

Runnymede Borough Council

**Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies,
Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Screening Statement - Determination under Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations 2004

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Screening Statement – Determination under Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats
and Species Regulations 2017

December 2024

Introduction

- 1.1. This Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening determination has been undertaken by Runnymede Borough Council in their duty to determine whether the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople: Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) requires SEA or HRA. This screening assessment is based on the draft SPD dated May 2024. Whilst amendments have been made to the SPD following the period of public consultation in June/July 2024, these amendments are not considered to impact on the overall conclusions drawn in this assessment.
- 1.2. Regulation 9 (1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 requires authorities to determine whether or not a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required for certain plans, policies or programmes. This statement also sets out the Borough Council's determination as to whether Appropriate Assessment is required under Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017.
- 1.3. Under the requirements of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC (Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive) and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), specific types of plans that set the framework for the future development consent of projects or which require Appropriate Assessment must be subject to an environmental assessment.
- 1.4. There are exceptions to this requirement for plans that determine the use of a small area at a local level and for minor modifications if it has been determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.
- 1.5. In accordance with the provisions of the SEA Directive and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) (Regulation 9 (1)), the Borough Council must determine if a plan requires an environmental assessment. In accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017, the Borough Council is the competent authority for determining if a plan requires Appropriate Assessment.

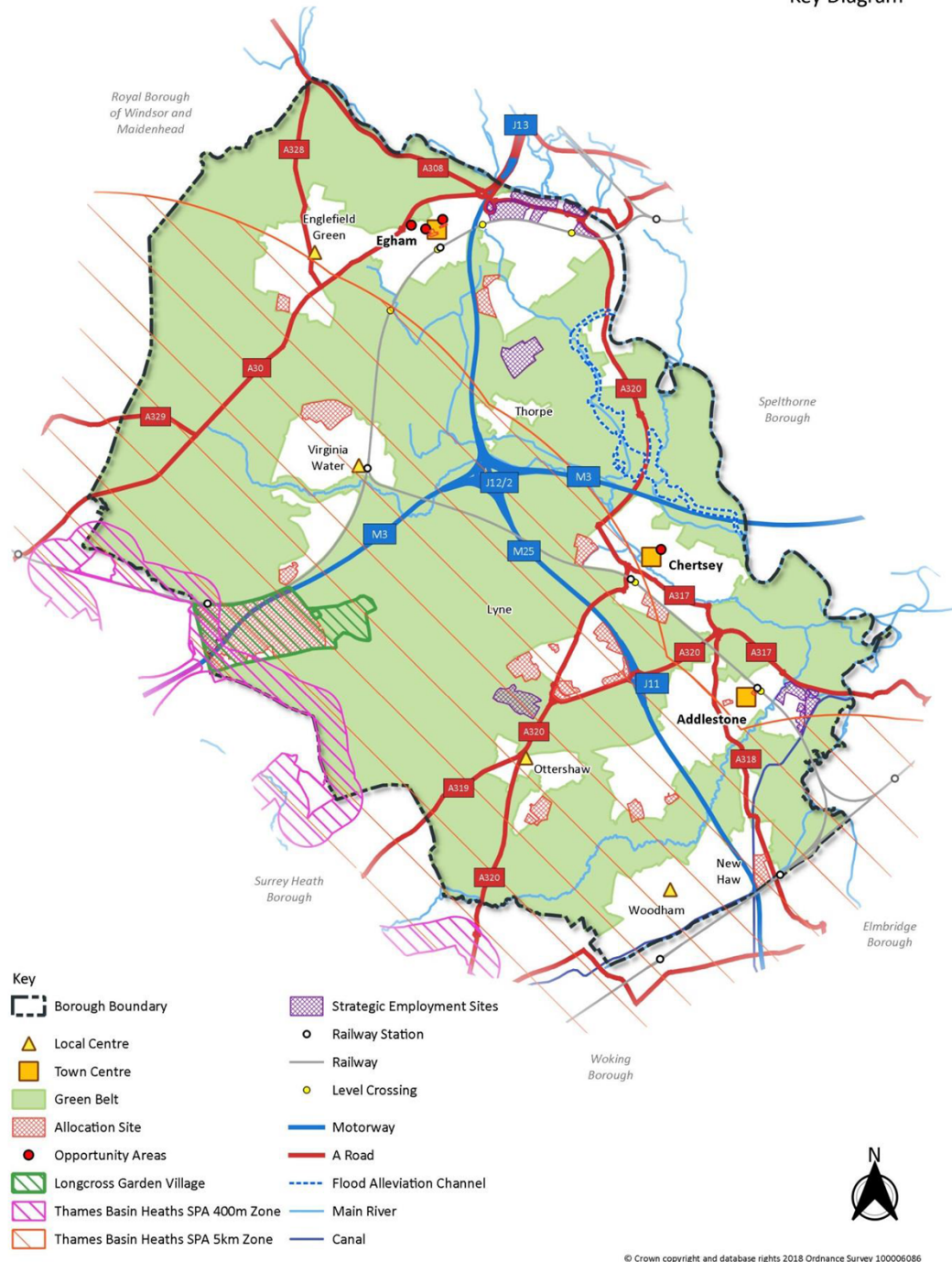
Background to the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD

- 1.6. The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) makes provision for local authorities to prepare and adopt Local Development Documents which can include SPD's. However, an SPD does not form part of the Development Plan for an area as set out in Section 38 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) but it is a material consideration in taking planning decisions.
- 1.7. An SPD is required to be consulted on and adopted by the Borough Council and once implemented sets out additional planning guidance that supports and/or expands upon the Policies of a Local Plan.
- 1.8. The proposed Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD covers all of the area within the jurisdiction of Runnymede Borough Council and contains the urban areas of Addlestone, Chertsey, Englefield Green, Egham, Ottershaw, Woodham & New Haw and Virginia Water. Interspersed between the urban areas is designated Green Belt holding numerous wooded copses, golf courses and businesses as well as small pockets of development, agriculture and equestrian uses. The M25 and M3 motorways bisect

the Borough north-south and east-west respectively and effectively cut the Borough into four quarters. There are six rail stations in Runnymede Borough offering direct services to London Waterloo, Reading & Woking. A plan of the designated area is shown in Plan 1-1.

Plan 1-1: Map of Runnymede Borough

Runnymede Borough
Key Diagram



- 1.9. There are numerous areas of woodland/copses designated as ancient/semi-natural or ancient replanted woodland which are also identified as priority habitat as well as swathes of woodpasture and parkland which is a national Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) designation. Priority habitat designations also include areas of lowland meadows, lowland heathland, and lowland fens. There are five SSSIs located in the Borough area, Basingstoke Canal, Langham Pond, Thorpe Haymeadow, Thorpe no.1 Gravel Pit and Windsor Forest.
- 1.10. Unit 2 of the Basingstoke Canal SSSI lies to the south of the Borough and is in an unfavourable, no change status which does not meet the PSA target of 95% in favourable or unfavourable recovering status. Status reasons are extent of habitat, lack of plant diversity and poor water quality.
- 1.11. Langham Pond SSSI is formed of 3 units. 100% of the SSSI is in a favourable or unfavourable recovering status, meeting the PSA target. The Thorpe Haymeadow SSSI is formed of one unit in a favourable condition, which also meets the PSA Target.
- 1.12. The Thorpe no.1 Gravel Pit SSSI is formed of one unit and is in a favourable condition status meeting the PSA target. The SSSI also forms part of the wider South West London Water Bodies Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar, an internationally designated site for nature conservation importance.
- 1.13. The Windsor Forest SSSI is formed of 22 units with units 10, 11 and 16 within or partly within Runnymede. The SSSI is in 100% favourable condition status and meets the PSA target of 95%. The SSSI also forms part of the Windsor Forest & Great Park Special Area of Conservation (SAC) another internationally designated site for nature conservation importance.
- 1.14. Other internationally designated sites, whilst not within the Borough but within 5km include, the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC.
- 1.15. The Borough also lies within 12km of the Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment SAC, 12.2km from Burnham Beeches SAC, 13km of the Richmond Park and Wimbledon Common SACs, 20km from the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC, 23km from the Wealden Heaths Phase I SPA and its component parts (including Thursley, Hankley & Frensham Commons SPA and Thursley & Ockley Bog Ramsar) and 30km from the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA.
- 1.16. There are also over 30 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) in the Borough as well as two Local Nature Reserves at Chertsey Meads and Riverside Walk in Virginia Water. The Borough lies within the River Wey and Tributaries catchment and there are large areas of the Borough, including within its urban areas which lie within flood risk zones 2 and 3 including functional floodplain.
- 1.17. From a heritage perspective, the Borough contains numerous statutorily listed or locally listed buildings and structures most notably the Grade I Royal Holloway College building in Englefield Green. There are 6 Conservation Areas in the borough as well as 6 scheduled ancient monuments, 48 areas of high archaeological potential and four historic parks and gardens.
- 1.18. The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD does not form part of the Development Plan for the area and does not allocate any sites for development or propose policies for the use of land but is a material consideration in decision making. The 2030 Local Plan which is the document which allocates sites and contains policies concerning land use has

been the subject of Sustainability Appraisal (including the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment) as well as Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

- 1.19. Local Plan Policy SL22: Meeting the Needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople states the following:

Where traveller pitches are required to be provided on sites allocated through this Local Plan, the Council will secure their delivery through the imposition of appropriate planning conditions or obligations attached to any planning approval granted. Those obligations will include an appropriate management agreement including measures to secure:

- *Phasing of site delivery and trigger points to secure early delivery, proportionate to the site delivery;*
- *Measures to ensure the site is secured in perpetuity for Gypsies, Travellers or Travelling Showpeople (in accordance with the relevant definition from the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, or any replacement guidance) as appropriate;*
- *A policy for Allocation (to preserve access for those with local connection); and,*
- *Further to Policy SL20, consideration of delivery of a proportion of the pitches or plots at below market rate, as affordable housing, based on evidence of need as set out in the Council's latest GTAA and viability at the time of the application. This consideration applies to both the provision of pitches or plots on site and in cases where provision is proposed off site.*

- 1.20. The Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD seeks to provide further guidance on how this part of the policy should be interpreted.

