

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Hoxne Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report

June 2022

Quality information

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Table of Contents

Non-Technical Summary (NTS)	i-vi
1. Introduction	1
2. What is the plan seeking to achieve?	2
3. What is the scope of the SEA?	4
Part 1: What has plan-making/ SEA involved to this point?	6
4. Introduction (to Part 1)	7
5. Establishing reasonable alternatives	8
6. Appraising reasonable alternatives	15
7. Developing the preferred approach	21
Part 2: What are the SEA findings at this stage?	22
8. Introduction (to Part 2)	23
9. Appraisal of the HNP	25
10. Conclusions and recommendations	35
Part 3: What are the next steps?	36
11. Next steps and monitoring	37
Appendices	38
Appendix A Regulatory requirements	39
Appendix B Scoping Information	43

Non-Technical Summary (NTS)

Introduction

AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Hoxne Neighbourhood Plan (HNP). The HNP is being prepared under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and in the context of the adopted Mid Suffolk Local Plan Core Strategy (1998) and the emerging Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan. Once 'made' the HNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications, as part of the Mid Suffolk local development framework.

SEA is a required process for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects.¹ This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) provides a summary for the full Environmental Report for the HNP. It is published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).

Structure of the Environmental Report/ this NTS

Structure of the Environmental Report/ this NTS

SEA reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:

- 1) What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
 - including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.
- 2) What are the SEA findings at this stage?
 - i.e., in relation to the draft plan.
- 3) What happens next?

Each of these questions is answered in turn within a discrete 'part' of the Environmental Report and summarised within this NTS. However, firstly there is a need to set the scene further by answering the questions 'What is the Plan seeking to achieve?' and 'What's the scope of the SEA?'.

What is the Plan seeking to achieve?

The following objectives have been established in the development of the HNP:

- a) *Retain and protect the heritage and historic character of the village.*
- b) *Maintain and improve its green spaces and surrounding landscape.*
- c) *Support local services which underpin the cohesion of the community.*
- d) *Create a safe environment with traffic managed.*

¹ Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: A) an environmental report; or, B) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a 'screening' process. Whilst no initial screening was undertaken, the Parish and District agreed a high likely requirement for SEA and the initial steps of the SEA process involved obtaining views from consultees on both the need for SEA alongside the suggested scope of the SEA.

- e) *Support small scale, high quality, new housing development suitable for younger households and older people.*
- f) *Support small-scale high-quality business development appropriate to the village.*

What is the scope of the SEA?

The scope of the SEA is reflected in a list of themes, objectives, and assessment questions, which, taken together indicate the parameters of the SEA and provide a methodological 'framework' for assessment. A summary framework is presented below.

SEA theme	SEA objective
Air Quality	Improve air quality in the Hoxne Neighbourhood area.
Biodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity sites and features, by avoiding impacts on regionally and locally designated sites, and delivering demonstrable biodiversity net gains.
Climate change (including flood risk)	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Plan Area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.
Landscape	To protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.
Historic environment	To protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the Hoxne Neighbourhood Plan area.
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land. Protect and enhance water quality in addition to the use and sustainable management of water resources.
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the Parish is aligned with the needs of all residents and capacity of the settlement and social infrastructure, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

Plan-making/ SEA up to this point

An important element of the required SEA process involves assessing 'reasonable alternatives' in time to inform development of the draft proposals, and then publishing information on reasonable alternatives for consultation alongside the draft proposals. As such, Part 1 of the Environmental Report explains how work was undertaken to develop and assess a 'reasonable' range of alternative approaches for the HNP.

Specifically, Part 1 of the report –

1. Explains the process of establishing the reasonable alternatives.
2. Presents the outcomes of assessing the reasonable alternatives; and
3. Explains reasons for developing a preferred option, considering the assessment.

Establishing the alternatives

The Environmental Report explains how reasonable alternatives were established subsequent to process of considering how much growth, and where growth should be located.

This work identified three site options with the potential to deliver growth within Hoxne (emboldened in the list below). These options as listed below are depicted in **Figure 5.1** of the Environmental Report, and form the alternative options for appraisal;

- **Option 1:** SS0728 Land to the south of Denham Road
- **Option 2:** SS0045 Land west of Denham Low Road
- **Option 3:** Both SS0728 and SS0045

Assessing the alternatives

The full assessment of the options for housing are presented in Part 1 of the Environmental Report. The summary findings are presented below.

SEA theme		Option 1 (SS0728 Land south of Denham Rd)	Option 2 (SS0045 Land west of Denham Low Rd)	Option 3 (Both SS0728 and SS0045)
Air Quality	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	1	1	2
Biodiversity	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	=	=	=
Climate change	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	=	=	=
Landscape	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	1	2	2
Historic environment	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	2
Land, soil, and water resources	Likely significant effect?	Yes - positive	No	No
	Rank	1	2	2
Community wellbeing	Likely significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
	Rank	2	3	1
Transportation	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	1	1	2

Overall, no significant negative effects are anticipated in development under any of the options. Alternatively, by addressing housing needs over the Plan period all options have the potential to deliver significant positive effects in relation to the community wellbeing theme.

A single brownfield redevelopment site strategy at Option 1 is considered best performing in relation to the land, soil and water resources theme. Minor negative effects are associated with greenfield development under Options 2 and 3 which are ranked less favourably accordingly. For the same reasons, the landscape theme also ranks Option 1 slightly higher than Option 2 and 3.

Regarding the historic environment theme, minor negative effects are anticipated at this stage under both options as it is considered likely that significant effects can be avoided through appropriate on-site mitigation. Option 2, by avoiding development

so close to assets associated with Shreeves Farm, is considered to rank slightly more preferably to Options 1 and 3 in relation to this SEA theme.

By delivering slightly fewer homes overall, Options 1 and 2 are marginally preferred to Option 3 in the transportation theme. Although, the scale of growth proposed under all three options is not considered likely to lead to significant negative effects, and likely residual minor negative effects are anticipated.

The scale of development is also considered unlikely to lead to any significant deviations from the baseline in relation to climate change (as a global issue) and no significant biodiversity constraints are present in the Parish.

Developing the preferred approach

In response to the appraisal of alternatives, the Parish Council have identified the preferred approach of Option 3, to allocate both sites SS0728 and SS0045. No potential significant negative effects are associated with this option, which will deliver more affordable homes for the Parish overall, and better meet the need for affordable homes identified through the evidence base.

