



Sandwell Local Plan 2 (2026 – 2044)

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement

July 2026

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process designed to evaluate and communicate the potential environmental effects of a plan, alongside its reasonable alternatives. The purpose of SEA is to guide and shape the plan-making process, preventing or reducing adverse impacts and enhancing opportunities for positive outcomes. In doing so, SEA aims to strengthen a plan's overall contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.2 SEA is required under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations), which transcribed the European Directive 2001/42/EC (the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive) into UK law.
- 1.3 The stated objective of the SEA process is *“to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development”*¹

SEA of Local Plans

- 1.4 The SEA Regulations require the ‘responsible authority’ to ‘determine’ whether SEA is required, with the process used to do so termed SEA Screening.
- 1.5 Sandwell Council is the ‘responsible authority’ for the Sandwell Local Plan 2 (2026 – 2044) (SLP 2) and therefore responsible for undertaking SEA to ‘determine’ whether SEA is required to inform its preparation.

The Sandwell Local Plan 2 (2026 – 2044)

- 1.6 The SLP 2 will establish the vision, measurable outcomes and a spatial strategy for the sustainable development of Sandwell over the period to 2044.
- 1.7 It will be informed by assessments of need for housing (including affordable housing and specialist accommodation), employment and other appropriate land-uses. To meet identified needs, the next Sandwell Local Plan will allocate land and provide policies to manage development.
- 1.8 Crucially, the SLP 2 will also be informed by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, identifying the infrastructure it is forecast will be required for new planned growth and how the infrastructure will be funded and delivered - ‘on-site, through ‘developer contributions’ and/or from other sources. This infrastructure is likely to include additional school places, highway works, public transport and active travel improvements, new and enhanced GP practices, and leisure and community facilities.

¹ Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive

- 1.9 To ensure the delivery of essential infrastructure, the SLP 2 will identify the on-site infrastructure required for allocated sites and include policies outlining the ‘developer contributions’ required for the provision of infrastructure from development.
- 2.0 The SLP 2 also provides an opportunity to consider and respond to evidenced local issues and opportunities, thereby maximising the potential of development to meet community needs and conserve and enhance our natural, built and historic environment.
- 2.1 This SLP 2 will be progressed under Government’s new plan-making process. This is characterised by a more efficient 30-month preparation and adoption process (with an additional mandatory minimum four-month scoping stage prior to its formal commencement).
- 2.2 Guidance published by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to support implementation of this new plan-making process provides useful context when undertaking SEA Screening of Local Plans.
- 2.3 It specifies Local Planning Authorities “*will need to carry out SEA if it meets certain criteria set out in regulation 5 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004*”², continuing to state that Government expects “*all Local Plans will need to carry out SEA*”.²

2. SEA Screening

Introduction

- 2.1 The purpose of this SEA Screening exercise is to establish, from the outset, whether there is a need to undertake SEA to inform SLP 2.