- 1.21. In particular, the Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD seeks to provide further detailed guidance on how the Council will assess whether an applicant has a local connection to the Borough and sets out how the Council will assess if an applicant meets the planning definition of a Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling Showperson (as contained in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2015 as amended). The SPD provides information to both market and affordable pitches and plots which may come forward, as well as general information on matters such as equalities, monitoring, fraud and complaints.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.22. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and associated Regulations (as amended), requires a local authority to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for their Local Plan documents. This considers the social and economic impacts of a plan as well as the environmental impacts. SPDs are not Local Plan documents and therefore a Sustainability Appraisal is not required.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) – Screening

Assessment Process

- 1.23. The need to undertake an Appropriate Assessment as part of an HRA is set out within the EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and transposed into British Law by Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Appropriate Assessment stage of HRA is only required should the preliminary screening assessment not be able to rule out likely significant effects.

- 1.24. The European Habitats Directive requires that any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a European site must be subject to an Appropriate Assessment. The Habitats Directive states that any plan or project not connected to or necessary for a site's management, but likely to have significant effects thereon shall be subject to appropriate assessment. There are four distinct stages in HRA namely: -

Step 1: Screening – Identification of likely impacts on a European site either alone or in combination with other plans/projects and consideration of whether these are significant. Following the decision of the ECJ in the *People Over Wind & Sweetman v. Coillite Teoranta (C-323/17)* case, avoidance and/or mitigation measures cannot be taken into account at the screening stage and it is purely an exercise to determine if possible pathways for effect exist and whether these can be ruled out taking account of the precautionary principle. It is the opinion of this HRA screening assessment and in light of the Planning Practice Guidance Note on Appropriate Assessment that adopted policies of the current development plan cannot be taken into account at this stage of HRA where they are proposing mitigation for European Sites. Similarly, any HRA undertaken for other development plan documents which have not been through Examination in Public (EiP) and found sound should only be given limited weight. However, it is considered that greater weight can be attributed to screening undertaken in HRAs which support development plan documents found sound at examination. In this respect, this screening assessment takes account of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan HRA where it indicates that effects can be screened out in the absence of avoidance/mitigation.

Step 2: Appropriate Assessment – consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European Site whether alone or in combination with other plans or projects with respect to the sites structure, function and conservation objectives. Where there are significant effects, step 2 should consider potential avoidance and/or mitigation measures.

Step 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions – Assessing alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan/project which avoids impact, if after Step 2 significant effect cannot be ruled out even with avoidance or mitigation measures; and

Step 4: Assessment of Compensatory Measures – Identification of compensatory measures should impact not be avoided and no alternative solutions exist and an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) deems that a project should proceed.

- 1.25. Should step 1 reveal that significant effects are likely, or effect cannot be discounted because of uncertainty, then it is necessary to move onto step 2: Appropriate Assessment. If step 2 cannot rule out significant effect even with avoidance and/or mitigation, then the process moves onto step 3 and finally step 4 if no alternative solutions arise.

Step 1 - Screening

- 1.26. There are four stages to consider in a screening exercise: -

Stage 1: Determining whether the plan/project is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site;

Stage 2: Describing the plan/project and description of other plan/projects that have the potential for in-combination impacts;

Stage 3: Identifying potential effects on the European site(s); and

Stage 4: Assessing the significance of any effects.

Stage 1

- 1.27. It can be determined that the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site.

Stage 2

- 1.28. Information about the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD can be found in paragraphs 1.8 to 1.21 of this screening assessment. Table 1-1 lists those other plans and projects, which may have in-combination impacts.