Assessment findings at this stage

Part 2 of the Environmental Report presents an assessment of the HNP as a whole. Assessment findings are presented as a series of narratives under the 'SEA framework' theme headings. The following overall conclusions are reached:

The appraisal considers that the only significant effects likely to arise in implementation of the HNP are positive in nature and relate to the SEA theme of community wellbeing. This reflects the main plan objective to coordinate the anticipated future growth in the neighbourhood area and maximise the potential benefits it can bring for both existing and future residents. This includes by delivering development that targets locally identified housing needs (such as providing homes suitable for older people), delivering new school expansion space and new green spaces, and improving access and car parking.

Some greenfield loss is anticipated, and minor negative effects are expected in this respect in relation to both the landscape and land, soil, and water resources SEA themes. However, the policy framework and supporting evidence base (include design guide and masterplanning) provide mitigation that is likely to minimise impacts and avoid significant effects arising.

There are notably heritage constraints associated with both the housing and employment development sites. However, the Steering Group have developed the policy framework in consultation with Historic England with the intention of ensuring no significant residual impacts for the historic environment.

Residual neutral effects are concluded in relation to the SEA themes of biodiversity, and climate change, reflecting the Plan's avoidance and mitigation measures which should ensure that new development integrates without causing significant deviations from the baseline situation. Although all allocated sites are a substantial distance from Hoxne Brick Pit SSSI, a degree of uncertainty is noted in relation to biodiversity, recognising the **recommendation** to consult with Natural England with regards to potential increases in vehicle use along Eye Road.

Finally, in recognising that growth in the Plan area is likely to occur with or without the HNP, inevitable increases in vehicle use in the neighbourhood area are anticipated as part of the future baseline. The policy provisions of the HNP provide support in minimising the impacts of growth and enhancing safety, parking, and active travel opportunities are considered for likely minor long-term positive effects. However, the site allocations are likely to add more cars to the road which is deemed likely to have a minor indirect negative effect on air quality at the Breckland AQMA.

Next steps

Following Regulation 14 consultation and consideration of responses, the HNP and SEA Environmental Report will be finalised for submission.

Following submission, the Plan and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation, and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

If the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the Neighbourhood Plan will then be subject to a referendum, organised by Mid Suffolk District Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the HNP will become part of the Development Plan for Mid Suffolk, covering the defined Neighbourhood Area.

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Hoxne Neighbourhood Plan (HNP). The HNP is being prepared under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and in the context of the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (JLP) as well as the adopted Core Strategy for Mid Suffolk (Focused Review, 2012) and saved plan policies.
- 1.2 Once 'made' the HNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications in the neighbourhood area, as part of the Mid Suffolk local development framework.
- 1.3 SEA is a required process for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative effects and maximising potential positive effects.²

SEA explained

- 1.4 It is a requirement that the SEA process is undertaken in-line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The Regulations stipulate that a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that "*identifies, describes, and evaluates*" the likely significant effects of implementing "*the plan, and reasonable alternatives*".³ The report must then be considered when finalising the plan.
- 1.5 More specifically, the report can be structured to address requirements by answering the following three questions:
 1. What has plan-making/ SEA involved up to this point? (Including in relation to reasonable alternatives)
 2. What are the SEA findings at this stage? (I.e., in relation to the current draft plan)
 3. What happens next?

This Environmental Report

- 1.6 This report is the Environmental Report for the HNP. It is published alongside the 'submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended). The report answers the three questions outlined above in turn, as discrete 'parts' of the report. However, before answering these questions, two further introductory sections are presented to further set the scene (Chapters 2 and 3).

² Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: A) an Environmental Report, or B) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a 'screening' process. The HNP was officially 'screened in' by Mid Suffolk Council as requiring SEA in February 2022.

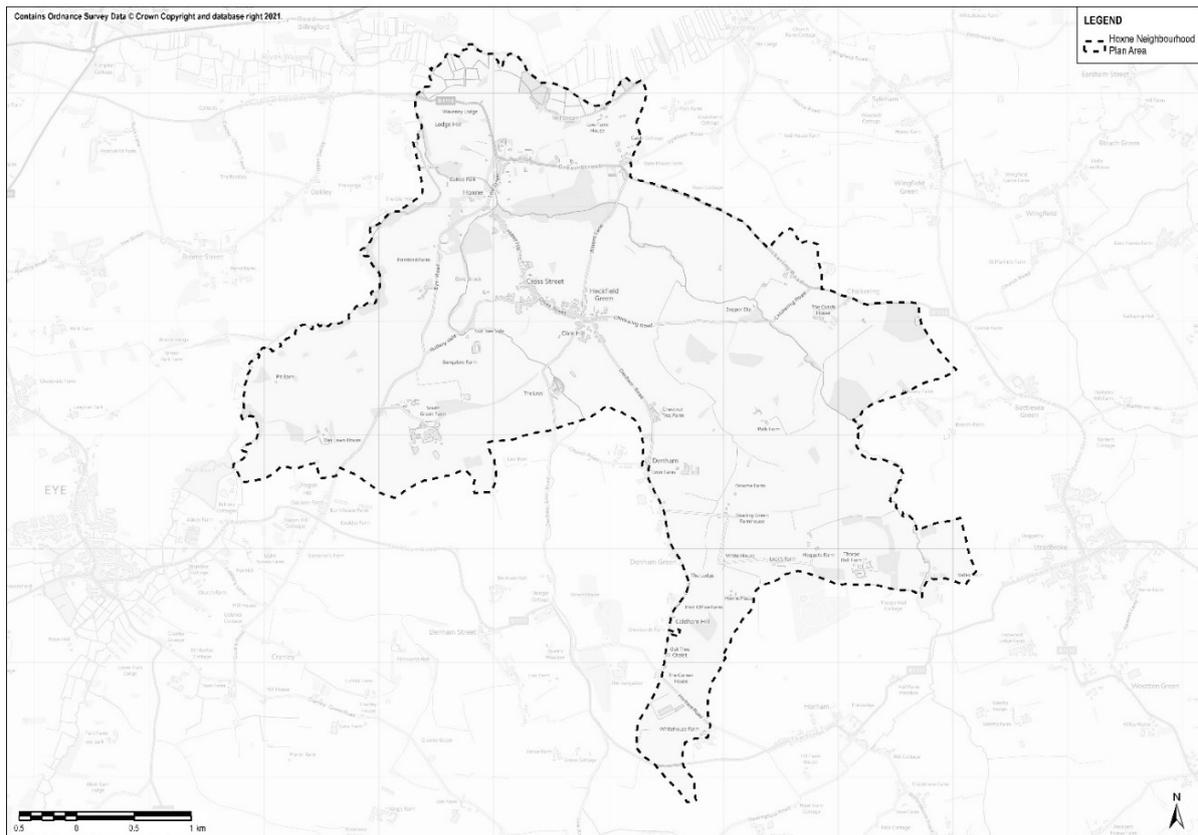
³ Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

2. What is the plan seeking to achieve?

Introduction

2.1 This section is an introductory chapter to consider the context provided by both Mid Suffolk District Council's local development framework, and the vision and objectives of the HNP. The designated neighbourhood area lies within Mid Suffolk, not far from the town of Eye, and is presented in **Figure 2.1**.

