



## **Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan**

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) &  
Habitat Regulations Assessment

Screening Report  
(Cannock Chase Council, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017)

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# Contents

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Legislative Background
- 3. SEA Screening
- 4. HRA Screening
- 5. Conclusions and recommendations of the Screening Assessments

## Appendix

- Appendix 1 – Map of Natura 2000 sites within 15km of Neighbourhood Plan Boundary
- Appendix 2 – HRA review of Proposed Policies
- Appendix 3 - SEA & HRA Screening Opinion and Statutory Consultee Responses

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This screening report is an assessment of whether or not the contents of the Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/ EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. This screening assessment has taken place on Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan as dated March 2017.
- 1.2 This report will also screen to determine whether the HNP requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Article 6(3) and (4) of the EU Habitats Directive and with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). A HRA is required when it is deemed that likely adverse significant effects may occur on protected European Sites (Natura 2000 sites) as a result of the implementation of a plan/project. As a general 'rule of thumb' it is identified that sites with pathways of 10-15km of the plan/project boundary should be included with a HRA. Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Cannock Extension Canal SAC are within a 15km radius of the plan boundary along with Mottey Meadows (in South Staffordshire) Pasturefields Salt Marsh (in Stafford Borough) West Midlands Mosses (in Stafford Borough) Appendix 1 shows the Plan Boundary in relation to the 15km radius of Natura 2000 sites.
- 1.3 Several other European sites of international conservation interest are located within approximately 20km of the plan boundaries or beyond 20km but have the potential to be hydrologically connected: these are:
- Pasturefields Salt Marsh SAC – an inland salt marsh
  - West Midlands Mosses SAC – quaking bog and natural pool
  - Mottey Meadows SAC – lowland hay meadow
  - River Mease SAC - river habitat and aquatic fauna
  - Fens Pools SAC – designated for its great crested newt population
  - Midland Meres and Mosses Ramsar Site – Wetland and bog habitats with rare plants and wetland invertebrates; and
  - Humber estuary, SPA and Ramsar site – estuaries, mudflats, sandflats, coastal lagoons and dunes and breeding and over – wintering birds
- 1.4 The purpose of the HNP is to provide a set of statutory planning policies to guide development within Parish of Hednesford over the life of the plan. The Plan sets out the community's vision of how the area will look by 2028 and contains a series of policies and a limited number of proposed site allocations. These are focused primarily on town centre improvements, encouraging the expansion and redevelopment of existing businesses to help them perform, providing a better taxi rank and more parking for rail commuters, improving the public realm, identifying areas of local green space, developing small scale housing sites including provision for the elderly, identifying and protecting important buildings and character areas.
- 1.5 The legislative background set out in the following section outlines the regulations that require the need for this screening exercise. Section 3 provides a screening assessment of both the likely significant environmental effects of the HNP and the need for SEA. Section 4, provides a screening assessment of both the likely significant effects of the implementation of the HNP and the need for a Habitats Regulation Assessment.
- 1.6 This report will be split into two parts. The first will cover the screening for the SEA (see section 3) and the second will cover the screening process for the HRA (see section 4). A summary of findings and conclusions for both screening processes can be found in the conclusions chapter at section 5.

## **2. Legislative Background**

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC and was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Detailed Guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM 2005).
- 2.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 required Local Authorities to produce Sustainability Appraisals (SA) for all local development documents to meet the requirement of the EU Directive on SEA. It is considered best practice to incorporate requirements of the SEA Directive into an SA as discussed within the NPPF at paragraph 165. However, the 2008 Planning Act amended the requirement to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal for only development plan documents (DPD's), but did not remove the requirement to produce a Strategic Environmental Assessment. As a Neighbourhood Plan is not a development plan document it therefore does not legally require a Sustainability Appraisal. Where appropriate, however, an SEA still needs to be undertaken in line with the SEA regulations. The purpose of this report is to determine if SEA is required for the Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.3 The National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) contains specific guidance in relation to neighbourhood plans and SEA. This guidance has been considered and taken account of through this screening assessment.
- 2.4 The District Council is required to consult three statutory consultation bodies designated within the regulations, these are; Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency on whether a SEA is required, Details of the consultation bodies responses can be found at Appendix 3.

### **Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)**

- 2.5 It is required by article 6 (3) of the EU Habitats Directive and by regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) that an appropriate assessment is carried out with regard to the Conservation Objectives of the European Sites and with reference to other plans and projects to identify if any significant effect is likely for any European Site.
- 2.6 To fulfil the legal requirements to identify if likely significant effects will occur with the implementation of the HNP upon European Sites (Natura 2000 sites) a screening assessment has been undertaken and is set out in section 4 of this report.
- 2.7 The legislation requires where there is a "risk" of a significant effect on a European Site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects then there will be requirement for the plan to progress from HRA screening to an Appropriate Assessment. This is known as the precautionary principle.

### **Description of the Plan or Programme**

- 2.8 The HNP has been prepared by Hednesford Town Council. The Plan sets out the community's vision of how the area will look by 2028 and contains a series of policies and a limited number of proposed site allocations. These are focused primarily on town centre improvements, encouraging the expansion and redevelopment of existing businesses to help them perform, providing a better taxi rank and more parking for rail commuters, improving the public realm, identifying areas of local green space, developing small scale housing sites including provision for the elderly, identifying and protecting important buildings and character areas.

