

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Initial Screening Statement

For ***Landscape Character Assessment*** (Supplementary
Planning Document)

October 2025

1. Introduction

This Initial Screening Statement has been prepared to help determine the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment for the following document:

Landscape Character Assessment SPD – November 2025 Consultation Draft

Public consultation will take place on this document between **Friday 14th November and Friday 12th December 2025**.

It is intended that the Bradford District Landscape Character Assessment will become a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Its purpose will be to provide the information necessary to enable planning officers and developers to understand the different landscape character types and areas within the district, and help guide development that is sympathetic to local character and the qualities of the landscape. It can also be used to inform appropriate design and mitigation, as well as providing baseline evidence for more detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LIVA) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVA). The SPD is in

support of policies in the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy (Policy EN4) (and emerging draft Local Plan (Policy EN5)).

2. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The requirement for a **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** is set out in the Government's practical guidance on applying *European Directive 2001/42/EC*, and in the *Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004*. These documents place an obligation on local planning authorities to undertake an SEA on any land use plan or programme "*which sets the framework for future development consent of projects*".

The Government's *Planning Practice Guidance* (2014) states that supplementary planning documents "*may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already have been assessed during the preparation of the relevant strategic policies.*"

To determine whether significant environment effects are likely the local planning authority should take into account the criteria specified in *Schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004* and they should consult the consultation bodies.

Section 7 provides details of the consultation which has been carried out with the Statutory Bodies and Section 8 provides the final determination outcome.

3. Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is the process by which the requirement for SEA Directive is applied to Local Plan documents. An SA is required under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 for all Development Plan Documents (DPDs).

The main difference between SEA and SA is that an SEA has more of an environmental focus, while an SA has a wider focus encompassing social, economic and environmental issues.

Although SEA and SA are distinct requirements, government guidance has recommended a single appraisal process and the guidance on undertaking SAs has been prepared so as to incorporate the requirements of the SEA Directive.

Relevant DPDs that have been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal are:

- Bradford Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted 2017)

In addition, a Sustainability Appraisal has been undertaken of the draft Preferred Options for the new Bradford District Local Plan (February 2021).

The *Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009* removed the previously automatic need for an SA of SPDs, and the Government's *Planning Practice Guidance* (2014) states that “*Supplementary planning documents do not require a sustainability appraisal*”.

4. Landscape Character Assessment SPD

The Council previously prepared a Landscape Character Assessment SPD in 2008. However, there have been notable changes in the landscape since that time and changes to the development pressures within the district, as well as new guidance on how to prepare Landscape Character Assessments, therefore a new assessment has now been prepared. This new assessment will be translated into a new SPD which will replace the existing one.

The new assessment provides further details and guidance to support the implementation of Core Strategy Policy EN4: Landscape, which requires development proposals to make a positive contribution towards the conservation, management and enhancement of the diversity of landscapes within the District.

The LCA was prepared by consultants LUC, and included consultation and engagement with a number of stakeholders with an interest in the landscape. A workshop was held with:

- Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Council Officers from planning, landscape, design and conservation, countryside and rights of way, biodiversity, flood risk, and development management
- West Yorkshire Ecology Service, West Yorkshire Archaeology Advice Service
- Government organisations such as Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency
- The National Trust, Farming Representatives, Yorkshire Water, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, and National Farmers Union.

Separate targeted consultation with Town, Village and Parish councils was also undertaken.

The LCA identifies the different landscape character types and areas within the district and makes an assessment of the character using a set of established criteria and in line with the Natural England guidance. These are:

- Geology, Soils, Topography and Drainage
- Semi-natural Habitats and Tree Cover
- Land Use and Field Patterns
- Cultural Associations and Historic Landscape
- Settlement and Transport Pattern
- Access and Recreation
- Views and Perceptual Qualities

The LCA describes the key characteristics of each landscape character area and also sets out pressures and forces for change for each landscape character type. They are outlined under the following broad headings:

- Climate Change
- Agricultural Change
- Development
- Habitat Management and Environmental Initiatives
- Heritage at Risk
- Tourism, Recreation and Access Pressure
- Pollution, Littering and Anti-social Behaviour

The guidance includes recommendations to help counter or mitigate the identified pressures in order to maintain and/or enhance the landscape character. Overall, the SPD seeks to provide more detailed guidance in relation to how new development can be designed and managed to integrate successfully into the landscape.