Figure 2.1: Hoxne Neighbourhood Area



Local development framework for Mid Suffolk

2.2 The current adopted documents which form the local development framework for Mid Suffolk consists of:

- The Core Strategy (2008) and its Focused Review Document (2012).
- An Area Action Plan for Stowmarket (2013).
- Saved Policies from the 1998 Mid Suffolk Local Plan and the 2006 Local Plan First Alteration; and
- Supplementary Documents, Guidance, and Briefs, including location specific development briefs for Ashes Farm, Chilton Leys, Mill Lane, Edgecomb Park, and the Land South of Union Road, and a Cycling Strategy for Mid Suffolk.

2.3 The local development framework is in the process of being updated through the introduction of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (JLP). The

JLP was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in March 2021.

- 2.4 Policy SP03 (Settlement Hierarchy) of the submitted JLP categorises Hoxne as a 'hinterland village' within the settlement hierarchy. Policy SP04 (Housing Spatial Distribution) identifies a total of 9% growth in hinterland villages over the plan period 2018-2037. Table 04 identifies that for Hoxne this equates to a total of 43 new homes, 13 of which had already received planning permission as of April 2018, leaving a residual need to identify land for a further 30 homes. Policy LS01 of the submitted JLP allocates the 'land south of Denham Road' for 30 homes to meet the identified residual need.
- 2.5 However, in December 2021, correspondence between Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and the Inspectors (document G09⁴ and G10⁵) indicate that the emerging JLP will be divided into two parts, in which the existing housing allocation policies (including Policy LS01) would be deleted from the emerging plan and the settlement boundaries in the adopted 1998 Mid Suffolk Local Plan and 2008 Core Strategy (as opposed to the proposed) policies map would be retained. A review of the settlement hierarchy is also likely to be undertaken.
- 2.6 Certain spatial elements of the submitted plan are considered unsound at present and would require further review with a more up-to-date and robust evidence base. They are thus likely to be considered in the preparation and adoption of a 'Part 2' JLP which is expected to start as soon as possible after the adoption of 'Part 1' of the emerging JLP. This removes the growth target provided for Hoxne, thereby meaning that the previously identified need for an additional 43 homes in the period up to 2037 is no longer a material consideration.

Objectives of the HNP

- 2.7 The following six objectives have been established in the development of the HNP:
- *“Retain and protect the heritage and historic character of the village.*
 - *Maintain and improve its green spaces and surrounding landscape.*
 - *Support local services which underpin the cohesion of the community.*
 - *Create a safe environment with traffic managed.*
 - *Support small-scale, high-quality, new housing development suitable for younger households and older people; and*
 - *Support small-scale, high-quality business development appropriate to the village.”*

⁴ Available at: <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/JLPExamination/CoreDocLibrary/G-ExaminationCorrespondence/G09-Letter-Inspectors-to-BMSDC.pdf>

⁵ Available at: <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/JLPExamination/CoreDocLibrary/G-ExaminationCorrespondence/G10-Letter-BMSDC-to-Inspectors.pdf>

3. What is the scope of the SEA?

Introduction

- 3.1 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA, i.e., the sustainability themes and objectives that should be a focus of the assessment of the Plan and reasonable alternatives.
- 3.2 The SEA Scoping Report (February 2022) sets out the policy context and baseline information that has informed the development of key issues and the identification of appropriate sustainability objectives. The SEA Scoping Report is submitted separately to the SEA Environmental Report.

Consultation

- 3.3 The SEA Regulations require that “*when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies*”. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England.⁶
- 3.4 As such, these authorities were consulted over the period Tuesday 15th March to Tuesday 19th April 2022. Responses were received from Natural England and Historic England and neither authority had specific comments to make but included general information and supporting documents. No response was received from the Environment Agency. Scoping consultation responses are detailed in **Appendix B**.

The SEA framework

- 3.5 The SEA framework presents a list of themes, objectives, and assessment questions that together comprise a framework to guide the appraisal. A summary framework of the themes and objectives is provided in **Table 3.1**, with the full framework presented in **Appendix B**.

⁶ These consultation bodies were selected “*by reason of their specific environmental responsibility, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes*” (SEA Directive, Article 6(3))

Table 3-1: Summary SEA framework

SEA theme	SEA objective
Air Quality	Improve air quality in the Hoxne Neighbourhood area.
Biodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity sites and features, by avoiding impacts on regionally and locally designated sites, and delivering demonstrable biodiversity net gains.
Climate change	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area.
	Support the resilience of the neighbourhood area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.
Landscape	To protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.
Historic environment	To protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the Hoxne neighbourhood area.
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land.
	Protect and enhance water quality and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood plan area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

Part 1: What has plan-making/ SEA involved to this point?

4. Introduction (to Part 1)

Overview

- 4.1 Whilst work on the HNP has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of work to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives.
- 4.2 More specifically, this part of the report presents the information on the consideration given to reasonable alternative approached to addressing a particular issue that is of central importance to the Plan, namely the allocation of land for housing and employment development (or alternative sites).

Why focus on sites?

- 4.3 The decision was taken to develop reasonable alternative in relation to the matter of allocating land for development, given the following considerations:
 - The core plan objective to understand housing and employment needs and allocate sites for development.
 - Housing and employment growth is known to be a matter of key interest amongst residents and other stakeholders; and
 - The delivery of new homes and employment land is most likely to have a significant effect compared to other proposals in the Plan. National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.

Structure of this part of the report

Part 1 of the Environmental Report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 5** explains the process of establishing reasonable alternatives.
- **Chapter 6** presents the outcomes of appraising the reasonable alternatives; and
- **Chapter 7** explains the Steering Group's reasons for selecting the preferred approach considering the alternatives.

5. Establishing reasonable alternatives

Introduction

- 5.1 The aim of this chapter is to explain the process that led to the establishment of alternative sites and thereby present “*an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with*”.⁷
- 5.2 Specifically, there is a need to explain the strategic parameters that have a bearing on the establishment of options (in relation to the level and distribution of growth) and the work that has been undertaken to date to examine site options (i.e., sites potentially in contention for allocation in the HNP). These parameters are then drawn together in order to arrive at ‘reasonable alternatives’.

How much growth?