### 3. SEA Screening

#### Criteria for Assessing the Effects of the HNP

3.1 Criteria for determining the likely significant effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below:

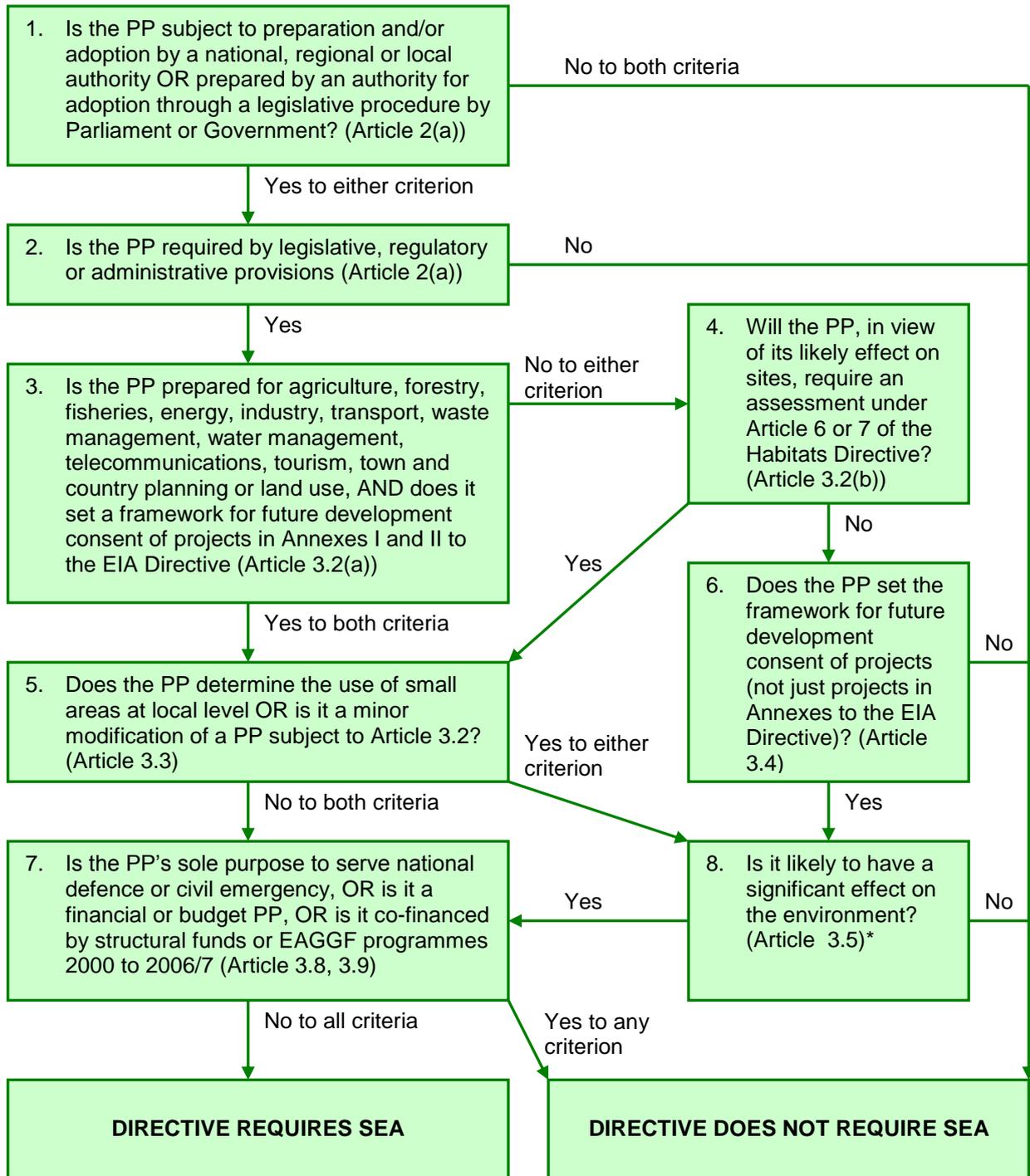
1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to
  - the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
  - the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
  - the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
  - environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
  - 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).
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 transboundary nature of the effects,
  - the risks to human health or 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.

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

## **Assessment**

- 3.2 It is required by the Localism Act that Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan which presently is the adopted Local Plan Part 1 (Part 2 is at the Issues and Options stage: consultation from 30<sup>th</sup> January to 27<sup>th</sup> March 2017 and this is accompanied by SA and HRA scoping report). The Local Plan Part 1 was subject to a full Sustainability Appraisal which included a SEA assessment. This ensured that there were no likely significant effects which would be produced from the implementation of the Local Plan as if any were likely to arise, it ensured that mitigation measures were in place.
- 3.3 Government guidance includes the following flow chart for screening a planning document to ascertain whether a full SEA is required, see figure1.

Figure 1. Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes (PPs)



\* The Directive requires Member States to determine whether plans or programmes in this category are likely to have significant environmental effects. These determinations may be made on a case by case basis and/or by specifying types of plan or programme.