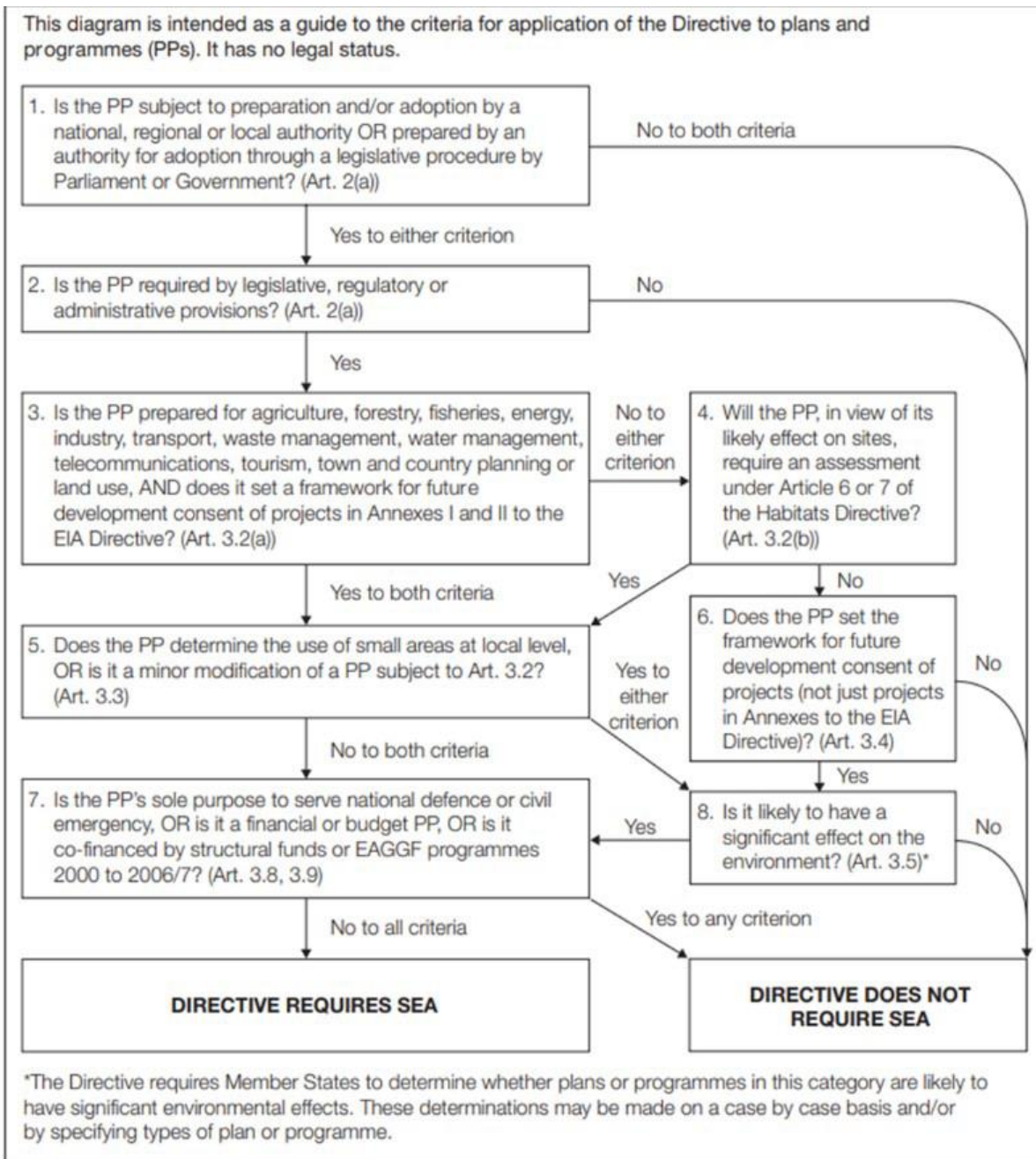
How to Undertake an SEA Screen

- 2.2 The ‘Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’³ (which is equally applicable to the SEA Regulations) provides a flow diagram which summarises the SEA screening process. This flow diagram forms Figure 1:

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

² MHCLG, (2026), Guidance - 30-month local plan process: an overview, <https://gov.uk/guidance/30-month-local-plan-process-an-overview>

³ MHCLG (then ODPM) (2005), <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a78ec0740f0b62b22cbddd2/practicalguidesea.pdf>



SEA Screen of SLP 2

2.3 The process outlined in Figure 1 has been applied when undertaking the SEA 'screening' of the SLP 2. Specifically, a series of questions were drawn from the criteria from the Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (summarised in Figure 1) which were used to 'screen' the SLP 2 – based on our current understanding of its likely 'scope'.

2.4 These questions and the assessment of SLP 2 are summarised within Figure 2:

Figure 2: Application of the SEA Directive

Stage	Y/N	Explanation
1. Is the 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))	Y	The SLP 2 is to be prepared and adopted by a local authority: Sandwell MBC. Preparation and adoption of SLP 2 is in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (as amended) and Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (as amended).
2. Is the plan or programme required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Y	Local Planning Authorities are legally required to produce Local Plans, such as SLP 2, under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (as amended) and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (as amended).
3. Is the plan or programme 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 (see Appendix 2) to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))?	Y	The SLP 2 is prepared for town and country planning and land use purposes. The SLP 2 will set the framework for the future development consent of projects, which may include development which may fall under Annex I and II of the EIA Directive. Specifically, it will contain criteria and/or conditions which guide the way a consenting authority decides an application for development consent. Development consent is defined in the EIA Directive as “the decision of the competent authority or authorities which entitled the developer to proceed with the project” (Article 1(2) of the EIA Directive).
4. Will the plan or programme, 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))?	Y	Due to the inclusion of site allocations, the SLP 2 has the potential for significant effects on European natural designations and as such Habitats Regulations Assessment will be required.

5. Does the plan or programme 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)	N	Not applicable.
6. Does the plan or programme set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Y	The SLP 2 will both allocate land for development and through local planning policies provide a framework for the determination of planning applications thereby providing a framework for the future development consent of projects.
7. Is the plan or programme'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)	N	The SLP 2 does not serve national defence or civil emergency purposes, nor is it cofinanced by structural funds or EAGGF programmes.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	Y	The local planning policies and site allocations of SLP 2 have the potential for a significant effect on the environment. Further information is provided within Figure 3.

2.5 When deciding whether SLP2 might have significant effects on the environment (Question 8), its potential scope needs to be assessed against the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. This process is summarised within Figure 3.

Figure 3: Assessment of the Likely Significant Effects on the Environment

Criteria for Determining Likely Significance of Effects	Likely Significant Environmental Effects?	Summary of Significant Effects
1. Characteristics of the Plan, having regard to:		
(a) 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.	Yes	SLP 2 would contribute to the framework for future development consent of projects through the inclusion of local planning policies and site allocations.

