

**Babergh & Mid Suffolk District
Councils**

**Beyton Neighbourhood
Development Plan
SEA Screening Opinion**

Final report

Prepared by LUC

March 2021

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1.	Draft Report	L. Meldrum	K Nicholls	J Owen	04.03.2021
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Beyton Parish Council is in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Beyton is located within Mid Suffolk District, five miles east of Bury St Edmunds and eight miles west of Stowmarket, to the south of the A14 trunk road. LUC has been appointed by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils to consider whether there is a need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.2 SEA may be required for a Neighbourhood Plan if it is likely to have significant environmental effects. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is similar to SEA but includes assessment of the likely significant effects of a plan or programme on economic and social factors, as well as environmental factors. Planning Practice Guidance¹ (PPG) clarifies that there is no legal requirement for a Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to SA, but that SA can be used to demonstrate how the plan will contribute to sustainable development.

1.3 Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have commissioned LUC to carry out SEA Screening of the Pre-Submission Consultation Version of the Beyton Neighbourhood Plan (February 2021) in order to determine whether an assessment is required under European Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive), transposed into UK law through the SEA Regulations².

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

² The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/1633), as amended by The Environmental Assessments and Miscellaneous Planning (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018 (SI

2018/1232). It should be noted that the purpose of the amendments to the SEA Regulations is to ensure that the law functions correctly now that the UK has left the European Union. No substantive changes are made to the way the SEA regime operates.

Chapter 2

SEA Screening

Scope of the Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 Beyton Parish Council has prepared the Pre-Submission (Regulation 14) version of the Neighbourhood Plan which is being subject to public consultation between February and April 2021.

2.2 The Beyton Neighbourhood Plan covers the entire parish. The Pre-Submission consultation document includes a vision for the long-term future of Beyton along with 12 objectives which aim to deliver that vision:

1. Enable the delivery of new housing that meets locally identified needs and desires of villagers.
2. Ensure that new housing is designed and located to reflect the characteristics of Beyton's built and natural environment.
3. Protect and preserve important green spaces and woodland.
4. Protect important views and links to the wider countryside.
5. Develop greater biodiversity and habitats.
6. Ensure new development respects the historic character of the village.
7. Protect existing historic assets.
8. Maintain and improve the existing community services and facilities.
9. Maintain and enhance the character and heritage of the village.
10. Minimise the impacts of new development on the environment.
11. Reduce the impact of through traffic on the village.
12. Improve measures for non-car users.

2.3 The Neighbourhood Plan then sets out 20 planning policies (Policies BTN1 - 20) to realise and deliver the vision and objectives. Policy BTN1 sets out the Spatial Strategy for the parish, specifying that the focus for new development will be within the Settlement Boundary and that development outside of that area will only be permitted where certain criteria are met. Policy BTN2: Housing Development provides for around 43 dwellings to be developed in the parish between

2018 and 2037. These will be delivered through site allocations made in policies BTN3 (10 dwellings), BTN4 (12 dwellings) and BTN5 (10 dwellings) and through small brownfield 'windfall' sites and infill plots within the Settlement Boundary that come forward during the plan period. The site allocated through policy BTN3 (Land at the Former Nursery, Tostock Road) already has planning permission but the other two allocated sites do not.

2.4 Policies BTN6-20 address a range of topics including the landscape, flooding, biodiversity, important views and the protection of the historic environment. Together these policies seek to ensure that new development in Beyton is high quality and sensitively designed so as not to have adverse impacts on the surroundings.

Baseline Information

2.5 This section summarises baseline information for the parish of Beyton, drawing from the information set out in the Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan.

Context

2.6 Beyton is a village and civil parish in the Suffolk District of Mid Suffolk, eastern England. It is located five miles east of Bury St Edmunds and eight miles west of Stowmarket, to the south of the A14 trunk road.

Biodiversity, flora and fauna

2.7 There are no nationally or internationally designated biodiversity sites within the parish. Norton Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the nearest nationally designated site to Beyton and is located approximately 2.5km to the east in Norton Parish. The nearest European designated sites are Breckland Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA), which are approximately 17km to the north west.