3.4 The process in figure 1 has been undertaken and the findings can be viewed in Table 1. Table 1 shows the assessment of whether the HNP will require a full SEA. The questions in Table 1 are drawn from the diagram above which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

**Table 1: Establishing the Need for SEA**

Stage	Yes/No	Reason
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) 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	This Neighbourhood Plan is prepared by Hednesford Town Council (as the Qualifying Body) under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. Once the plan is 'made' subject to examination and having received 50%+ or more 'yes' votes through a referendum it will be adopted by Cannock Chase Council and become part of the Statutory Development Plan for the area.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	Communities can <u>choose</u> to produce a Neighbourhood Plan; however they are not technically <u>required</u> by legislative, regulatory or administrative purposes to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. However, <b>once 'made' the Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan would form part of the statutory development plan, and would be used when making decisions on planning applications within the Neighbourhood Area.</b> Therefore it is considered necessary to answer the following questions to determine further if an SEA is required.
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 HNP is prepared for town and country planning and land use. The plan sets out a framework for future development in the Hednesford Neighbourhood Area. Once 'made' the HNP will form part of the statutory development plan, and will be used when making decisions on planning applications which may include development which may fall under Annex I and II of the EIA directive.
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive?(Art. 3.2 (b))	Yes	The Neighbourhood Plan could potentially have an impact on internationally designated wildlife sites covered by the Habitats Regulations. See screening assessment for HRA in following section 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)	<b>Yes</b>	The HNP identifies a limited number of land allocations at the local level as well as policies which may influence uses of land locally. Once 'made' the HNP will form part of the statutory development plan and be used when making decisions on planning applications of small areas at the 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)	<b>Yes</b>	The HNP, once 'made', forms part of the statutory development plan and will be used to determine planning applications within the designated Hednesford Neighbourhood Area. Therefore the Neighbourhood Plan will set the framework for future developments.
7. Is the PP's sole purpose to serve the 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)	<b>No</b>	The HNP does not deal with any of these categories of plan.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	<b>Yes</b>	The HNP could potentially have a significant effect on the environment, not just within the Neighbourhood Area but also within the District. The HNP could also impact upon Cannock Chase SAC a Natura 2000 site, (see HRA section). For these reasons a case by case assessment of the HNP is required.

3.5 A number of the criteria above suggest that SEA of the Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan may be required. Criteria 4 and Criteria 8 of the assessment in Figure 1 and Table 1 consider that the Neighbourhood Plan may have a significant effect on the environment, particularly relating to Natura 2000 sites. Depending on the proposals within the plan, assessment may be made on a case by case basis. The criteria for undertaking such an assessment are drawn from Article 3(5) of the SEA Directive as set out at paragraph 3.1 of this report.

3.6 The following assessment will consider the likelihood of the Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan (as published at the date of this report) to have significant effects on the environment.

**Table 2: Assessment if likelihood of significant effects on the environment**

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of Significant effects
<b>The characteristics of the plans, having regard to;</b>	
<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>Once 'made'; the HNP will set out the framework which will be used to determine proposals for development within the neighbourhood area. The HNP includes policies relating to specific sites within the neighbourhood area which would guide the types of development delivered – or constrained - on sites. It also proposes allocating sites: two in the town centre for mixed uses and one to the edge of the centre for proposed retirement accommodation as well as suggesting (but not allocating) a small residential scheme. It also proposes allocating a number of sites for public open space / green space and encourages improvements to existing Rights of Way onto Cannock Chase AONB. There is therefore the potential for an effect on the environment resulting from the proposals in the plan.</p>
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.</p>	<p>The HNP must be in broad conformity with the Cannock Chase Local Plan Part 1. The Part 2 Allocations document is in the early stages of production (Issues and Options consultation January 30<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> March 2017) and so there will be an opportunity for the two plans to 'dovetail'. There is also a potential impact upon the AONB Management Plan and Cannock Chase SAC mitigation plan.</p> <p>The HNP will help to deliver the overall aims of the Local Plan. The HNP seeks to provide greater detail on issues which are of local relevance to the community.</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>Any Neighbourhood Plan is required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore the likelihood of significant effects on the environment is minimised. This plan seeks to allocate sites and contains policies relating to specific areas within the Neighbourhood Area. It provides more local detail than that contained in Local Plan Part 1 and so could give rise to impacts on the environment.</p>
<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan.</p>	<p>The environmental impacts of the proposals within the HNP are likely to be minimal due to the scale and nature of development proposed. However, the allocations and policies within the plan may assist in determining the scale and location of certain types of development which would be the determining factor in the magnitude of any environmental impact.</p>
<p>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).</p>	<p>The HNP has to be in general conformity with the Local Plan. The adopted Local Plan Part 1 has had regard to European Community legislation on the environment and therefore this legislation will not be relevant for the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>