Table 1-1: Other Key Plans/Projects

<p>Plan/ Project</p>	<p>National Planning Policy Framework (2021): High level national planning policy covering topics such as housing, economy, employment, retail as well as biodiversity, flood risk and heritage.</p> <p>South East Plan 2009: Saved Policy NRM6 sets out protection for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.</p> <p>London Plan 2021: Contains planning policies for the development of land across the wider London area including housing and employment allocations with a target of 52,000 new homes per annum (2019/20 – 2028/29).</p> <p>Runnymede 2030 Local Plan: Sets policies for the consideration of development and the spatial strategy for the Borough including provision of 7,920 dwellings over the Plan period and allocations for residential, employment and retail development.</p> <p>Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan 2021: Sets policies for development proposals which come forward within the Thorpe Neighbourhood Area.</p> <p>Englefield Green Village Neighbourhood Plan 2024: Sets policies for development proposals which come forward within the Englefield Green Village Neighbourhood Area.</p> <p>Other Local Authority Local Plans within 10km or adjoining sites identified in paras 1.8 to 1.12: Housing target for areas around European sites set out in Table 1-2.</p> <p>Large Scale Projects within 10km or adjoining European Sites: Large scale projects within 10km are subsumed in the consideration of ‘Other Local Authority Local Plans’ above.</p> <p>Thames Basin Heaths Joint Delivery Framework 2009: Sets out the agreed Framework regarding the approach and standards for avoiding significant effects on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.</p> <p>Environment Agency, Thames River Basin District Management Plan (2015): Sets out actions to improve water quality. Future aims for the River Wey include implementing Lower Wey Oxbow Restoration Project to enhance and restore the main Wey river channel and Wey Diffuse Advice Project throughout the catchment.</p> <p>Environment Agency, Thames Catchment Flood Management Plan (2009): Aim is to promote more sustainable approaches to managing flood risk. Will be delivered through a combination of different approaches.</p> <p>Environment Agency, River Wey Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (2019): identifies the Wey having restricted ‘Water available for licensing’.</p> <p>Environment Agency, Water Resources Strategy: Regional Action Plan for Thames Region (2009): Key priorities for Thames region include ensuring sufficient water resources are available, making water available in over-abstracted catchments and reducing demand.</p>
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Table 1-2: List of Local Authority Housing Targets within 10km of European Sites

Site	Local Plan Area	Housing Target
Thames Basin Heaths SPA*		
	Waverley Borough	11,210
	Guildford Borough	10,678
	Woking Borough	4,964
	Surrey Heath Borough	3,240
	Runnymede Borough	7,920
	Elmbridge Borough	3,375
	Bracknell Forest Borough	11,139
	Windsor & Maidenhead	14,260
	Wokingham Borough	13,230
	Rushmoor Borough	8,884
	Hart District	6,208
Total		95,108
Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC		
	Runnymede Borough	7,920
	Woking Borough	4,964
	Surrey Heath Borough	3,240
	Spelthorne Borough	3,320
	Elmbridge Borough	3,375
	Windsor & Maidenhead Borough	14,260
	Bracknell Forest Borough	11,139
	Slough Borough	6,250
	South Bucks District	2,800
	LB Hillingdon	10,830
	LB Hounslow	17,820
Total		85,918
South West London Water Bodies SPA & Ramsar		
	Runnymede Borough	7,920
	Elmbridge Borough	3,375
	Spelthorne Borough	3,320
	Epsom & Ewell Borough	3,620
	Mole Valley District	3,760
	Windsor & Maidenhead Borough	14,260
	Slough Borough	6,250
	Bracknell Forest Borough	11,139
	South Bucks District	2,800
	LB Hillingdon	10,830
	LB Hounslow	17,820
	LB Ealing	21,570
	LB Kingston	9,640
	LB Richmond	4,110
Total		120,426

* Also includes the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC

Stage 3

- 1.29. Information regarding the European site(s) screened and the likely effects that may arise due to implementation of the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD can be found in Tables 1-3 to 1-6 and 1-7. All other European Sites were screened out of this assessment at an early stage as it was considered that their distance from the Borough area meant that there is no pathway or mechanism which would give rise to significant effect either alone or in combination. In this respect regard has been had to the 2030 Local Plan HRA specifically paragraphs 2.1-2.2.

Table 1-3: Details of Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Potential Effects Thereon

European site:	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA).
Site description:	The Thames Basin Heaths SPA was proposed in October 2000, and full SPA status was approved on 9 March 2005. It covers an area of some 8,274 ha, consisting of 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) scattered from Surrey, to Berkshire in the north, through to Hampshire in the west. The habitat consists of both dry and wet heathland, mire, oak, birch acid woodland, gorse scrub and acid grassland with areas of rotational conifer plantation.
Relevant international nature conservation features:	Thames Basin Heaths SPA qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive: During the breeding season: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>: 7.8% of the breeding population in Great Britain (count mean, 1998-1999); - Woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i>: 9.9% of the breeding population in Great Britain (count as at 1997); - Dartford warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i>: 27.8% of the breeding population in Great Britain (count as at 1999).
Environmental conditions which support the site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate management • Management of disturbance during breeding season (March to July) • Minimal air pollution • Absence or control of urbanisation effects, such as fires and introduction of invasive non-native species • Maintenance of appropriate water levels • Maintenance of water quality
Potential Effects arising from the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None (see Table 1-7)

Showpeople SPD	
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Table 1-4: Details of Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC and Potential Effects Thereon

International site:	Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Site description:	The Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC covers an area of some 5,154 ha with areas of wet and dry heathland, valley bogs, broad-leaved and coniferous woodland, permanent grassland and open water.
Relevant international nature conservation features:	The Thursley, Ash, Pirbright and Chobham Special Area of Conservation is designated for three Annex I habitats. The qualifying Annex 1 habitats are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath - Dry heaths - Depressions on peat substrates
Environmental Conditions which Support the Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate management; • Managed recreational pressure; • Minimal air pollution; • Absence or control of urbanisation effects such as fires and introduction of invasive non-native species; • Maintenance of appropriate water levels; • Maintenance of water quality.
Potential Effects arising from the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None (see Table 1-7)

Table 1-5: Details of Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC and Potential Effects Thereon

International site:	Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC
Site description:	The Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC covers an area of some 1,680 ha with Atlantic acidophilus beech forests with Ilex and sometimes Taxus. It is one of four outstanding locations in the UK for oak woods on sandy plains and is one of only three areas in the UK for Limoniscus violaceus (violet click beetle).