2.8 Beyton Environmental Group manages three wildlife sites:

- The Churchyard, which supports around 95 plant species including locally uncommon ones;
- Oak Tree Pond, which consists of a pond, woodland and wildflower meadow with some specie-rich farmland border; and
- Beyton Old Orchard, which is part of the old school grounds and includes old fruit trees, a pond and open glades. Over 300 insect species have been identified on this site including some nationally rare species.

2.9 Other significant natural habitats are small areas of scrub which are rich in invertebrates and birds and together with the woodland they provide hunting and nesting

opportunities for a variety of birds of prey including kestrels, sparrowhawks, buzzards, tawny, little and barn owls.

2.10 Beyton Parish also contains a number of veteran, historic and significant trees. These are important features within the village landscape and together with the hedgerows form important wildlife corridors between the areas of scrub, woodland and meadow.

Population

2.11 According to the Government's most recent population estimates (2019) the population of Beyton was 718. Over a quarter of the population was aged 65 or over, compared with less than one fifth of the population in 1991.

Human health

2.12 The majority of Beyton's residents are in good or very good health (88.1%) with a small proportion (3.3%) in bad to very bad health. Information from the 2011 Census indicates that the proportion of the Beyton population that is in very good health (56.8%) is higher than the Mid Suffolk (47.9%) and England (47.2%) averages.

Soil

2.13 Beyton Parish comprises approximately 50% Grade 2 and 50% Grade 3 agricultural land. However, it is not known if any or all of the Grade 3 land is Grade 3a (classed as best and most versatile agricultural land) rather than the lower quality Grade 3b.

Water

2.14 The Environment Agency's Flood Risk Maps for planning indicate that the majority of Beyton Parish lies within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has a low probability of flooding. There is an area of Flood Zone 3 associated with the stream which runs through the centre of the parish from south to north.

Air and Climatic Factors

2.15 There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) that have been declared within or near to Beyton Parish.

2.16 Climate data are not available at parish level, but within Mid Suffolk District as a whole, reductions in overall carbon emissions of 28% were achieved between 2005 and 2018. This reduction was mostly due to progress in reducing emissions from large industrial installations followed by electricity from industrial and commercial sectors and domestic sources. There was minimal progress on reducing transport emissions, which make the largest contribution to carbon emissions in Mid Suffolk District.

2.17 Traffic counts undertaken have identified that on an average weekday just over 6,000 vehicles enter the village from all directions, equating to 11,000 trips in and out of Beyton every weekday.

Material Assets

2.18 For a village with a community of 360 dwellings, Beyton is reasonably well-served by community and recreational facilities. These include a community college, two public houses, a garage, recycling facilities and a weekly mobile library.

2.19 In terms of recreational facilities, these are very limited in Beyton. There are no formal sport or recreation facilities available with the exception of the playing fields, swimming pool and tennis courts associated with the Thurston Community College Sixth Form Campus. However, currently there is no general access to these facilities for residents. There is a well-equipped children's play area on The Green which is within a 15-minute walk for much of the village but many of these routes are along roads that do not have pavements making it an unsafe walk.

2.20 The parish has nine well-used public footpaths that provide important links within the village as well as links to the wider Public Rights of Way network. These are supplemented by permissive access to fields west of Church Road.

2.21 Public transport in Beyton is limited, with only a bus service that operates around hourly during the day and connects to Bury St Edmunds, Stowmarket and other villages in the immediate area. Residents have shown a desire for an increased service which may be due to the ageing population of the parish.

2.22 There are no GP surgeries or shops within Beyton Parish.

Cultural heritage

2.23 Beyton Conservation Area was originally designated in 1973 and covers two distinct areas of the village. Of the 360 dwellings in Beyton, 20 are Grade II listed, with a cluster of these around The Green which are listed as being of special architectural and historic interest. All Saints Church is Grade II* listed, with the Norman doorway and round tower dating from the 13th Century. None of the designated heritage assets within Beyton Parish are listed on the Historic England 'Heritage at Risk' Register.

2.24 The Suffolk Historic Environment Record database lists 25 sites of archaeological interest in the parish.

Landscape

2.25 Beyton covers an area of 264 hectares and is set within a flat landscape of light loams and sandy soils with a network of tree belts and coverts including large areas of enclosed heathland and 18th, 19th and 20th century landscape parks. Beyton sits on the border of areas described as Ancient Rolling Farmlands and Plateau Estate Farmlands in the Suffolk Landscape Character Appraisal. There are areas in the south and west of the parish that are designated as a Special Landscape Area (SLA) in the adopted Mid Suffolk Local Plan due to its high local landscape value. The SLA in Beyton is part of a larger area that extends to the south and east into Hessett and Drinkstone Parishes.