<b>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular to;</b>	
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	Development is supported within the HNP and therefore an element of environmental change will occur, the impacts of which will depend upon the proposals. The plan period is to 2028 but effects may occur long after this date.
The cumulative nature of the effects.	The cumulative effects of proposals within the HNP are unlikely to be significant on the local environment given the level of development proposed does not exceed that within the adopted LPP1 however this would need further analysis of the policies and proposals to be certain this is the case.
The trans boundary nature of the effects.	Effects will be local with limited effects on neighbouring areas.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	There is limited risk to human health or the environment as a result of the HNP.
The magnitude spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The scale of development proposed through the HNP is small therefore effects are likely to be localised. It is unlikely that the effects of proposals within the neighbourhood plan will be large scale and extensive.
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:  - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage - exceeded environmental quality standards - intensive land use	The HNP is unlikely to significantly affect the value and vulnerability of the area in relation to the special natural characteristics or cultural heritage although small localised changes may occur.  The level of development proposed through the HNP is unlikely to lead to intensive land use on a significant scale, with effects being small and localised.
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	The Cannock Chase SAC and AONB lie within 15km of the HNP boundary. Developments within the Cannock Chase SAC 15km zone of influence will in combination have an effect on the integrity of the SAC. The HNP will need to show that it is in accordance with Policy CP13 of the adopted Local Plan Part 1 which ensures that before development is permitted it must demonstrate that it (alone or in combination) will not have an adverse effect, whether direct or indirect, upon the integrity of the SAC having regard to avoidance or mitigation measures. The HNP boundary is within 15km of the Cannock Extension Canal SAC, the West Midland Mosses SAC Motte Meadows (in South Staffordshire) and Pasturefields Salt Marsh (in Stafford Borough) It is not considered that the HNP will impact these areas.

## **Screening Outcome**

- 3.7 The HNP is focused upon small scale, localised development, , but it does propose to allocate sites for development and local green space and encourage improvements to existing Public Rights of Way onto Cannock Chase AONB which could also impact upon the Cannock Chase SAC. It also includes policies which relate to specific areas within the Neighbourhood Area.
- 3.8 The conclusions of the above screening assessment on the Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan indicate that Strategic Environmental Assessment will be required for the Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan.

## 4. HRA Screening

- 4.1 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) refers to the assessment required for any plan or project to assess the potential impacts against the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 wildlife sites. The assessment must determine whether the plans would adversely affect, or would be likely to affect, the integrity of a site(s) in terms of its nature conservation objectives. Where negative effects are identified other options should be examined to avoid any potential damaging effects.
- 4.2 Under Criteria 4 of Figure 1 and Table 1 it was concluded that the Neighbourhood Plan may have an impact upon internationally designated sites and as such a 'case by case' assessment is required.
- 4.3 The HRA process is generally divided into three stages. The initial stage of the HRA process is called the screening stage and determines if there are any likely significant effects or risk of significant effects possible as a result of the implementation of the plan. If there are significant effects the plan will need to undertake an Appropriate Assessment. The screening process should provide a description of the plan and an identification of the Natura 2000 sites which may be affected by the plan and assess the significance of any possible effects on the identified sites.
- 4.4 The adopted Cannock Chase Local Plan Part 1 was subject to HRA during its production. This assessment looked at all internationally designated sites which could be impacted by development within Cannock Chase District. The Habitat Regulations Report 2012 was updated by the Habitats Regulations Addendum Report 2013 which concluded that the Local Plan Part 1 would have no likely significant effects upon European sites.
- 4.5 This section of the report provides a "screening" assessment for the HNP. It looks at the potential impacts of the plan's proposals on European Sites within 15km of the Neighbourhood Plan area; these sites are illustrated at Appendix 1. The following screening assessment will determine if the HNP will have any likely significant effects to determine whether the subsequent stages will be required.

### Relevant Natura 2000 sites

- 4.6 The relevant Natura 2000 sites were identified in the HRA for Local plan Part 1 as having the potential to be impacted:
- **Cannock Chase SAC**
  - **Cannock Extension Canal**
  - **West Midland Mosses SAC**

The following European sites were screened out from further consideration due to their qualifying features not being significantly affected by Local Plan Part 1 or due to their distance from the District boundaries:

- **Fens Pools SAC**
- **Midland Meres and Mosses (Phases 1 and 2) Ramsar sites**
- **Mottey Meadows SAC**
- **Pasturefields Salt Marsh SAC**
- **River Mease SAC**
- **Humber estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar.**

- 4.7 This assessment has been undertaken having regard to the results and information in the HRA and HRA addendum prepared for the Local Plan Part 1 and is set out at Table 3.

**Table 3: Sites within 15km of Hednesford Neighbourhood Area**

Name of Site	Qualifying Features	Site characteristics and vulnerability / conservation objectives	Potential for Likely Significant Effects (LSE)
<p><b>Cannock Chase SAC</b></p>	<p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ European dry heaths</li> </ul> <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix</li> <li>▪ Wet heathland with cross leaved heath</li> </ul>	<p>The SAC is at threat from habitat fragmentation due to multiple paths and tracks, track and path widening causing erosion, trampling and compaction and horse riders and cyclists going off the bridleways, eutrophcation from dog mess and disturbance from people and dogs.</p> <p>The reintroduction of sustainable management in the form of livestock grazing has many problems.</p> <p>The site overlies coal measures which have been deep-mined resulting in fissures across the site. This is a threat to the hydrology of the site.</p> <p>The underlying Sherwood Sandstone is a major aquifer. Major increase in its use would impact significantly on the site.</p> <p>Air pollution concerns for heathlands and sub arctic scrub habitats in the UK are nitrogen deposition and ozone.</p>	<p><b>Potential for LSE</b> to qualifying features from atmospheric pollution, recreation disturbance and water abstraction.</p>

