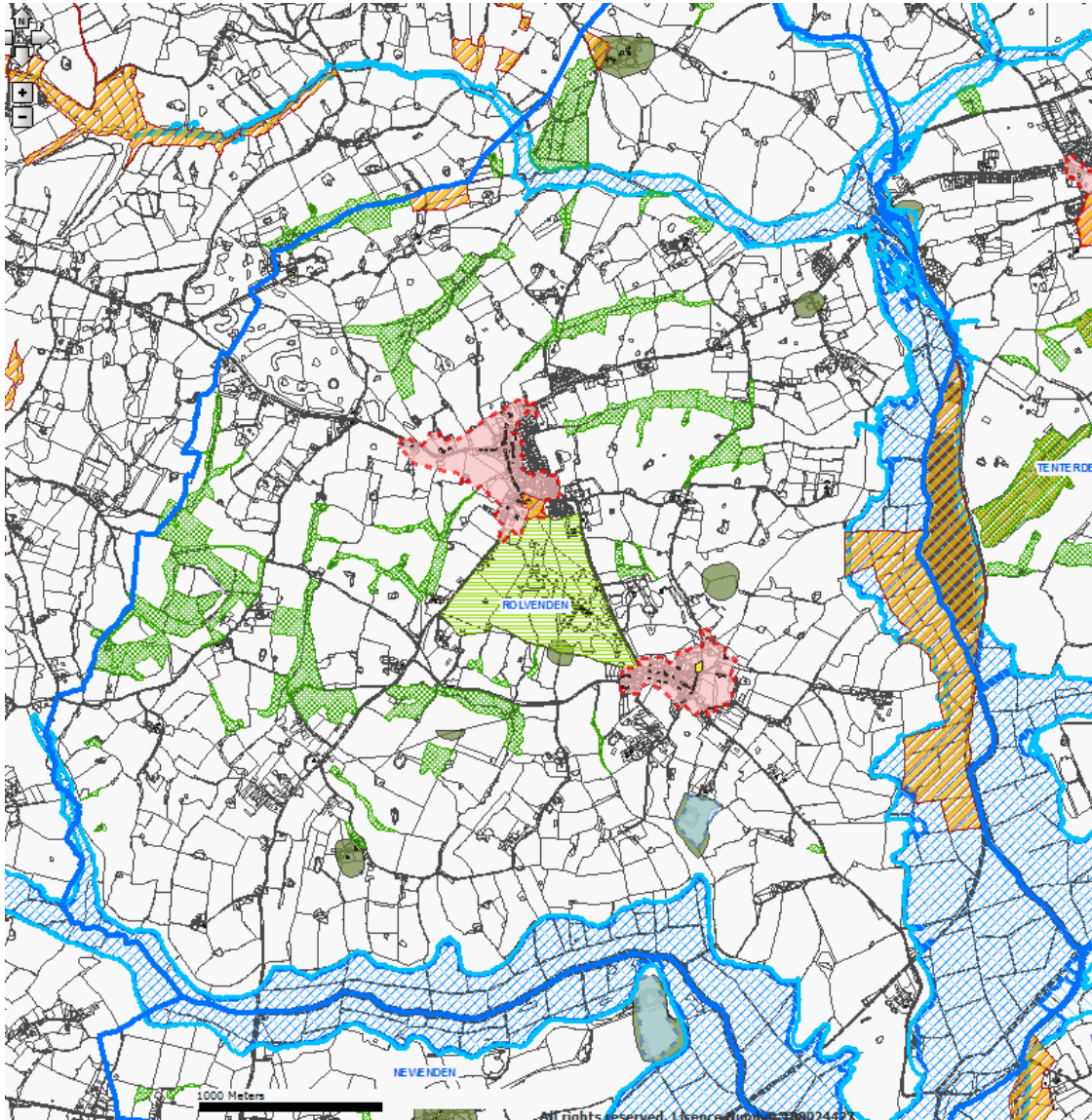
Screening Assessment Conclusion

4.12 As either the current Core Strategy and Tenterden DPD or the Local Plan 2030 would be the primary development plan and as these international sites are over 9km away, it is considered that the Rolvenden NP proposals will not adversely affect the integrity of the internationally designated sites, alone or in combination with other projects and plans. It is therefore considered that a full HRA of the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan is **not required**.