Relevant international nature conservation features:	Annex I habitat of oak woods on sandy plain which is the primary reason for designation with Atlantic beech forests.
Environmental Conditions which Support the Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of trees through forestry management • Urbanisation • Managed recreational pressure • Air Quality
Potential Effects arising from the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None (see Table 1-7)

Table 1-6: Details of South West London Water Bodies SPA & Ramsar and Potential Effects Thereon

International site:	South West London Water Bodies SPA & Ramsar
Site description:	The South West London Water Bodies SPA & Ramsar covers an area of some 825 ha and is formed from 7 former gravel pits and reservoirs which support overwintering populations of protected bird species.
Relevant international nature conservation features:	Supports overwintering populations of:- Gadwall Shoveler
Environmental Conditions which Support the Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed recreational pressure • Water quality • Water abstraction
Potential Effects arising from the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None (see Table 1-7)

Showpeople SPD	
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Stage 4

1.30. The consideration of potential effects is set out in Table 1-7.

Table 1-7: Assessment of Potential Effects

<p>Indirect effect from recreational disturbance and urbanisation.</p>	<p>The likely effects of recreational disturbance have been summarised in the Underhill-Day study for Natural England and RSPB (2005); this provides a review of the urban effects on lowland heaths and their wildlife. The main issues relating to the conservation objectives and the integrity of the SPAs and SAC's effected by recreational disturbance and urbanisation as a whole are: fragmentation, disturbance, fires, cats, dogs (as a result of nest disturbance and enrichment), prevention of management, off-roading, vandalism and trampling.</p> <p>Natural England has advised that recreational pressure, as a result of increased residential development within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA & Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC (or sites of 50 or more dwellings within 7km), is having a significant adverse impact on the Annex I bird species. Woodlark and Nightjar are ground nesting and Dartford Warblers nest close to the ground. They are therefore sensitive to disturbance, particularly from dogs, but also from walkers, and cyclists etc. They are, in addition, vulnerable to other effects of urbanisation, in particular predation by cats.</p> <p>Joint work involving Natural England and the authorities affected by the SPA/SAC have agreed a mechanism to avoid impacts to the SPA/SAC from recreational activities in the form of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management & Monitoring (SAMM) and from the impacts of urbanisation by not allowing any net additional dwellings within 400m of the SPA.</p> <p>In terms of the Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan HRA states that forestry management and recreational impacts has the potential for loss of trees and damage to trees from burning (arson).</p> <p>For the South West London Water Bodies SPA & Ramsar threats arise through unmanaged recreational activities such as use of motorboats and fishing.</p> <p>The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD provides further detailed guidance on how the part of Policy SL22 which relates</p>
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	<p>to sites already allocated in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, and which will contain traveller pitches/plots, should be interpreted. In particular it provides guidance on how the Council will assess whether an applicant has a local connection to the Borough and sets out how the Council will assess if an applicant meets the planning definition of a Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling Showperson (as contained in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2015 as amended). However, the SPD does not in itself, allocate or safeguard any land for development that could give rise to increased recreation or urbanisation impacts.</p> <p>As such, there are no pathways for effect for impacts either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects and it is considered that the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD would not give rise to likely significant effects on any of the European Sites in terms of recreation or urbanisation, such that an Appropriate Assessment is required.</p>
<p>Atmospheric Pollution</p>	<p>The Runnymede 2030 Local Plan HRA concludes no likely significant effect as a result of atmospheric pollution in combination with other plans and projects on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham SAC or the Windsor Forest & Great Park SAC, given the findings of the Council's air quality evidence.</p> <p>The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD provides further detailed guidance on how the part of Policy SL22 which relates to sites already allocated in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, and which will contain traveller pitches/plots, should be interpreted. In particular it provides guidance on how the Council will assess whether an applicant has a local connection to the Borough and sets out how the Council will assess if an applicant meets the planning definition of a Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling Showperson (as contained in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2015 as amended). However, the SPD does not in itself, allocate or safeguard land for development.</p> <p>Overall, the SPD by itself or in-combination with other plans and projects is unlikely to give rise to significant effects on any of the European Sites in terms of air quality, such that an Appropriate Assessment is required.</p>
<p>Water Quality & Resource</p>	<p>The Runnymede 2030 Local Plan HRA concludes no likely significant effects to European sites as a result of water quality or abstraction.</p> <p>The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD provides further detailed guidance on how the part of Policy SL22 which relates</p>