<b>Cannock Extension Canal SAC</b>	<p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Floating water-plantain</li> <li>▪ Luronium natans</li> </ul>	<p>Recreational pressure – population of Luronium natans is dependent upon a balanced level of boat traffic.</p> <p>Water quality – surface water run-off causes some reduction in water quality</p>	<p><b>No LSE</b> predicted for water quality impacts: scoped out following consultation with Natural England (see HRA of Local Plan Part 1 )</p>
<b>West Midland Mosses SAC</b>	<p>Habitats Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds Transition mires and quaking bogs</p>	<p>Recreational pressure and disturbance causes erosion and trampling of all habitats that allow pedestrian access, as well as possible casual pollution.</p> <p>Air pollution – potential threat, particularly where it increases nutrient loading, eg through airborne, NOx deposition from vehicle emissions</p> <p>Management agreement controls agricultural run off.</p>	<p>SAC is approximately 9km from the District Boundary and its qualifying features are unlikely to be vulnerable to any impacts over this distance, although potential for recreational disturbance.</p> <p><b>Potential for LSE.</b></p>
<b>Mottey Meadows SAC</b>	<p>Lowland hay meadows</p>	<p>Meadows dependent upon traditional agricultural management. Site is vulnerable to nutrient run off from adjacent agricultural land. Site is owned and managed by Natural England with all of the above issues addressed through the site's management plan. The site is also vulnerable to a lowering of both ground and surface water levels.</p>	<p><b>No LSE:</b> scoped out following consultation with Natural England (see HRA of Local Plan Part 1 ) due to distance away from the site.</p>

<b>Pasturefields Salt Marsh SAC</b>	Inland salt meadows	Requires traditional agricultural management with livestock grazing and minimal use of agricultural management. Is likely to be vulnerable to abstractions of water and is dependent upon the brine source being maintained.	<b>No LSE:</b> scoped out following consultation with Natural England (see HRA of Local Plan Part 1 ) due to distance away from the site.
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- 4.8 The likelihood of significant effects have been assessed in relation to the specific features and environmental conditions of the protected sites, as could be affected by the Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan, or in combination with other known plans, taking particular account of the sites conservation objectives. As part of establishing what effects are significant, the probability of impact, duration of the impact, frequency of any impact and reversibility of impact have been considered.
- 4.9 Tables 4-8 set out the assessment based on the effects of the HNP on the five sites detailed above.

**Table 4: Cannock Chase SAC**

	Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressures	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is LCNP likely to impact upon this site	<i>Potential</i>	<i>Potential</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Possible effects in combination with other plans	The site is influenced by traffic and visitors from a wide area. Evidence has been produced which demonstrates that any new residential development within 15km of the SAC will, alone or in combination, have an impact upon the integrity of the SAC due to the potential for increasing visitors to the SAC.							
Assessment of effects and why considered significant	<p>Potential for LSE to qualifying features from atmospheric pollution, recreation disturbance and water abstraction.</p> <p>Mitigation measures for recreation impacts on the Cannock Chase SAC were established through Local Plan Part 1, Policy CP13 and other policies in Local plan Part 1 provide mitigation / avoidance measures in terms of atmospheric pollution and water abstraction. The Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan provides more detail to Local Plan Part 1 at the local level but levels of development are small scale and localised.</p> <p>Provided that the Neighbourhood Plan is in broad conformity with Local Plan Part 1, and has a direct link to SAC Policy CP13 for mitigation of recreational impacts caused by an increase in visitors from new residential development (as shown on page 18 of the Neighbourhood Plan) , it is not considered that Likely Significant Effects will occur in this respect as mitigation is already provided for. Policy ROW1 encourages improvements to the existing Rights of Way network in partnership with Staffordshire County Council, Cannock Chase Council, the Forestry Commission and the Cannock Chase AONB Unit. Support for such improvements would be via the plans, policies and programmes of these other bodies which would therefore be subject to their own HRA and so LSEs from the Neighbourhood Plan itself can be ruled out as its role here is one of supporting the work of others, not instigating such works itself.</p> <p>Following consultation Natural England state that in terms of water abstraction, investigation work has been carried out by the water companies that abstract water from the aquifer beneath the Chase and the Environment Agency has reviewed this work as part of the 'review of consents' process under the Habitats Regulations. This has identified that water abstraction for drinking is not having an impact on the water levels within the SAC</p>							
<b>Conclusion: No Significant Effects</b>								