- 5.3 Chapter 2 serves to highlight that the housing target for Hoxne is not set (adopted) yet, and subject to further development as part of the JLP (Part 2).
- 5.4 To reiterate, the submitted JLP proposed 9% growth across all hinterland villages, which equates to 43 homes in Hoxne over the period up to 2037. Whilst this target is no longer a material consideration, on account of the emerging plan removing housing allocation policies, it may be useful as a guide for the degree to which spatial development can be expected in the Parish. As of April 2018, 13 homes had received planning permission and will count towards this target figure, leaving a residual need to identify land for a further 30 homes. No additional permissions are identified to date which would affect that target figure further.
- 5.5 Also of note, and providing up-to-date evidence, a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) has been developed alongside the HNP which provides further evidence in relation to affordable housing needs. The HNA indicates a need for around 19 affordable homes over the plan period (equating to around 63% of the target housing figure).

Where could growth be located?

- 5.6 No local call for sites has been undertaken, and reliance has been placed on the call for sites undertaken by the District Councils as part of the JLP process. The JLP Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) (2020) identifies a total of nine sites in Hoxne.
- 5.7 The SHELAA discounted eight of the nine sites as follows:
- SS0043 Land south of Nuttery Vale – with poor pedestrian access to core services and facilities.
 - SS0044 Land south of Cross Street – with poor connectivity to the existing settlement.

⁷ Schedule 2(8) of the SEA Regulations

- SS0045 Land west of Denham Low Road – with poor connectivity to the existing settlement and no identified suitable access to the site.
 - SS0059 Land east of B1118 – with no identified suitable access, poor access to core services and facilities, and poor connectivity to the existing settlement.
 - SS0060 Land west of Whittons Lane – with poor connectivity to the existing settlement.
 - SS0565 Land south of Green Street – with poor connectivity to the existing settlement and the determination that development would not be consistent with the settlement pattern.
 - SS0730 Land to the north of Chickering Road – with poor connectivity to the existing settlement.
 - SS1236 Land west of Abbey Hill – with the site deemed to be poorly related to the existing settlement pattern.
- 5.8 As a result, the only site that the SHELAA identifies as a suitable site to deliver the residual need for 30 new homes is Site SS0728 Land to the south of Denham Road.
- 5.9 Whilst this work (as part of the JLP) has been undergoing examination, the HNP Steering Group have also assessed the sites and the HNP provides Supporting Document 3 (Site Assessment). This document identifies one additional site (Site I Land west of Abbey Hill (and south of SS1236)) to the SHELAA (considering a total of 10 sites).
- 5.10 Attention is also drawn at this stage to the core HNP objective to “*support small-scale, high-quality, new housing development suitable for younger households and older people*” and proposed HNP policy provisions to designate and protect an ‘Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity’ (ALLS) and designate Local Green Spaces. The ALLS coincides with ‘Special Landscape Areas’ identified in adopted Local Plan policies which are not proposed to be carried forward or designated through the emerging JLP. **Figure 5.1** depicts the proposed ALLS, and **Figure 5.2** identifies proposed Local Green Spaces.

Figure 5.1: HNP proposed 'Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity'

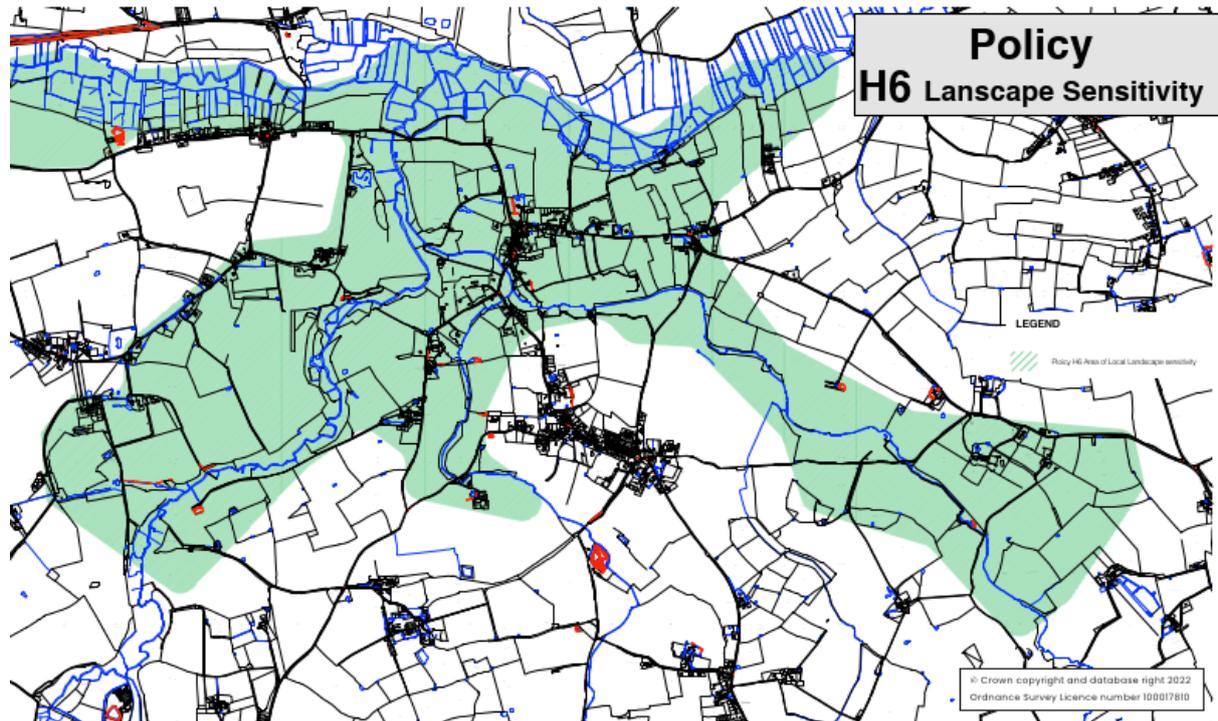
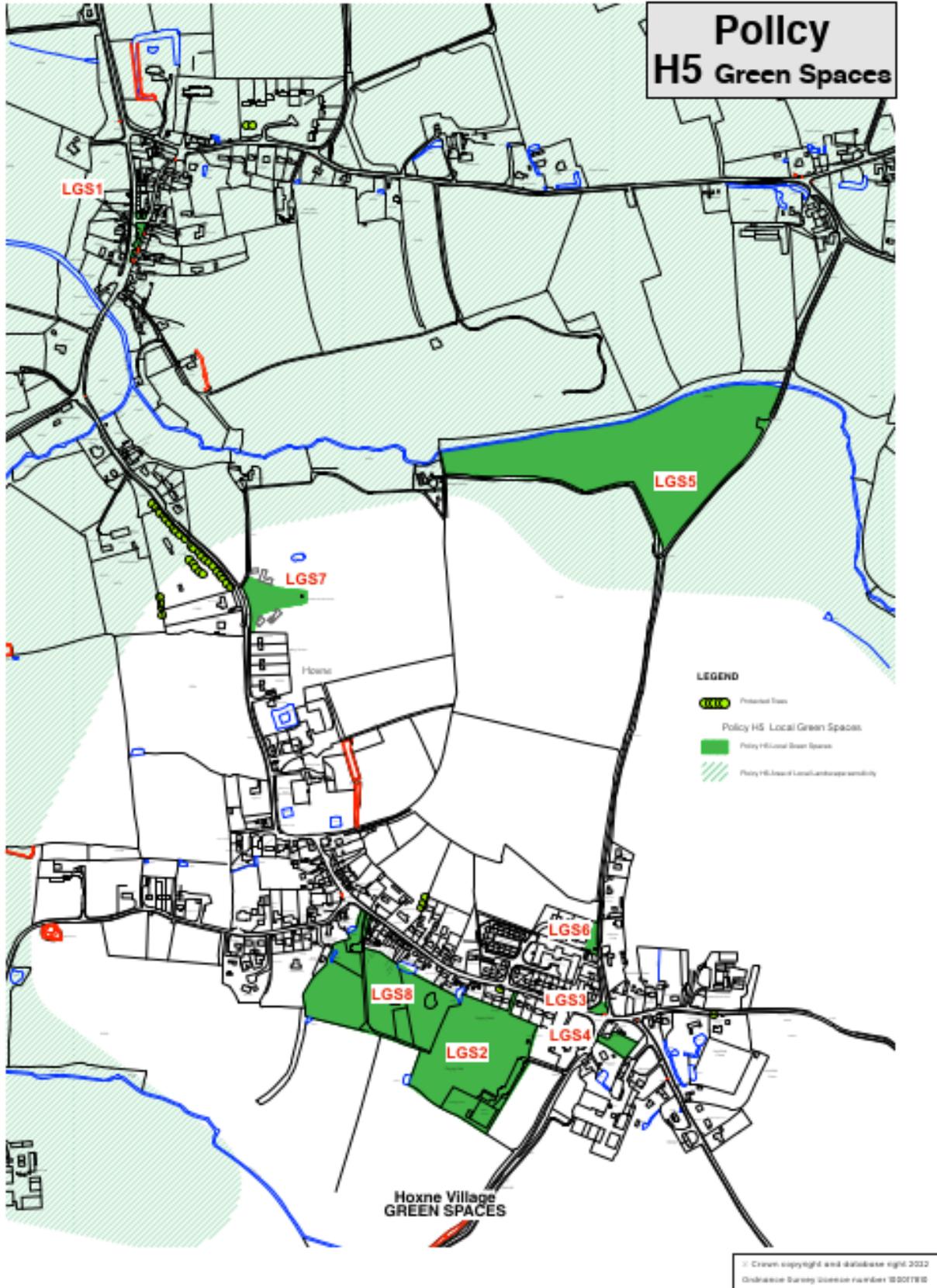