(b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.	Yes	SLP 2 is likely to influence other future statutory Development Plans. This includes Supplementary Plans and Neighbourhood Plans.
(c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	Yes	Local Plans are expected to be in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that “all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects” (paragraph 11, NPPF 2024).
(d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan	Yes	There is potential for environmental impact from the proposals in SLP 2 due to the inclusion of local planning policies and site allocations.
(e) 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)	Yes	SLP 2 has the potential to impact on the implementation of community legislation on the environment. It will form the next Mineral & Waste policies for Sandwell – as such it is linked to waste management. Furthermore, it will influence and draw upon the Wastewater Management Plans of the water companies operating in Sandwell.
Criteria for Determining Likely Significance of Effects	Likely Significant Environmental Effects?	Summary of Significant Effects
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:		
(a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	Yes	The SLP 2 has the potential to have enduring environmental effects due to the inclusion of local planning policies and site allocations. As these effects relate to development, they may not be reversible. However, whilst this potential exists, it is expected that the SLP 2 will through its local planning policies result in positive impacts on the environment. Furthermore, the national requirement for most new

		development to achieve a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain provides the opportunity for site allocations to achieve environmental benefit.
(b) The cumulative nature of the effects	Yes	The SLP 2 has the potential to cause cumulative effects on the environment due to the inclusion of local planning policies and site allocations. However, whilst this potential exists, it is expected that the SLP 2 will through its local planning policies result in positive impacts on the environment. Furthermore, the national requirement for most new development to achieve a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain provides the opportunity for site allocations to achieve environmental benefit.
(c) The transboundary nature of the effects	Yes	The SLP 2 has the potential to cause transboundary effects on the environment due to the inclusion of local policies and site allocations. However, whilst this potential exists, it is expected that the SLP 2 will through its local planning policies result in positive impacts on the environment. Furthermore, the national requirement for most new development to achieve a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain provides the opportunity for site allocations to achieve environmental benefit.
(d) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	Yes	The SLP 2 has the potential to contribute to risks to human health and the environment due to the inclusion of local planning policies and site allocations. However, this is deemed to be extremely unlikely.
(e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	Yes	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects of the local planning policies and site allocations within the SLP 2 will depend on its vision and spatial strategy, but it has the potential to extend across Sandwell Council's administrative area. There is also potential for transboundary impacts on other local planning authorities' administrative areas.

(f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: i i. Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage ii ii. Exceeded environmental quality standards iii iii. Intensive land-use	Yes	The SLP 2 has the potential to affect the special natural characteristics of the area due to the inclusion of local planning policies and site allocations. The SLP 2 has the potential to introduce development which exceeds environmental quality standards or limit values. The SLP 2 has the potential to introduce development which constitutes intensive land-use. However, whilst this potential exists, it is expected that the SLP 2 will through its local planning policies result in positive impacts on the environment. Furthermore, the national requirement for most new development to achieve a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain provides the opportunity for site allocations to achieve environmental benefit.
(g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	Yes	The local planning policies and site allocations in the SLP 2 have the potential to affect areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.

3. Conclusion

SEA Screening of the SLP 2

3.1 The conclusion of this SEA Screen of the SLP 2 is that based on its likely 'scope', it has the potential to have a significant effect on the natural environment.

3.2 As such, it is Sandwell Council's opinion that the emerging SLP 2 should be 'screened in' to the Strategic Environment Assessment process.

Scope of SLP 2

3.3 This SEA screening has been undertaken alongside the first stage of consultation (referred to as the 'scoping consultation' stage) undertaken to inform preparation of the SLP 2.

3.4 The purpose of the 'scoping consultation' will be to seek initial views on what the SLP 2 should contain and Sandwell Councils approach to engagement during its preparation. This will include 'scoping':

- a) The key priorities for the vision and measurable outcomes for the delivery of the next Sandwell Local Plan.

- b) The key considerations for identifying a spatial strategy to manage the level and distribution of development in Sandwell.
- c) Matters that would benefit from being addressed by local planning policies to complement new *national decision-making policies*.
- d) How we should effectively engage communities and wider stakeholders during the plan-making process.
- e) The evidence required to support the next Sandwell Local Plan

3.5 Importantly, as this ‘scoping consultation’ will seek views on the scope of SLP 2 and will not identify proposed or preferred options or identify draft site allocations SEA is not required to inform this stage of consultation.

Next Steps

3.6 The next step in the SEA process will be to define the proposed ‘scope’ of the assessment. The ‘Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’⁴ (which is equally applicable to the SEA Regulations) summarises the five steps to do so as:

- a) Identifying other relevant plans: to establish how the plan or programme is affected by outside factors, programmes and environmental to suggest idea for how any constraints can be addressed, and to help protection objectives to identify SEA objectives.
- b) Collecting baseline information: to provide an evidence base for environmental problems, prediction of effects, and monitoring: to help in the development of SEA objectives.
- c) Identifying environmental problems: to help focus the SEA and streamline the subsequent states, including baseline information analysis, setting of the SEA objectives, prediction of effects and monitoring.
- d) Developing SEA objectives: to provide a means by which the environmental performance of the plan or programme and alternatives can be assessed.
- e) Consulting on the scope of SEA: to ensure that the SEA covers the likely significant environmental effects of the plan or programmes.

3.7 SEA will through the assessment of environment affects, inform the development/refinement of reasonable options and selection of preferred options within SLP 2 – this includes the identification of preferred site allocations.

⁴ MHCLG (then ODPM) (2005),
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a78ec0740f0b62b22cbddd2/practicalguidesea.pdf>