**Table 5: Cannock Extension Canal SAC**

	Direct Habitat loss	Impact on protected species	Air Quality	Water Quality	Recreational Pressures	Water Quantity	Change in Surrounding Land Use	Invasive Species
Is LCNP likely to impact upon this site	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Possible effects in combination with other plans	None							
Assessment of effects and why not considered significant	<p>No LSE predicted for water quality impacts: scoped out following consultation with Natural England (see HRA of Local Plan Part 1 )</p> <p>The Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan provides more detail to Local Plan Part 1 at the local level but levels of proposed development are small scale and localised.</p> <p>Therefore it is considered no Likely Significant Effects will occur.</p>							
<b>Conclusion: No significant effects</b>								

**Table 6: West Midland Mosses SAC**

<b>Is LCNP likely to impact upon this site</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Possible effects in combination with other plans</b>	None							
<b>Assessment of effects and why not considered significant</b>	<p>SAC is approximately 9km from the District Boundary and its qualifying features are unlikely to be vulnerable to any impacts over this distance, although potential for recreational disturbance.</p> <p>The Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan provides more detail to Local Plan Part 1 at the local level but levels of proposed development are small scale and localised therefore it is considered no Likely Significant Effects will occur.</p> <p>Following consultation, Natural England adds the following statement: 'West Midlands Mosses SAC (Chartley Moss SSSI / Ramsar site / National Nature Reserve) recreation – Chartley Moss NNR is subject to 'permit only' access arrangements. Recreation pressure can therefore be screened out as part of your HRA'.</p>							
<b>Conclusion: No significant effects</b>								

**Table 7 Mottey Meadows SAC**

<b>Is LCNP likely to impact upon this site</b>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
<b>Possible effects in combination with other plans</b>	None							
<b>Assessment of effects and why not considered significant</b>	<p>SAC is approximately 13km from the District Boundary and its qualifying features are unlikely to be vulnerable to any impacts over this distance.</p> <p>The Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan provides more detail to Local Plan Part 1 at the local level but levels of proposed development are small scale and localised therefore it is considered no Likely Significant Effects will occur.</p>							
<b>Conclusion: No significant effects</b>								

**Table 8 Pasturefields Salt Marsh SAC**

<b>Is LCNP likely to impact upon this site</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Possible effects in combination with other plans</b>	None							
<b>Assessment of effects and why not considered significant</b>	<p>SAC is approximately 8km from the District Boundary and its qualifying features are unlikely to be vulnerable to any impacts over this distance.</p> <p>The Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan provides more detail to Local Plan Part 1 at the local level but levels of proposed development are small scale and localised therefore it is considered no Likely Significant Effects will occur.</p>							
<b>Conclusion: No significant effects</b>								

### **Screening Outcome**

- 4.10 Table 4 identifies that significant effects could potentially arise upon the Cannock Chase SAC as a result of policy within the HNP. Development is small scale and localised however and provided that the Neighbourhood Plan contains a clear policy which links to Policy CP13 of the adopted Local Plan Part 1 then significant effects will not occur as mitigation will be provided for. Policy ROW1 encourages improvements to the existing Rights of Way network in partnership with Staffordshire County Council, Cannock Chase Council, the Forestry Commission and the Cannock Chase AONB Unit. Support for such improvements would be via the plans, policies and programmes of these other bodies which would therefore be subject to their own HRA and so LSEs from the Neighbourhood Plan itself can be ruled out as its role here is one of supporting the work of others, not instigating such works itself.
- 4.11 Appendix 2 sets out a detailed assessment of the likely significant effects on European sites as a result of each policy within the HNP.
- 4.12 The conclusions of the screening assessment above indicate that no further stages of Appropriate Assessment will be required for the HNP as set out in paragraph 4.10 above.

## **5. Conclusions and recommendations of the Screening Assessments**

- 5.1 This report contains the detail of the assessment of the need for the Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment as required by the SEA Directive and Appropriate Assessment as required by the Habitats Directive.
- 5.2 The assessment of both of these requirements has been undertaken on the Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan dated March 2017. As such if the content of the Neighbourhood Plan is significantly changed there may be the need for a further screening exercise to be undertaken on any modified version of the Neighbourhood Plan. Cannock Chase Council reserves the right to undertake further screening at a later stage if this is considered to be appropriate.