Appendix 1: MAPS

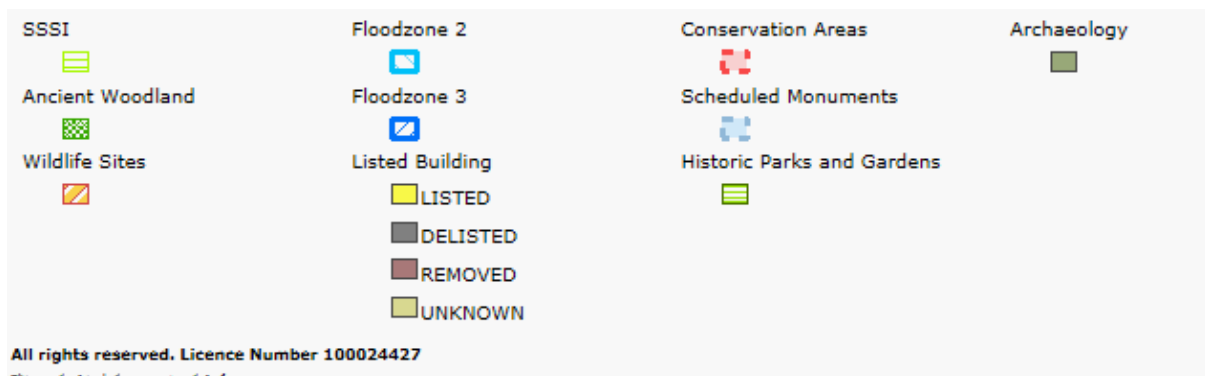
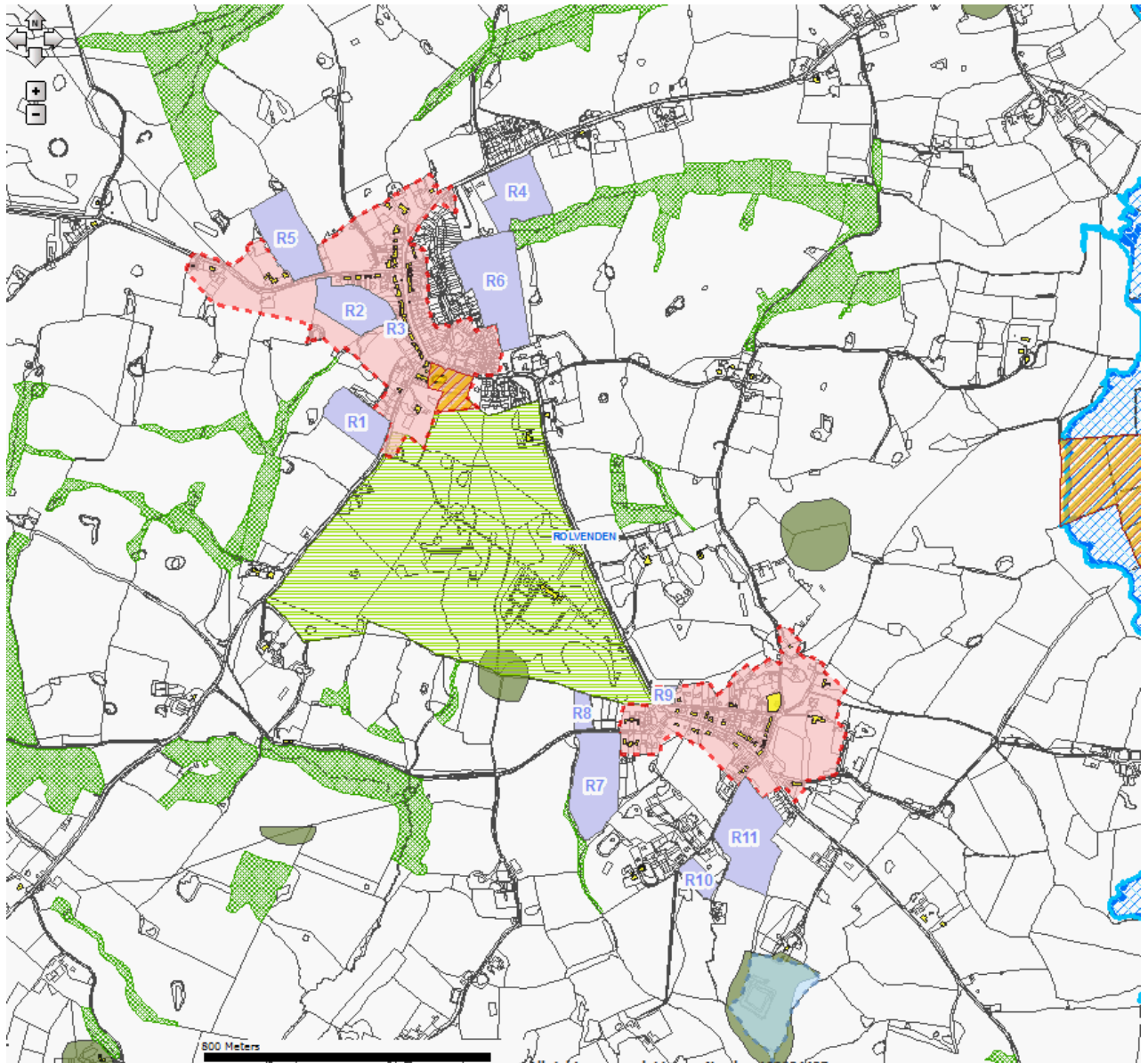
Map 1 - Environmental and Heritage Designations - Rolvenden Parish