2.26 There are no National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) within close proximity of the parish. The nearest AONB is Dedham Vale which is located over 20km away.

2.27 There are a number of features that make an important contribution to the landscape setting of Beyton. These include small meadows and patches of woodland which are linked by hedgerows and, whilst small, are important for increasing the habitat diversity in an otherwise open farmland landscape. Central to the parish is the village green and the stream that runs through both the parish and the village green from south to north bringing a variety of plant and animal wildlife to the landscape. However, the A14 runs on a large embankment and has considerable amenity impacts on the parish.

SEA Screening

2.28 An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the Regulation 14 Pre-Submission version of the Beyton Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA in accordance with the SEA Regulations.

2.29 **Figure 2.1** overleaf presents the flow diagram entitled 'Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes' which is taken from the Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive³, published in September 2005. This is a useful guide when considering whether a plan should be subject to SEA (The Practical Guide has been superseded by the National Planning Practice Guidance; however, it still provides a useful and relevant guide to the process to use in making SEA screening decisions).

³https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf

Figure 2.1 Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

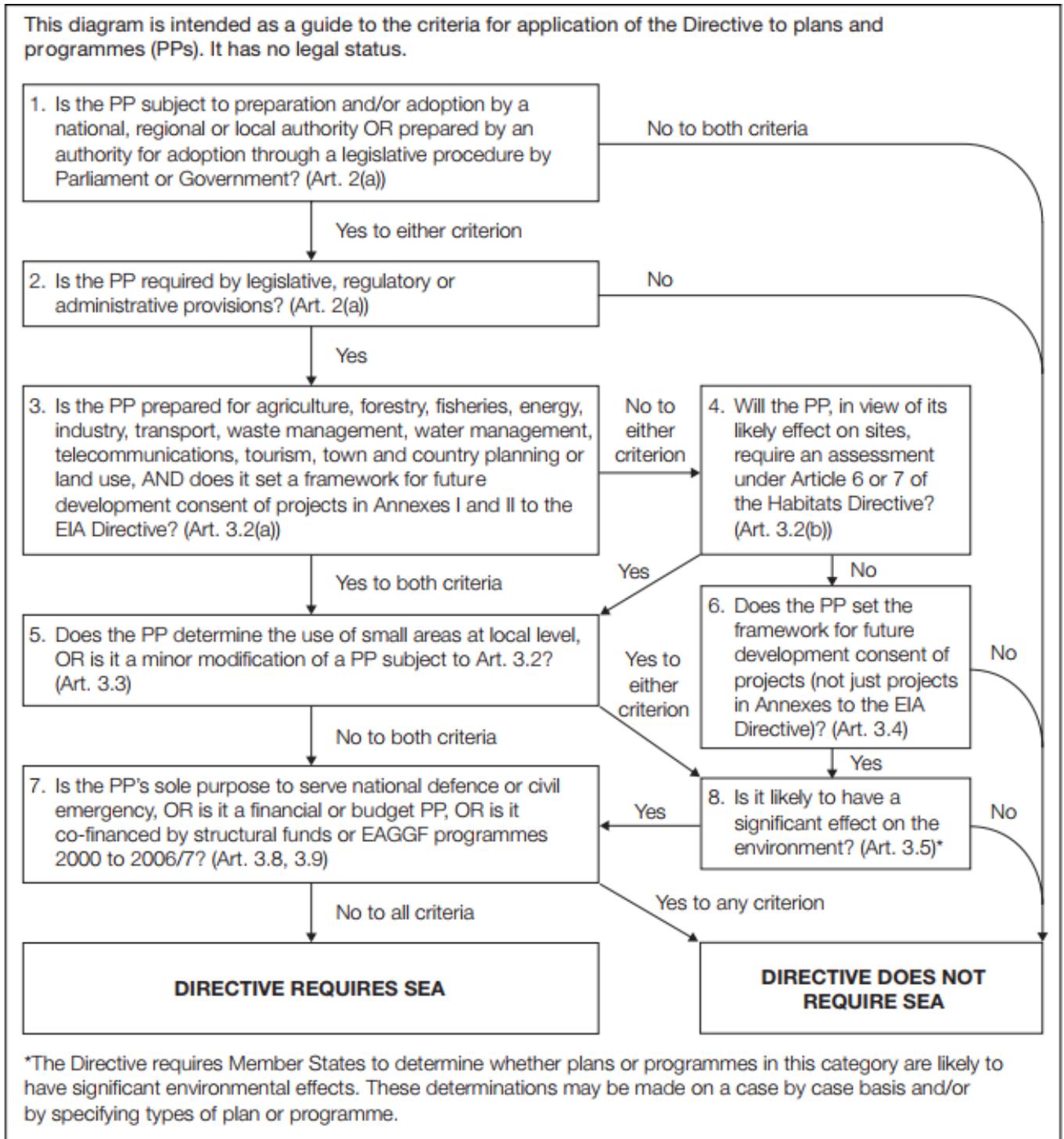


Table 2.1: Application of SEA Directive to the Beyton Neighbourhood Plan

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	The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and will be adopted ('made') by the Local Authority (Mid Suffolk District Council) as part of the statutory development plan. Move to Q2.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	No	The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. However, there is no requirement to produce a Neighbourhood Plan; it is an optional plan. Once made it will become part of the statutory development plan. Therefore, it should continue to be screened. Move to Q3.
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 and No	The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared for town and country planning and land use, but it does not set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive. Move to Q4.
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))	Uncertain	HRA screening of the Neighbourhood Plan is being undertaken separately on behalf of Mid Suffolk District Council and the outcome of that work is unknown at the time of writing. Therefore, it is necessary at this stage to consider both scenarios under Q4. Yes: Move to Q5. No: Move to Q6.
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)	Yes and No	The Neighbourhood Plan allocates three small-scale sites for housing development, only one of which already has planning permission. It is not a minor modification of a PP. Move to Q8.
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)	Yes	The Neighbourhood Plan allocates three sites for housing development (only one of which already has planning permission), setting the framework for future development consent. The Neighbourhood Plan also provides a framework for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes on rural exception sites outside of the Settlement Boundary where certain criteria are met, although it does not allocate sites for this purpose. Move to Q8.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	Yes	See Table 2.2. SEA IS REQUIRED.