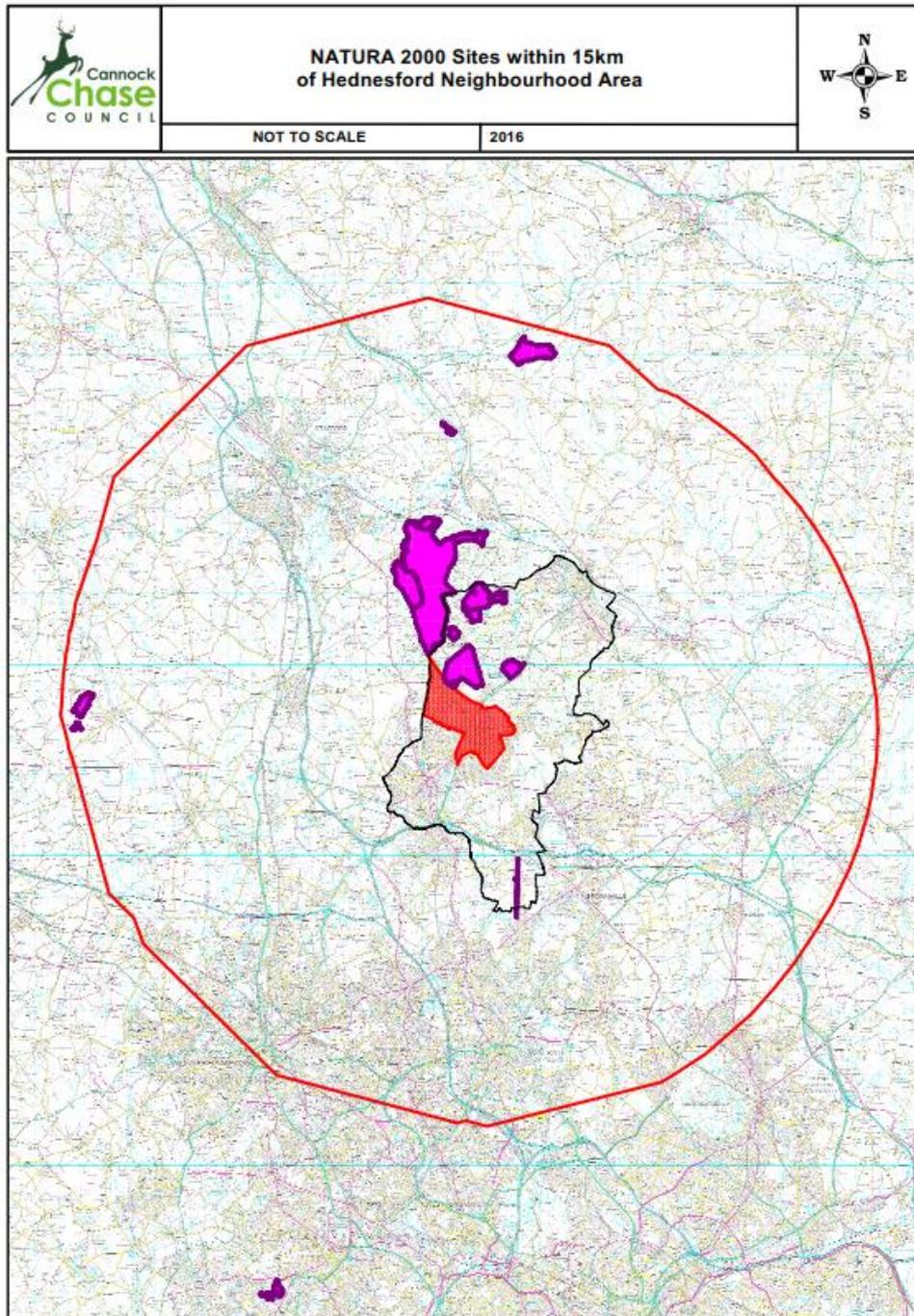
### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

- 5.3 In relation to the requirement for the Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment, the assessment detailed in Section 3 of this report concludes that the plan in its current form is likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore SEA will be required.

### **Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

- 5.4 In relation to the requirement for the Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to Habitat Regulations Assessment, the assessment detailed at Section 4 of this report concludes that there are no potential significant effects upon the identified designated European sites and as such no further work as part of the compliance with the Habitat Regulations will be required.

**Appendix 1: Map of Natura 2000 sites within 15km of Neighbourhood Plan Boundary**



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**Key**

- Cannock Chase District Boundary
- Special Area of Conservation (Natura 2000 site)
- Hednesford Neighbourhood Area
- 15km radius from Hednesford Neighbourhood Area

**Appendix 2 – HRA review of Proposed Policies in Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan and schedule of corrections to this document**

<b>HNP Policy Number</b>	<b>Description of Policy</b>	<b>Any likely significant effects on European Sites anticipated as a result of the policy?</b>
<b>TC1</b>	Defining an area of special local character	This is about protecting and enhancing the historic environment. No LSEs.
<b>TC2</b>	Defining acceptable uses for the town centre core in Market Street	There could be a net gain in residential uses (especially on upper floors of buildings) which will need to be mitigated for in terms of impacts on the Cannock Chase SAC. However, provided the Neighbourhood Plan shows a clear link to Policy CP13 of the Local Plan Part 1 in terms of implementing mitigation measures then no LSEs will occur.
<b>TC3</b>	Using S106 money to enhance vitality and viability of businesses in Market Street	Policy relates to enhancement issues. No LSEs.
<b>TC4</b>	Identify sites for development in Market Street – residential development, possible tourist accommodation and market facilities	There could be a net gain in residential uses (especially on upper floors of buildings) which will need to be mitigated for in terms of impacts on the Cannock Chase SAC. However, provided the Neighbourhood Plan shows a clear link to Policy CP13 of the Local Plan Part 1 in terms of implementing mitigation measures then no LSEs will occur.
<b>TC5</b>	Delivering environmental and operational improvements to the car park at the rear of the Co-op store.	Small scale localised improvements. No LSEs.
<b>TC6</b>	Extension of station car park.	Small scale localised improvements. No LSEs.
<b>TC7</b>	Allocation of sites for residential purposes focusing on elderly provision.	Net gain in residential uses which will need to be mitigated for in terms of impacts on the Cannock Chase SAC. However, provided the Neighbourhood Plan shows a clear link to Policy CP13 of the Local Plan Part 1 in terms of implementing mitigation measures then no LSEs will occur.
<b>ROW1</b>	Encouraging improvements to existing public rights of way	Policy ROW1 encourages improvements to the existing Rights of Way network in partnership with Staffordshire County Council, Cannock Chase Council, the Forestry Commission and the Cannock Chase AONB