	<p>to sites already allocated in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, and which will contain traveller pitches/plots, should be interpreted. In particular it provides guidance on how the Council will assess whether an applicant has a local connection to the Borough and sets out how the Council will assess if an applicant meets the planning definition of a Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling Showperson (as contained in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2015 as amended). However, the SPD does not in itself, allocate or safeguard land for development.</p> <p>The SPD, either by itself or in-combination with other plans and projects is unlikely to give rise to significant effects on any of the European Sites in terms of water quality, such that an Appropriate Assessment is required.</p>
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Conclusion

- 1.31. It is the conclusion of this updated HRA that following a screening assessment it can be ascertained, in light of the information available at the time of assessment and even in the absence of avoidance and mitigation measures that the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD **will not** give rise to significant effects on European Sites either alone or in-combination with other plans and/or projects. Given the findings of the screening assessment, it is considered that a full appropriate assessment is not required.

Strategic Environmental Assessment-Screening

The Assessment Process

- 1.32. The process for determining whether or not an SEA is required is called 'screening'. For some types of plan or programme SEA is mandatory and includes the following:
- Plans which are prepared for town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive; or
 - Plans which have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive (this has already been screened out as set out in paragraph 1.31 above).
- 1.33. However, the main determining factor when considering whether a plan or programme requires SEA is whether it will have significant environmental effects.
- 1.34. Within 28 days of making its determination, the determining authority must publish a statement, such as this one, setting out its decision. If it is determined that an SEA is not required, the statement must include the reasons for this.

This Screening Report sets out the Council's determination under Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 on whether or not SEA is required for the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD. The Borough Council must consult with the three statutory bodies (Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural England) and take their views into account before issuing a final

determination. The comments received from the statutory consultees are summarised in the table below following consultation with them in June 2024:

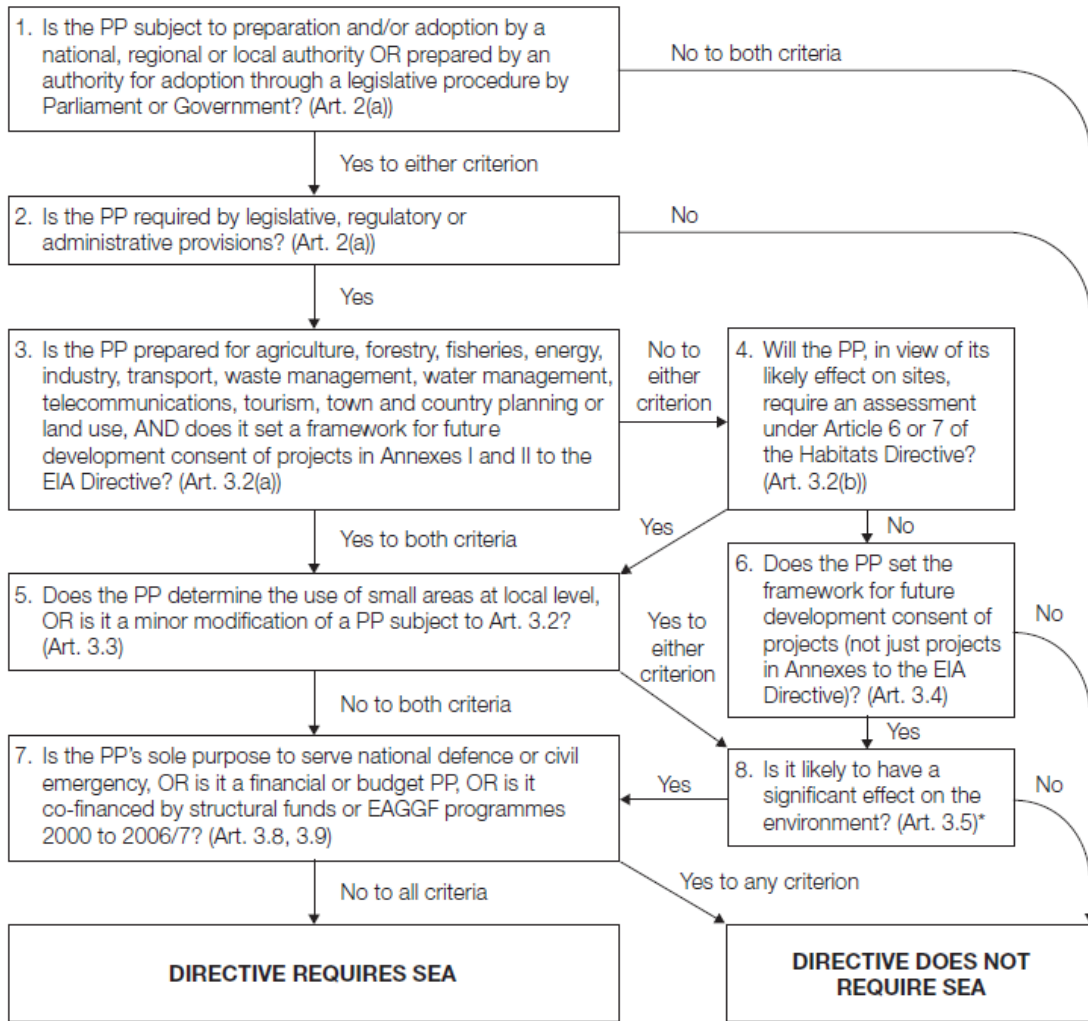
Consultee	Response
Natural England	It is Natural England's opinion that the SEA shows that no adverse effects will be caused by the Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People SPD and we feel that there is no need to progress to an SEA.
Historic England	In light of the Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2024, our view is that a SEA is not required in this instance for the reason set out in paragraph 1.37 of the Screening Statement.
Environment Agency	<p>We understand the draft Allocation Scheme SPD supports the implementation of Policy SL22: Meeting the Needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The SPD seeks to provide further guidance on how the policy should be interpreted.</p> <p>This policy is in a local plan which has been itself through the SEA process. We therefore have no further comments and agree with the LPA that, <i>'The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects and as such an SEA is not required.'</i></p>