2.30 Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations sets out the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects. These are listed in **Table 2.2** below along with comments on the extent to which the Beyton Neighbourhood Plan meets these criteria.

Table 2.2: Likely Significant Effects

SEA Requirement	Comments
The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:	
1.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>Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the statutory development plan and will guide the delivery of development in Beyton Parish, including in terms of design. The Neighbourhood Plan allocates three sites for development which are expected to accommodate around 32 dwellings, with a total of around 43 to be provided once existing permissions and windfall sites are taken into account. The Neighbourhood Plan also provides a framework for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes on rural exception sites outside of the Settlement Boundary where certain criteria are met, although it does not allocate sites for this purpose.</p> <p>The adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008, review 2012) identifies Beyton as a Secondary Village in Policy CS1 – Settlement Hierarchy. This policy seeks to direct development to towns and key service centres but also with some provision for meeting local housing needs in primary and secondary villages. The Core Strategy does not identify a specific housing delivery target for Secondary Villages over the Plan period to 2025.</p> <p>The emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan identifies Beyton as a Hinterland Village. While the new Local Plan is unlikely to be adopted until later in 2021, it has been taken into consideration in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is noted that the Regulation 19 (Pre-Submission) version of the Joint Local Plan makes provision for 10,165 new homes across Mid Suffolk between 2018 and 2037 and proposes that 10% of these will be in the Hinterland Villages. For Beyton specifically, the emerging Joint Local Plan identifies a minimum figure of 30 new homes.</p>
2.the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The Neighbourhood Plan has to be in general conformity with the local strategic framework (i.e. the adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008, review 2012) and the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan). The Neighbourhood Plan must also have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework. The Neighbourhood Plan does not have influence over other plans. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory development plan for Beyton Parish and will be used in conjunction with the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (once adopted) to determine planning applications.
3. the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,	One of the Basic Conditions which the Neighbourhood Plan must meet is to contribute to sustainable development.
4. environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,	Baseline information relating to Beyton Parish was described earlier in this chapter. Key issues of relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan are the presence of high-quality agricultural land in the parish, the presence of land within Flood Zone 3, the presence of designated heritage assets including a Conservation Area and a number of listed buildings, and the presence of a Special Landscape Area in the parish.
5. 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).	N/A
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:	
6. the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,	The Neighbourhood Plan allocates three sites for housing development, two of which do not yet have planning permission. The third site, land allocated at the Former Nursery Tostock Road, has already received planning consent for 10 houses. The Beyton