Note that the whole parish is within the High Weald AONB



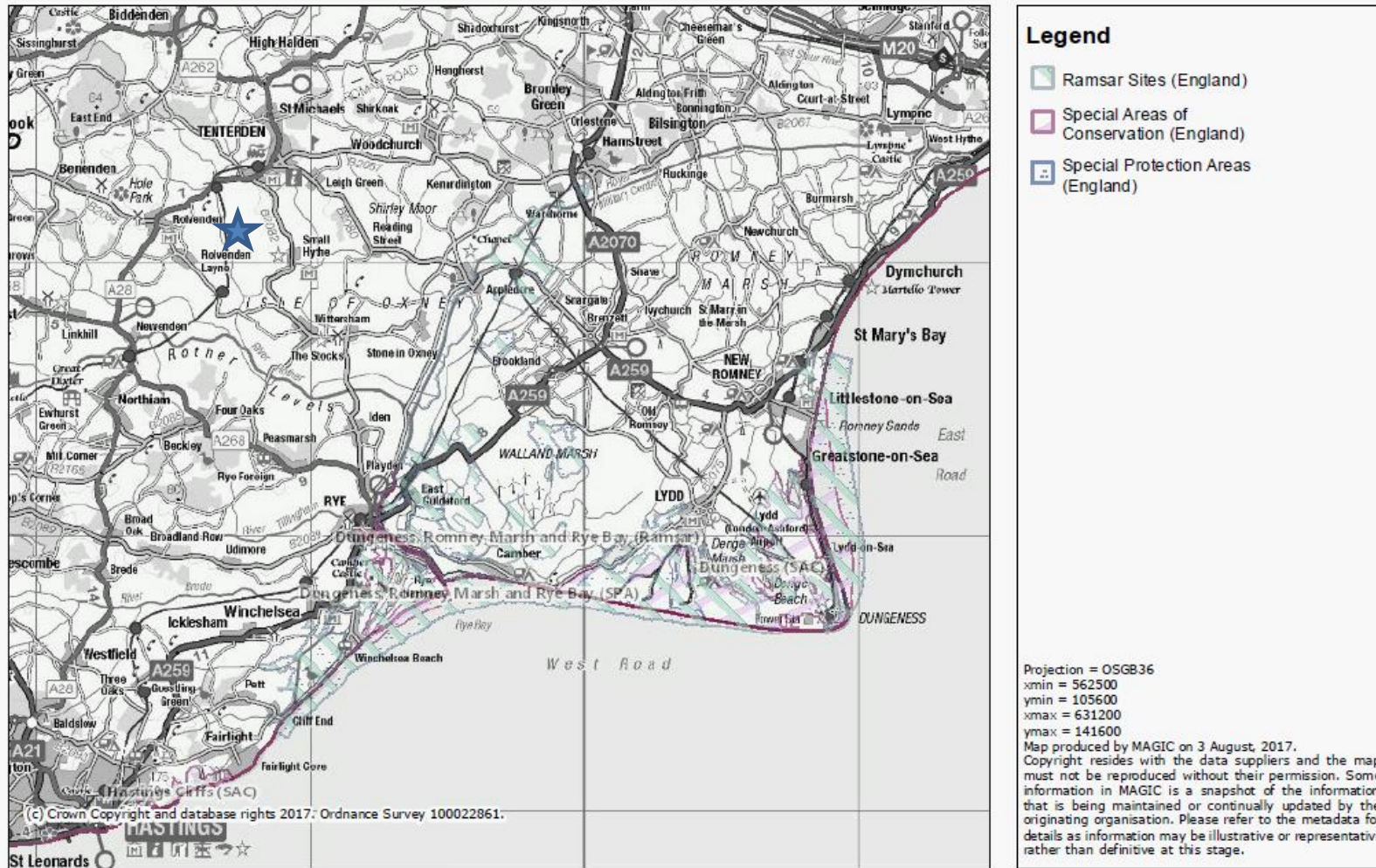
Map 2 - Environmental and Heritage Designations & Potential Site allocations