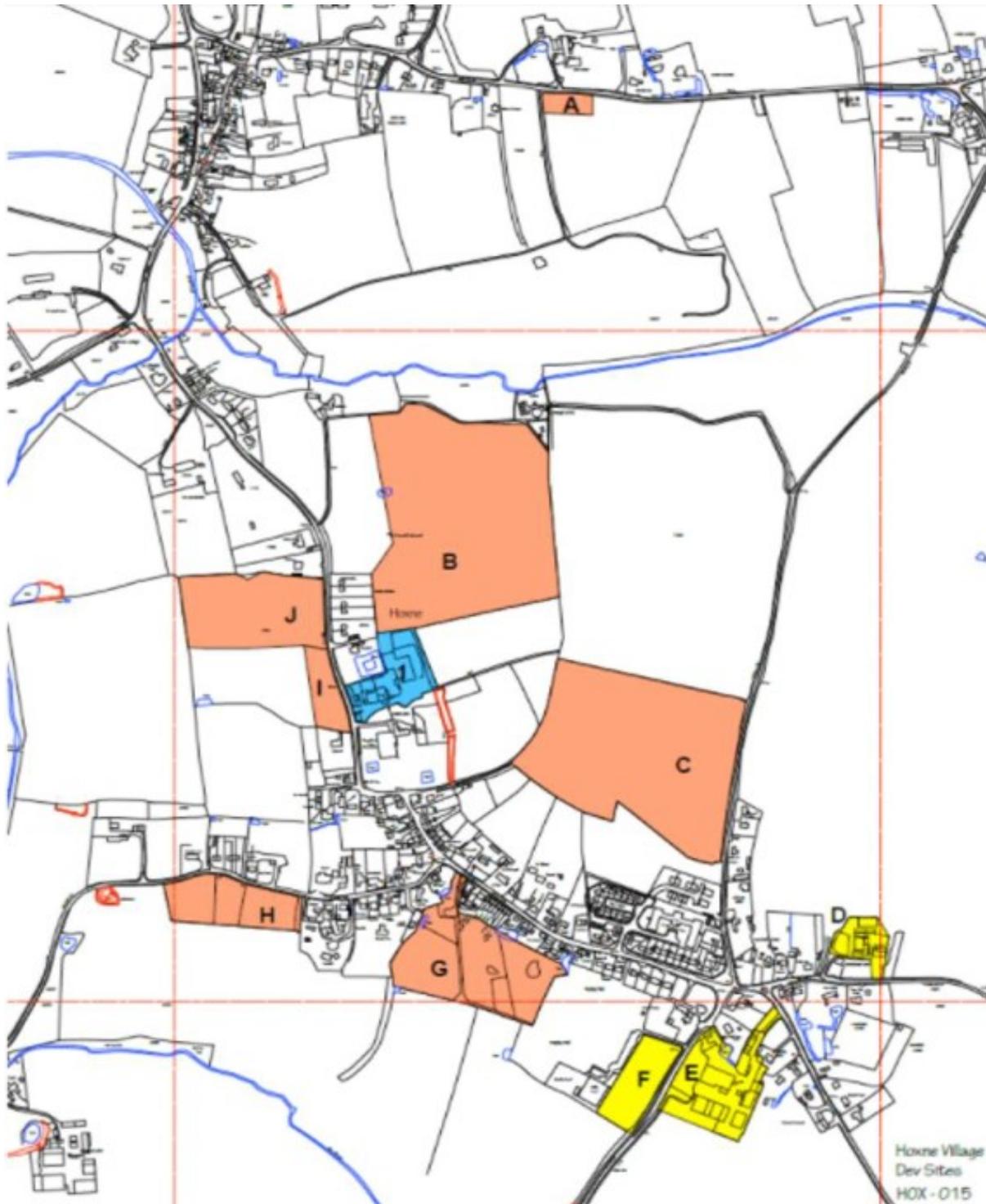
Figure 5.2: Proposed Local Green Spaces (to be designated in the HNP)



5.12 Also of note, the methodology developed by the Steering Group when assessing sites has also identified a need to “*preserve the poly focal nature of the Parish and in particular the gap between Low Street and Cross Street*”.