SEA Requirement	Comments
	Neighbourhood Plan covers the period 2018-2037 and the effects of housing development that occurs during the plan period are expected to be long-term and permanent. Any effects associated specifically with construction are likely to be short-term and temporary.
7. the cumulative nature of the effects,	<p>Cumulative effects could result from the Neighbourhood Plan in combination with development that takes place in the surrounding towns and villages – albeit the parish of Beyton is rural and the scale of development proposed is relatively small.</p> <p>As the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan is still in its development, it is not yet possible to assess with certainty the amount and location of development that may result from the Plan within and close to Beyton Parish. It is noted that the Beyton Neighbourhood Plan proposes allocating two new sites for housing development, in addition to land allocated at the Former Nursery Tostock Road where 10 houses already have planning consent. It does not propose allocating the site that is currently included in the Regulation 19 Joint Local Plan (LS01 on Church Road). If that site were to come forward as well as the sites allocated in the Local Plan there could be cumulative effects on the parish although if the housing needs of Beyton are met through the Neighbourhood Plan, the Local Plan allocation may not be made in the final version.</p> <p>The Adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008) identifies Beyton as a 'secondary village' in the settlement hierarchy, with the expectation that new development should meet local needs only.</p>
8. the transboundary nature of the effects,	The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on Beyton Parish only. Transboundary effects under the SEA Regulations refers transboundary effects on other EU Member States; therefore, they are not relevant to this Neighbourhood Plan.
9. the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),	There are no anticipated risks to human health or the environment from the Neighbourhood Plan.
10. the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),	The Neighbourhood Plan covers all of Beyton Parish. According to the Government's most recent population estimates (2019) the population of the Parish was 718.
11. the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, ■ exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, ■ intensive land-use, 	The majority of the built-up areas of the village in the north and south of Beyton are designated as a Conservation Area and there are numerous listed buildings both within and outside of that part of the parish. There is also an area of high quality (Grade 2) agricultural land in the north and south of the parish and the presence of land within Flood Zone 3 associated with the stream which runs from south to north through the centre of Beyton.
12. the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	The parish does not lie within or near to an AONB or National Park. There are two areas within the parish that are identified by Mid Suffolk District Council as being within a Special Landscape Area (SLA) due to their high landscape value.

effects when assessed against the topics listed in the SEA Regulations.

SEA Screening Conclusion

2.31 A screening assessment has been undertaken by applying the criteria from the SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations to determine whether or not the Beyton Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental

2.32 The Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision, objectives and planning policies to shape development in the parish up to 2037. It allocates two sites for residential development that do not already have planning permission, in addition to the 10 homes on the site allocated at the Former Nursery, Tostock Road where planning permission has already been granted.

The residential development allocated through the Neighbourhood Plan could have a range of environmental effects during the construction period and afterwards, in particular in relation to additional traffic generation and demand for water treatment.

2.33 One of the housing allocations (Land Opposite the Bear Public House, Tostock Road) in the Beyton Neighbourhood Plan lies within a Conservation Area and is within close proximity of several listed buildings as well as being within close proximity of Flood Zone 3. Additionally, the site allocated at the Former Nursery, Tostock Road is also located within close proximity of the Beyton Conservation Area. The presence of high-quality agricultural land within the parish and the Special Landscape Area (SLA) that extends to the south and west add to its sensitivity. There are policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and in the adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy that may provide mitigation, and mitigation may also be provided by the policies in the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan, although it is noted that, given its current stage of development, emerging policies may change.

2.34 However, given the sensitivity of the areas in which the allocated sites are located, **it is considered that the Beyton Neighbourhood Plan has the potential to have significant environmental effects and that SEA is therefore required.**

Next Steps

2.35 This SEA screening opinion will be sent to the three statutory consultees (Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency) and will be reviewed as appropriate in light of any comments received.