



Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan

Covering note to the 2015 SEA and HRA Screening Report

October 2018

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report was produced for a draft version of the Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan in July 2015 by officers within Durham County Council's Environment and Design section. At this time the draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan aimed to:

- ✓ Allocate a defined village centre comprising public realm, commercial spaces, community space, café, outdoor covered meeting space, imaginative landscaping, parking and a bus stop.
- ✓ Designate areas of local green space for protection
- ✓ Allocate land for housing, including a site to contribute to the regeneration of Front Street
- ✓ Encourage use of and improve sustainable modes
- ✓ of travel for all
- ✓ Improve broadband connection to the village
- ✓ Extend protection to non-designated heritage assets
- ✓ Explore potential for community energy generation

The Screening report concluded that the Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan will not result in likely significant effects to the environment, including European protected wildlife sites and therefore SEA and Appropriate Assessment (a stage within HRA) were not required.

With the exception of the Environment Agency who considered that SEA was required as the Plan intended to allocate housing sites, the consensus of the statutory consultees was that SEA and Appropriate Assessment were not required. As none of the draft housing allocations were considered to give rise to significant environmental effects, the final determination of Durham County Council was that neither SEA nor Appropriate Assessment was required.

Since this determination, the Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan has been revised and no longer allocates land for housing. Whilst no land is allocated within the Plan for housing a comprehensive design approach for the area of south of Front Street is included within the Plan, (as per previous Screening Opinion recommendations) in the event that this land is found to be suitable for housing in the future.

Durham County Council maintain that the original conclusion of the screening report can be upheld.

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