		Unit. Support for such improvements would be via the plans, policies and programmes of these other bodies which would therefore be subject to their own HRA and so LSEs from the Neighbourhood Plan itself can be ruled out as its role here is one of supporting the work of others, not instigating such works itself.No LSEs.
<b>OS1</b>	Protection of open spaces identified on the proposals map unless lost as part of wider estate redevelopment in which case alternative sites of equivalent size and quality to be provided.	Localised small scale designations. No LSEs.
<b>BE1</b>	Retention and protection / enhancement of buildings defined in the proposed Local List	Localised small scale designations. No LSEs.
<b>BE2</b>	Designation of area at Greenheath Rd / Station Road as an area of Local Character. Policy seeks to protect and enhance this area.	Localised small scale designation. No LSEs.
<b>H1</b>	Major housing sites to be 10% bungalows subject to viability.	Net gain in residential uses which will need to be mitigated for in terms of impacts on the Cannock Chase SAC. However, provided the Neighbourhood Plan shows a clear link to Policy CP13 of the Local Plan Part 1 in terms of implementing mitigation measures then no LSEs will occur.
<b>H2</b>	Bungalows on small housing sites to be given priority	Net gain in residential uses which will need to be mitigated for in terms of impacts on the Cannock Chase SAC. However, provided the Neighbourhood Plan shows a clear link to Policy CP13 of the Local Plan Part 1 in terms of implementing mitigation measures then no LSEs will occur.
<b>H3</b>	Land at Cannock Road to provide an Extra Care or market retirement complex.	Net gain in residential uses which will need to be mitigated for in terms of impacts on the Cannock Chase SAC. However, provided the Neighbourhood Plan shows a clear link to Policy CP13 of the Local Plan Part 1 in terms of implementing mitigation measures then no LSEs will occur.
<b>EMP1</b>	Supporting opportunities for the redevelopment of	Employment uses not identified through the HRA of Local Plan Part

	unattractive areas of industrial development at Old Hednesford Rd / Chaseside Drive and Rugeley Rd / Station Rd for employment uses	1 as having LSEs so at the more localised scale this would still remain applicable.
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### **Appendix 3: SEA & HRA Screening Opinion and Statutory Consultee Responses**

The following appendix includes the screening opinion requests from Cannock Chase Council to the Statutory Bodies (Natural England, Historic England and Environment Agency) who have been consulted through the SEA & HRA process and their responses.

#### **Environment Agency**

As requested we have reviewed the screening assessment prepared in support of the Hednesford Neighbourhood Plan. We do not consider further work on the SEA and HRA necessary for the plan to progress as it is unlikely to have any significant environmental impacts.

#### **Historic England**

For the purposes of consultations on SEA, Historic England confines its advice to the question, "Is the Plan or proposal likely to have a significant effect on the environment?" in respect of our area of concern, cultural heritage. Our comments are based on the information supplied by yourselves in your consultation to us.

On the basis of the information supplied, including that set out in the draft plan, and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concur with the conclusion that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required. Regarding HRA Historic England does not disagree with your conclusions but would defer to the opinions of the other statutory consultees.

The views of the other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for a SEA is made. If a decision is made to undertake a SEA, please note that Historic England has published guidance on Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Historic Environment that is relevant to both local and neighbourhood planning and available at:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-sustainability-appraisal-historic-environment/>

## Natural England

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment – Screening**

We welcome the production of this SEA Screening report. Natural England notes and concurs with the screening outcome i.e. that SEA is required.

Further guidance on deciding whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects and the requirements for consulting Natural England on SEA are set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance at:

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal/sustainability-appraisal-requirements-for-neighbourhood-plans/>

### **Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening**

Natural England notes the screening process applied to this Neighbourhood plan. We agree with the Council's conclusion of no likely significant effect upon the named European designated sites:

- Cannock Chase SAC
- Cannock Extension Canal SAC
- West Midland Mosses SAC
- Pasturefields Saltmarsh SAC
- River Mease sAC
- The Humber Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar site
- Fens Pools SAC
- Midland Meres and Mosses (Phases 1 and 2) Ramsar sites
- Motte Meadows SAC
- Pasturefields Salt Marsh SAC

We have the following additional comments which you may wish to note and attach to your screening report. They do not alter your conclusions.

#### Cannock Chase SAC

Water abstraction – Investigation work has been carried out by the water companies that abstract water from the aquifer beneath the Chase and the Environment Agency has reviewed this work as part of the 'Review of consents' process under the Habitats Regulations. This has identified that water abstraction for drinking is not having an impact on the water levels within the SAC.

#### West Midlands Mosses SAC (Chartley Moss SSSI/Ramsar site/National Nature reserve)

Recreation – Chartley Moss NNR is subject to 'permit only' access arrangements. Recreation pressure can therefore be screened out as part of your HRA.



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