- 1.35. The determination is based on a two-step approach, the first of which is to assess the plan against the flowchart as set out in government guidance A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive¹. The flow chart is shown in Figure 1.

¹ A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Process (2005) ODPM. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-directive-guidance>

Figure 1:

This diagram is intended as a guide to the criteria for application of the Directive to plans and programmes (PPs). It has no legal status.



*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.

1.36. The second step is to consider whether the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD will have significant environmental effects when considered against the criteria set out in Annex II of the Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations. The findings of step 1 and step 2 are shown in Tables 1-9 and 1-10.

Table 1-9: SEA Screening Step 1

Stage in Flowchart	Y/N	Reason
<p>1. Is the plan/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? (Article 2(a))</p>	Y	<p>The provision to prepare and adopt a Local Development Document is given by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD will be prepared and adopted by Runnymede Borough Council. The preparation and adoption procedure is set out in the Town & Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2012. Whilst not forming part of the Development Plan the SPD will be a material consideration in planning decisions. Move to Stage 2</p>
<p>2. Is the plan/programme required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Article 2(a))</p>	N	<p>There is no mandatory requirement to prepare or adopt Supplementary Planning Documents and if adopted it will not form part of the Development Plan for Runnymede. As answer is No, flowchart identifies end to screening process, but move to Stage 3 for completeness.</p>
<p>3. Is the plan/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 to the EIA Directive? (Article 3.2(a))</p>	N	<p>Whilst the plan is prepared for town & country planning, the SPD does not set the framework for future development consents for projects in Annex I or II to the EIA Directive. Move to Stage 4.</p>
<p>4. Will the plan/programme, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under</p>	N	<p>The HRA screening undertaken in paragraphs 1.23 to 1.31 of this assessment has determined that</p>

Stage in Flowchart	Y/N	Reason
Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Article 3.2(b))		Appropriate Assessment is not required. Move to Stage 6.
5. Does the plan/programme determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Article 3.3)	N/A	The SPD will not form part of the Runnymede Development Plan and does not therefore determine the use of small areas at a local (or any) level. The plan is not a minor modification of an existing plan. Move to Stage 6
6. Does the plan/programme set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Article 3.4)	N	The SPD does not allocate any land or sites for development or set a framework for future development consents. As answer is No, flowchart identifies end to screening process, but move to Stage 8 for completeness.
7. Is the plan/programme'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? (Article 3.8, 3.9)	N	The sole purpose of the SPD is not to serve national defence or civil emergency. It is also not a budget plan or programme.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Article 3.5)	N	Effects on the environment and whether these are significant are considered in Table 1-10. No Significant Effects identified in Table 1-10, so determine that SEA is not required.

Table 1-10: SEA Screening Step 2

Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations)	Response	
Characteristics of the plan or programme		Significant Effect?
(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.	<p>The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD does not set out policies against which development proposals in the Runnymede area will be considered, although it will be a material consideration in decision making.</p> <p>The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD provides further detailed guidance on how the part of Policy SL22 which relates to sites already allocated in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, and which will contain traveller pitches/plots, should be interpreted. In particular it provides guidance on how the Council will assess whether an applicant has a local connection to the Borough and sets out how the Council will assess if an applicant meets the planning definition of a Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling Showperson (as contained in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2015 as amended).</p> <p>The SPD will be applied as guidance rather than policy and as such it does not set a distinct framework for projects or other activities.</p>	N
(b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD does not influence other plans or programmes but is itself influenced by other plans (i.e. the Runnymede Local Plan and the NPPF). It does not influence any plans in a hierarchy.	N
(c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental	The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD provides further	N

Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations)	Response	
<p>considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>	<p>detailed guidance on how the part of Policy SL22 which relates to sites already allocated in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, and which will contain traveller pitches/plots, should be interpreted. In particular it provides guidance on how the Council will assess whether an applicant has a local connection to the Borough and sets out how the Council will assess if an applicant meets the planning definition of a Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling Showperson (as contained in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2015 as amended).</p> <p>It is the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan itself which has set the development allocations for Runnymede. Through the Examination of the Local Plan, the allocations have been found to be sound, and in accordance with the NPPF which has at its heart, the presumption in favour of sustainable development.</p> <p>As the SPD does not allocate any land for development, its impact to the integration of environmental considerations could not in itself, be regarded as significant.</p>	
(d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	<p>Environmental problems include potential recreational or urbanising impacts, atmospheric pollution and water resources to European sites. Paragraphs 1.23 to 1.31 of this assessment set out the effects of the SPD on European sites and has determined no significant effects.</p>	
(e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community (EU) legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	<p>The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople is considered to have limited relevance to the implementation of Community legislation on the environment.</p>	
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected		

Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations)	Response	
(a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	<p>The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD provides further detailed guidance on how the part of Policy SL22 which relates to sites already allocated in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, and which will contain traveller pitches/plots, should be interpreted. In particular it provides guidance on how the Council will assess whether an applicant has a local connection to the Borough and sets out how the Council will assess if an applicant meets the planning definition of a Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling Showperson (as contained in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2015 as amended).</p> <p>It does not however allocate any land or sites for development or go beyond the requirements of the 2030 Local Plan. Therefore the probability of any effect is low. Duration of any effects would likely be long term (beyond 2030) given that there is an expectation in the Local Plan that once established, the traveller pitches/plots will be safeguarded, with their loss to other uses resisted unless it can be demonstrated that there is a surplus of traveller pitches and plots for Gypsies and Travellers in the Borough. Effects are expected to be generally positive but unlikely to be easily reversible. On the whole, effects are not considered to be significant.</p>	N
(b) The cumulative nature of the effects	<p>The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD provides further detailed guidance on how the part of Policy SL22 which relates to sites already allocated in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, and which will contain traveller pitches/plots, should be interpreted. In particular it provides guidance on how the Council will assess whether an applicant has a local connection to the Borough and sets out how the Council will assess if an applicant meets the planning definition of a Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling</p>	N

Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations)	Response	
	<p>Showperson (as contained in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2015 as amended).</p> <p>The SPD does not allocate or safeguard any land for development.</p> <p>In combination with the assessed impacts of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and the mitigation measures set out therein, it is considered that the cumulative effects of the SPD remain low and not significant.</p>	
(c) The transboundary nature of the effects	Given the scope of the SPD it is considered that no transboundary effects will arise.	N
(d) The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	None.	N
(e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD will cover the whole of the geographic area of Runnymede in Surrey. The area covered is 78km ² with a population of around 83,448. Given the nature of the SPD it is considered that effects will not be significant.	N
(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; iii) Intensive land-use.	<p>Given the nature of the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD:</p> <p>i) The area covered by the SPD contains 5 SSSIs with the majority in a favourable condition status which meets the PSA target of 95% in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition status. The Basingstoke Canal SSSI is in an unfavourable no change status which does not meet the PSA target. The Runnymede area contains numerous statutorily or locally listed buildings and structures as well as conservation areas, scheduled ancient monuments and areas of high archaeological potential. The area is a mixture of urban and Green Belt and contains</p>	N

Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive and Schedule I of the Regulations)	Response	
	<p>features such as green spaces, wooded copses and golf courses. However, the SPD does not in itself allocate any land for development and therefore significant effects on natural characteristics and cultural heritage are unlikely.</p> <p>ii) There are two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the Runnymede area, along the entire length of the M25 which runs through the Borough and the other in Addlestone at the High Street and Station Road junction. Air quality standards are exceeded at 5 air quality monitoring sites in the Runnymede area². The Environment Agency has identified the Wey catchment as having restricted water available for licensing.</p> <p>However, the SPD does not in itself allocate any land for development and therefore significant effects on air quality and water availability/quality are unlikely.</p> <p>iii) Intensive land use occurs in the urban areas (built development), but the SPD does not in itself, allocate any land for development. As such significant effects are unlikely.</p>	
(g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have recognised national, community or international protection status.	The effects on European Sites for Nature Conservation are dealt with in (d) above. There are no landscapes which have recognised national, community or international protection status in the Runnymede area.	N
Conclusion	The Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects and as such an SEA is not required.	

² Runnymede 2017 Air Quality Annual Status Report (2017) RBC, Available at: <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/airquality>

- 1.37. On the basis of the Screening process it is determined that the Runnymede Pitch and Plot Allocation Scheme for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople SPD does not require a SEA under the SEA Directive and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004). This is because: -
- The SPD is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects given that it does not allocate sites for development; and
 - The content of the SPD when taken as a whole and in combination with policies in the emerging 2030 Local Plan will not give rise to significant effects.
- 1.38. This determination was made on the 9th December 2024.