5. Screening Process

To assess whether an SEA is required the Responsible Authority (Bradford Council) must undertake a screening process based on a standard set of criteria, and this must be subject to consultation with Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

Where the Responsible Authority determines that the plan or programme is unlikely to have significant environmental effects, and therefore does not need to be subject to full Strategic Environmental Assessment, it must prepare a statement showing the reasons for this determination.

The Council has undertaken a screening process using the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (Annex II of the SEA Directive). These criteria are set out in Appendix 1 of this document, along with the Council's response in relation to the SPD.

The initial screening finds that the draft Landscape Character Assessment SPD is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment, and as such it will not be necessary to carry out an SEA on this document.

6. Conclusion

The Council believes that the draft SPD will have positive environmental impacts in Bradford District based on the screening against the SEA Directive Criteria – see Appendix 1.

Furthermore the draft SPD is not setting new policy, it is supplementing and providing further guidance on existing policies set out in adopted DPDs which have been subjected to SEA as part of full Sustainability Appraisals. It is providing an update to the existing SPD, based on new guidance and taking account of the changes in the Landscape which have occurred over the last decade.

Therefore, it is not considered that a full SEA is required for the draft Landscape Character SPD.

Appendix 1 – Response to the SEA Directive Criteria

1. Characteristics of the draft Landscape Character Assessment SPD having particular regard to:

SEA Directive Criteria (as specified in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)	Bradford's Response	Is there a likely significant effect?
(a) The degree to which the SPD sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The SPD will provide support to Policy EN4 of the adopted Core Strategy (Policy EN5 of the emerging Local Plan). The Core Strategy currently provides the strategic framework for development in Bradford District. The SPD will provide guidance on how to interpret the different landscape character areas and types. Its aim is to guide development that is sympathetic to local character and the qualities of the landscape. The SPD will provide a robust and up-to-date strategic scale landscape evidence and provide a framework for more detailed landscape studies and sensitivity assessments. The SPD will not allocate resources.	No
(b) The degree to which the SPD influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The guidance provided in the SPD will be supplementary and in conformity with policies in the above stated DPDs which have been subject to full Sustainability Appraisals. The SPD sits in a hierarchy of documents but does not directly affect any other plans or programmes. It is influenced by higher tier planning policy including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).	No
(c) The relevance of the SPD for the integration of environmental considerations in particular	The primary aim of the SPD is to provide additional guidance to planning officers, developers and the public, to aid understanding of landscape character when	No

SEA Directive Criteria (as specified in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)	Bradford's Response	Is there a likely significant effect?
with a view to promoting sustainable development	considering any type of change. The SPD can be used by planning officers to consider the potential effects of planning applications on the landscape within the District, and by developers when siting and designing development schemes in order to help minimise any potential impacts. By considering the landscape at the early design stages and minimising potential adverse impacts, this helps to promote sustainable development as it reduces the environmental impacts. Development and other works may have positive impacts on the landscape – including schemes to restore nature and wildlife habitats. The SPD provides guidance and advice on the likely pressures and forces for change on the different landscape character types/areas and provides suggested guidance on mitigation and how to minimise impacts. The SPD is therefore relevant to the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	
(d) Environmental problems relevant to the SPD.	The SPD serves to address environmental issues. The policy content of the adopted Core Strategy and emerging Local Plan will additionally apply to forthcoming development proposals which include numerous thematic policies related to environmental protection. All Local Plan policies have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal within the context of the preparation of Local Plans. The respective SAs indicate that Core Strategy Policy EN4 and draft Local Plan Policy	No

SEA Directive Criteria (as specified in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)	Bradford's Response	Is there a likely significant effect?
	EN5 would have a positive impact against a number of SA objectives. This includes positive impacts against SA objectives: 1 (Prudent and efficient use of energy and natural resources), 4 (Safeguard and improve air, water and soil resources), 5 (Conserve and enhance the internationally, nationally and locally valued wildlife species and habitats), 6 (Maintain and enhance the character of natural and man-made landscapes), 13 (Provide social cohesion, encourage participation and improve the quality of all neighbourhoods) and 14 (Create good cultural, leisure and recreation activities available to all). This Screening Report focuses on those (direct / indirect) environmental problems or sources of potential problems relevant to the SPD. The main environmental problems considered by the SPD are: • Climate change • Agricultural change • Development • Habitat management • Heritage at risk • Pressure from recreation • Pollution The SPD sets out guidance to help to address and manage these problems. In addition, the importance of understanding the landscape in relation to these problems is set out below: • Understanding the character of place and evaluating an area's defining characteristics is a key component in managing growth sustainably.	