This map contains all sites under consideration for inclusion within the NDP.



Map 3 – International Designations (HRA)

Location of Rolvenden and internationally designated sites within 20km



Source: www.magic.gov.uk/Magicmap

Appendix 2: RESPONSE FROM STATUTORY CONSULTEES

Statutory Consultation with the 3 required bodies ran between 23rd August and Thursday 5th October 2017. The responses are detailed below:

Environment Agency

We have no major concerns with SEA screening however, the plan developers should be made aware of the environmental constraints in the area and the attached “*Planning for the environment at the neighbourhood level*”.

Kind Regards

Jennifer Wilson Planning Specialist

Sustainable Places – Kent and South London

Natural England

224538 - SEA/HRA Screening on Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan

Thank you for consulting Natural England on your Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA screening document. My comments are as follows:

In terms of national and international habitats, we agree with your conclusion (in paragraph 4.12) that there are not likely to be significant effects, based on the current understanding of the possible location of proposed development in the context of the location and sensitivities of designated habitats (and landscapes). We also accept your conclusion that the proposals as so far set out are unlikely to have a significant effect on Natura 2000 sites in plan area and in adjoining parishes and districts, and that a full Appropriate Assessment is not deemed necessary.

Additional Advice - Plan Policies

Generally the policies outlined in the document deal reasonably with matters relating to the natural environment. However, as the whole of the parish lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), I advise that the policies should include reference to proposed development complying with the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

I hope you find these comments helpful. If there are issues I have not covered, please let me know and I will respond as quickly as possible. If discussion would be helpful, please give me a call.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Bishop MRTPI - Adviser

Sustainable Development - Sussex & Kent Team

Historic England

I see that Policy RNP1 affords protection to heritage assets. In addition, Policy RNP4 c) also provides protection for the conservation area and listed buildings.

In theory, therefore, if these requirements are adhered to, the Plan's policies and proposals should not give rise to significant effects on the historic environment.

Accordingly, Historic England is satisfied that, based on this information, Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan is not strictly necessary.

However, some form of assessment of alternative sites to explain why those proposed were selected would be useful, and if we consider that the development of site c) would, notwithstanding the policy criteria, be harmful to the Conservation Area or listed building, we would look for a convincing explanation as to why that site was chosen. That may need to take the form of a proportionate SEA.

So, in summary, Historic England is happy at this stage and with the information currently available for the Plan to proceed without a SEA, but continue to reserve the right to change that opinion should circumstances change or more information becomes available.

I would also say that a SEA would help the PC demonstrate that the Plan is robust should anyone be minded to object to any of the policies or proposals, as well as identifying any potential unforeseen consequences and ensuring that the Plan meets the basic condition regarding compliance European law. So there are good reasons for doing a proportionate SEA, but that's a matter for the Council's to consider.

Martin Small