5.13 The HNP Site Assessment rejected seven of the ten sites assessed, see **Figure 5.3**. Notably, two of the SHELAA sites which were rejected through the JLP process are reconsidered through the HNP evidence as potential allocation sites: SS0730 and SS0045 (Sites D and F). These two sites, alongside Site SS0728 (Site E) were presented at public consultation in December 2020 as possible sites for allocation in the HNP.

Figure 5.3: HNP Site Assessment



5.14 Since this consultation, the landowner of Site SS0730 has withdrawn the site, and the site is no longer deemed to be available for development over the plan period.

Establishing alternatives

5.15 Considering the points above and in line with the objectives of the plan, namely the objectives to avoid development in the areas of highest landscape sensitivity and at identified locally valued green spaces, **Table 5.1** identifies the seven sites which are not considered 'reasonable' as alternatives and the outline reasons why.

Table 5-1: Sites not considered 'reasonable' for the purposes of SEA

Location	SHELAA reference	HNP Site Assessment reference	Justification
Land south of Green Street	SS0565	A	Too removed from the main settlement area, and within the proposed 'Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity'.
Land east of B1118	SS0059	B	A large-scale development site (against core HNP objectives) encroaching on the 'Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity' and the gap between Low Street and Cross Street. Connectivity constraints and site does not relate well with existing settlement pattern.
Land west of Whittons Lane	SS0060	C	A large-scale development site (against core HNP objectives) which does not relate well with the existing settlement pattern.
Land south of Cross Street	SS0044	G	Site is being proposed as Local Green Space in the HNP.
Land south of Nuttery Vale	SS0043	H	Access constraints likely to render small-scale development unviable.
Land west of Abbey Hill (and south of SS1236)	N/A	I	Development within the gap between Low Street and Cross Street. Availability is also unknown.
Land west of Abbey Hill	SS1236	J	Development within the gap between Low Street and Cross Street.

5.16 As a result, (and considering that Site SS0730 (HNP reference Site D) has been withdrawn) only two sites remain in contention for development in the HNP. These sites (Sites SS0728 and SS0045) form the options for appraisal.

5.17 A third option is also recognised with the potential to allocate both sites and contribute to delivering more affordable homes. This option is also taken forward to be explored through the alternatives appraisal.

5.19 The following three options are therefore identified for appraisal:

- **Option 1:** Site SS0728 (HNP reference Site E) Land to the south of Denham Road for 30 homes.
- **Option 2:** Site SS0045 (HNP reference Site F) Land west of Denham Low Road for 30 homes.
- **Option 3:** Sites SS0728 and SS0045 (Sites under Options 1 and 2) to deliver up to 60 homes.

6. Appraising reasonable alternatives

Introduction

6.1 As outlined in the previous section, three options are established for appraisal:

- **Option 1:** Site SS0728 (HNP reference Site E) Land to the south of Denham Road for 30 homes.
- **Option 2:** Site SS0045 (HNP reference Site F) Land west of Denham Low Road for 30 homes.
- **Option 3:** Sites SS0728 and SS0045 (Sites under Options 1 and 2) to deliver up to 60 homes.

Methodology

- 6.2 For each of the options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability themes and objectives identified through scoping (see **Table 3.1**) as a methodological framework. Where appropriate neutral effects, or uncertainty will also be noted.
- 6.3 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately, however, where there is a need to rely on assumptions to reach a conclusion on a 'significant effect' this is made explicit in the appraisal text.
- 6.4 Where it is not possible to predict likely significant effects based on reasonable assumptions, efforts are made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and to indicate a **rank of preference**. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in term of 'significant effects'. Numbers are used to highlight the option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective with 1 performing the best.
- 6.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking into account the criteria presented within the Regulations.⁸ So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects.

⁸ Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Appraisal findings

6.6 **Table 6.1** provides an overview of the findings of the appraisal, supported by the subsequent narrative, in relation to each of the SEA themes established through scoping.

Table 6-1: Summary of likely significant effects

SEA theme		Option 1 (SS0728 Land south of Denham Rd)	Option 2 (SS0045 Land west of Denham Low Rd)	Option 3 (Both SS0728 and SS0045)
Air quality	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	1	1	2
Biodiversity	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	=	=	=
Climate change	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	=	=	=
Landscape	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	1	2	2
Historic environment	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	2
Land, soil, and water resources	Likely significant effect?	Yes - positive	No	No
	Rank	1	2	2
Community wellbeing	Likely significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
	Rank	2	3	1
Transportation	Likely significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	1	1	2

Air quality

6.7 In relation to air quality, there are no AQMAs declared within the neighbourhood area, or significant air pollution issues associated with the main B1118 trunk road north of the Parish. However, localised congestion is a minor issue in Hoxne.

6.8 Adding additional cars to the road (due to an increase in housing) may lead to minor negative effects, including the possibility of increased congestion and reduced air quality, which in turn may have the potential to negatively affect the health of future residents.

- 6.9 Although there are no AQMAs in the neighbourhood area, residents are likely to travel through Breckland AQMA (primarily via the A143 and A1066) to access goods, services and employment opportunities, which has the potential to negatively impact this designated area.
- 6.10 However, the HNP also presents opportunities to enhance accessibility and support more local and sustainable journeys / connections around Hoxne.
- 6.11 In summary, although all three sites will bring more households (and therefore more cars) into the area, this is unlikely to lead to significant negative effects given the low-scale growth proposed in the neighbourhood area. Nevertheless, Options 1 and 2 have been ranked slightly more favourably than Option 3 due to the additional number of cars that are associated with the latter option.

Biodiversity

- 6.12 In relation to biodiversity none of the options are considered likely to lead to any significant effects given their proximity from designated sites and the scale of development being proposed under any given option. Whilst the Land south of Denham Road (Options 1 and 3) exceeds 1ha it is a largely brownfield site and part of the urbanised area. It is thus unlikely to trigger any requirement for further consultation with Natural England by way of its location within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ).
- 6.13 The Living England Habitat Map (available via Magic Map online) identifies most of the Land south of Denham Road as part of a built-up area, and most of the Land west of Denham Low Road as acid, calcareous, neutral grassland. Neither site is known to contain or intersect any Priority Habitats.
- 6.14 No significant differences are drawn between the options in relation to biodiversity, and all options are ranked on par accordingly. Notably, a premise for biodiversity net gain in development provides opportunities to enhance biodiversity in this location, though the sites are not identified as within a habitat expansion or enhancement zone as part of the National Habitat Network.