SEA Directive Criteria (as specified in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)	Bradford's Response	Is there a likely significant effect?
	• Understanding the landscape can help ensure that its inherent character and qualities can continue to be appreciated. • Understanding character can be used to ensure that any change or development does not undermine the particular characteristics of a certain landscape and help guide positive changes that conserves, enhances, restores, or creates local character. • The level of growth and development identified in the Core Strategy (and emerging Local Plan) has the potential to result in changes to the landscape through development. The SPD will help to support the policies to guide positive change and ensure adequate mitigation where necessary.	
(e) The relevance of the SPD for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The SPD will not impact on the implementation of community legislation on the environment.	No

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having particular regard to:

SEA Directive Criteria (as specified in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)	Bradford's Response	Is there a likely significant effect?
(a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The overall impact of the SPD will likely be positive. It will seek to maximise the positive environmental effects of development and minimise or avoid negative impacts.	No
(b) The cumulative nature of the effects.	As the likely effects of this SPD will be largely positive any cumulative impacts will also be positive.	No
(c) The transboundary nature of the effects.	The guidance in the SPD will be limited to developments within Bradford District.	No
(d) The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents).	It is not envisaged that the guidance contained within the SPD will pose risks to human health or the environment.	No
(e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The guidance in SPD will be applicable to those relevant development types within the defined landscape character areas as set out in the SPD. The SPD applies across the full Local Authority area of the City of Bradford Metropolitan District.	No
(f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to — (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or	The value and vulnerability of the area covered by the SPD has been considered. The SPD is applicable to developments across a large portion of the Bradford District, which includes a large amount of heritage including many conservation areas and listed buildings and natural environment designations (SPA/SAC, SSSI, LNR Local Wildlife Sites, Local Geological Sites etc). These are protected by separate policies in the Core Strategy and	No

(iii) intensive land-use	new draft Local Plan both of which have been subject to assessment through a full Sustainability Appraisal. The SPD provides further guidance to support and reinforce the relevant parts of these policies.	
(g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	The SPD will provide support to Policy EN4 of the adopted Core Strategy (Policy EN5 of the emerging Local Plan) which seeks to protect and enhance the district's landscapes. These policies have been subject to assessment through a full Sustainability Appraisal. Although the Bradford District does not include any national landscape designations, it does border two (Yorkshire Dale National Park and Nidderdale National Landscape), and also includes the South Pennine Moors Special Protection Area (SPA)/Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Saltaire World Heritage Site. These designated sites are protected by separate policies in the Local Plan.	No

7. Consultation with the Statutory Bodies

The three statutory consultation bodies were consulted on Monday 1st September for a period of 5 weeks until Monday 6th October 2025.

The following responses were received from the statutory bodies:

Statutory Body	Consultation Response
Historic England	Thank you for consulting Historic England about the above Screening Opinion. In terms of our area of interest, given the nature of the SPD, we would concur with your assessment that the document is unlikely to result in any significant environmental effects and will simply provide additional guidance on existing Policies contained within the Adopted Development Plan Document which has already been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal/SEA. As a result, we would endorse the Authority's conclusions that it is not necessary to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment of this particular SPD. The views of the other three statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for an SEA is made.
Natural England	A SPD requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment only in exceptional circumstances as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance here. While SPDs are unlikely to give rise to likely significant effects on European Sites, they should be considered as a plan under the Habitats Regulations in the same way as any other plan or project. If your SPD requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulation Assessment, you are required to consult us at certain stages as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance.
Environment Agency	I can formally report that the Environment Agency do not usually contribute to SEA screening requests and would only expect to input at the formal consultation on the scoping stage. We acknowledge that both documents will aim to supplement parent policies within the adopted Core Strategy DPD, which itself was fully subject to the SEA process. We therefore won't have any comments to make on the SEA screening requests for either of these documents: • Landscape Character Assessment SPD • Shopfront Design Guide SPD

The responses from the consultation bodies support the Council's conclusion that a full SEA is not required for the SPD.

8. Determination

As stated above an assessment has been made against the SEA criteria to determine whether the SPD would have any likely significant effects. This assessment finds that the content of the SPD and its application is unlikely to have any significant effects on the environment. It identifies that there could be some potential positive effects but that these are not considered to be significant.

The Council has taken account of the consultation responses from the statutory bodies and determines that Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required for this SPD.

This determination is made on 24th October 2025.

9. Next Steps

Consultation on the draft SPD will now be undertaken in line with the relevant legislation and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. The consultation responses will be considered and changes made where appropriate.