Climate change

- 6.15 In relation to climate change neither site is known to be at risk from fluvial or surface water flooding and no significant effects are anticipated under any option. Any opportunity to improve on-site drainage in development should still be explored at site level proposal stages.
- 6.16 No significant effects are anticipated in relation to climate mitigation under any option, given the scale of development being proposed. Both sites are notably close to the primary school, to facilitate active travel in this respect. Bus stops are also nearby at Cross Street to facilitate access to more sustainable forms of travel available in the settlement.
- 6.17 No significant differences are drawn between the options in relation to climate change. Whilst Option 3 will deliver more homes overall, differences between the options and likely effects are considered marginal and not significant. The options are therefore ranked broadly on par.

Landscape

- 6.18 In relation to landscape, Option 1 (and Option 3) notably utilises brownfield redevelopment opportunities arising at the Land south of Denham Road. This is likely to reduce the extent of potential landscape impacts and effects in relation to the settlement pattern. Minor positive effects are considered likely in this respect.
- 6.19 Also of note, all options avoid development within the proposed 'Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity' and avoid development in the gap between Low Street and Cross Street (thus retaining the poly focal nature and character of the settlement).
- 6.20 Development at the Land west of Denham Low Road (Options 2 and 3) will result in the loss of greenfield land at the settlement edge and minor negative effects are anticipated in this respect. However, a high-quality development scheme still has good potential to remain in-keeping with the settlement pattern.
- 6.21 Both sites under consideration sit in a slightly elevated position on land rising from Gold Brook. Development will need to consider potential views from the south/ southwest and minimise impacts in this respect. There may be opportunities to enhance or frame such views into the settlement area.
- 6.22 Overall whilst no significant effects are considered likely under any option, a potential for minor positive effects is associated with the brownfield development proposed at the Land south of Denham Road. Option 1 therefore ranks most favourably in relation this theme. Greenfield development at the Land west of Denham Low Road is considered for minor negative effects in relation to the landscape, and thus Options 2 and 3 rank slightly less preferably to Option 1.

Historic environment

- 6.23 In relation to the historic environment, notably the Land south of Denham Road lies directly adjacent to the Grade II listed barn at Shreeves Farm (90m west of the Farmhouse). The Farmhouse itself is not listed, but the farmstead is recorded on the Suffolk Historic Environment Record (HER) which the site encroaches upon. The land west of Denham Low Road also falls within its setting, on the other side of Denham Low Road. Heckfield Green (encompassing the primary school) is also recorded on the Suffolk Historic Environment Record, lying north of the sites.
- 6.24 There is existing tree screening between the sites and designated asset which is likely to reduce the extent of impacts on the setting, and Historic England have not raised any significant objections to development at the sites in consultation to date.
- 6.25 Overall, minor negative effects are anticipated at this stage under both options as it is considered likely that significant effects can be avoided through appropriate on-site mitigation. Option 2, by avoiding development so close to assets associated with Shreeves Farm, is considered to rank slightly more preferably to Options 1 and 3 in relation to this SEA theme.

Land, soil, and water resources

- 6.26 In relation to land, soil, and water resources, notably the Land south of Denham Road proposes the redevelopment of Shreeves Farm, a largely brownfield site. The efficient land use in this respect under Option 1 is noted for positive effects of significance.
- 6.27 The inclusion of greenfield land at the Land west of Denham Low Road under Options 2 and 3 is noted for minor negative effects in relation to land resources. However, the site is not known to be in active agricultural use compared to the larger stretches of arable land surrounding it in the south, and no significant effects are anticipated in relation to agricultural land resources.
- 6.28 Neither site under consideration intersects a waterbody, and no option proposes a significant level of growth that would warrant early consultation with water companies (in respect of water resources). With the level of growth being largely planned for through the JLP, communications with water companies are expected through the JLP process.
- 6.29 Overall, through a single brownfield redevelopment site strategy Option 1 is considered best performing in relation to this theme and the potential for significant positive effects is noted under this option. Minor negative effects are associated with greenfield development under Options 2 and 3 which are ranked less favourably accordingly.

Community wellbeing

- 6.30 In relation to community wellbeing, all options will deliver the forecasted number of homes required to meet needs over the plan period and significant positive effects are considered likely in this respect. By delivering more homes, Option 3 notably provides an opportunity to deliver more affordable homes and provide a greater contribution to meeting affordable housing needs identified through the supporting evidence base.
- 6.31 Development at the Land south of Denham Road (Options 1 and 3) notably provides the opportunity to deliver primary school expansion space as a significant community benefit arising from development, supporting population growth. All options will deliver homes close to the primary school and proposed Local Green Spaces, providing future residents with excellent access in this respect. The site also seeks to improve access to the playing fields (through additional footpaths, such as one linking them to the school), increase safety in the area (through reducing carriageway width outside of the school), and expand the range of facilities (the inclusion of a multi-use playing area).
- 6.32 In summary, all Options are considered likely to lead to significant positive effects, but by delivering primary school expansion space, Options 1 and 3 are ranked more highly than Option 2. The potential additional housing contributions, especially affordable housing contributions, under Option 3, makes this option rank most favourably overall.

Transportation

- 6.33 In relation to transportation, all options are likely to increase vehicles on local roads to some extent and contribute to increased congestion in this respect.

Whilst minor negative effects are anticipated under all options (given the scale of development being proposed under any option), these effects are slightly exacerbated under Option 3 when compared to Options 1 and 2.

- 6.34 All options locate growth in the southeast of the settlement area off Cross Street. Bus stops are accessible at Cross Street, not far from either option. All options further locate development close to the primary school with good potential to promote active travel in school runs and avoid further congestion around the school at peak times during the week.
- 6.35 With relatively few services and facilities located within the settlement, it is likely that future residents will continue to access a wider range of goods and services, as well as employment opportunities outside of the neighbourhood area. This does increase pressures on roads through the settlement and surrounding settlements as future residents continue to access the strategic road network. Minor negative effects are anticipated in this respect.
- 6.36 Overall, the scale of growth proposed under any option is not considered likely to lead to significant negative effects, and likely residual minor negative effects are anticipated. By delivering slightly fewer homes overall, Options 1 and 2 are marginally preferred to Option 3.

7. Developing the preferred approach

- 7.1 In response to the appraisal of alternatives, the Parish Council have identified the preferred approach of Option 3, to allocate both sites SS0728 and SS0045. No potential significant negative effects are associated with this option, which will deliver more affordable homes for the Parish overall, and better meet the need for affordable homes identified through the evidence base.

Part 2: What are the SEA findings at this stage?

8. Introduction (to Part 2)

8.1 The aim of Part 2 is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the current version of the HNP. This part of the report presents:

- An outline of the Plan contents, aims, and objectives.
- An appraisal of the Plan under the seven SEA theme headings.
- Consideration of cumulative effects; and
- The overall conclusions at this stage and recommendations for the next stage of plan-making.

HNP Policies

8.2 The DNP proposes 16 policies including two community policies and three site specific policies to guide future development in the neighbourhood area, the policy list is presented in **Table 8.1**.

Table 8-1: HNP policy list

Policy reference	Policy name
PH1	The Settlement Boundary
PH2	Heritage Assets
PH3	Design
PH4	Protecting Key Views
PH5	Local Green Spaces
PH6	Managing Change on the Landscape
PH7	Biodiversity Networks
PH8	Flood Risk
PH9	Sustainable Construction
PH10	Housing Allocations
PH11	Affordable Housing Provision
PH12	House Types and Sizes
PH13	Shreeves Farm
PH14	Land between Denham Low Road and Hoxne Playing Field
PH15	Abbey Farm Business Site
Community Policy A	Quiet Lanes
Community Policy B	Traffic management
PH16	Public Rights of Way
PH17	Infrastructure Requirements

Methodology

- 8.3 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see **Table 3.1**) as a methodological framework.
- 8.4 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the strategic nature of the policies under consideration and understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario) that is inevitably limited. Given uncertainties there is a need to make assumptions, e.g., in relation to plan implementation and aspects of the baseline that might be impacted. Assumptions are made cautiously and explained within the text (with the aim of striking a balance between comprehensiveness and conciseness). In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict 'significant effects', but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.
- 8.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e., the potential for the Neighbourhood Plan to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes, and projects. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.

9. Appraisal of the HNP

Plan contents, aims, and objectives

- 9.1 Hoxne is a village in Mid Suffolk, approximately five miles (8 km) east-southeast to the town of Diss. The parish covers the villages of Hoxne, Cross Street and Heckfield Green, with an area extending southwards to include part of the former RAF Horham Airfield.
- 9.2 The HNP seeks to identify the community's aspirations for Hoxne over the period to 2036. It recognises that Hoxne needs land allocations for at least 30 new homes over the plan period (either through the JLP or HNP) and has developed policies to guide this future development.
- 9.3 The HNP proposes development across 3 allocation sites:
- Land to the south of Denham Road for approximately 15 homes (PH13);
 - Shreeves Farm for approximately 38 homes (PH12); and
 - Abbey Farm Business Site (PH14) for continued employment uses.
- 9.4 Policy PH10 identifies that the allocations of the HNP exceed this requirement, which alongside existing commitments will deliver a total of around 66 new homes over the plan period to 2037 and includes the delivery of more affordable homes.
- 9.5 This strategy is informed by Policy PH1 which identifies a settlement boundary around the areas of Hoxne Low Street and Hoxne Cross Street/Heckfield Green and restricts development outside of this area (unless it meets national and strategic policies regarding development in the Countryside). The strategy is further supported by the emerging Joint Local Plan (JLP), whereby the Settlement Hierarchy (Policy SP03) seeks proportionate growth and ensures development integrates and connects well with existing services and facilities, to support the setting of Hinterland Villages throughout the district, such as Hoxne.
- 9.6 Wider housing policies (Policies PH3, PH11 and PH12) seek to influence the range of housing types, tenures, and sizes being delivered at allocation sites, as well as development design. Policy PH15 in the HNP also seeks to retain the existing employment area at Abbey Farm Business Site and support its ongoing vitality in future growth.
- 9.7 Shreeves Farm (Policy PH13) is the largest allocation and development at this site will also enable the expansion of and improved facilities for the primary school. The development of this site is required (through Policy PH13) to be in accordance with the Hoxne Design Codes and the indicative Masterplan.
- 9.8 The B1118 is the primary road located in the north of the village which extends eastwardly towards Chickering providing residents with access to a good range of services, facilities, and local employment opportunities. This road also stretches through the village itself where it meets Low Street and Eye Road which runs southwardly through the Hoxne Neighbourhood area. The A143 also provides Hoxne residents access to larger towns and villages throughout Suffolk such as Diss and Scole to the north-west (connected via the A1066) or

Harleston to the north-east. Policy PH16 seeks to protect the footpath network in the Parish.

- 9.9 Though the highway network provides good connections with surrounding areas; there are some areas of local congestion highlighted in the HNP, including areas surrounding St. Edmund's Primary School. Community Policies A and B (Quiet Lanes and Traffic Management), and Policy PH17 (Infrastructure Requirements) seek to reduce the impact of traffic locally, including through traffic calming measures and infrastructure enhancements.
- 9.10 The village is set within the Suffolk/Norfolk border and had distinctive views across the Waveney Valley. The north and the west Parish boundaries are defined by rivers: in the north the Waveney and in the west its tributary, the Dove. To the east the settlement runs along a ridge overlooking the Waveney Valley, whilst the main settlement areas are to be found to the south of this ridge.
- 9.11 An area along the Rivers Waveney and Dove has historically been designated as a Special Landscape Area and continues to be identified in the HNP as an Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity. As such, Policy PH6 is proposed to manage change in the landscape, and protect key characteristics, particularly within this area of higher sensitivity. This is supported by Policies PH3, PH4, and PH5 which seek to guide high-quality design in new development, protect key views and develop the network of local green spaces.
- 9.12 Linear features such as the Hoxne's rivers and streams and their associated habitats support a diverse range of ecological features which are protected under Policy PH7. This policy asserts that development proposals should demonstrate the measures proposed to achieve biodiversity net gain. This is reinforced by Policy PH9 (Sustainable Construction) encouraging current best practice in energy conservation for new developments. Development is also expected to avoid increasing flood risk within the Neighbourhood area under the provisions of Policy PH8.
- 9.13 There are a range of heritage assets and archaeological deposits in the village, largely centred around Low Street and Green Street but also including St. Peter & St. Paul's Church slightly further north. The Hoxne (Low Street) Conservation Area also encompasses much of the settlement area. The HNP policy framework places an emphasis on high-quality design which includes design that minimises impacts in relation to sensitive heritage settings. Policy PH2 (Heritage Assets) is proposed to enhance the appearance, character and setting of heritage assets and ensure new development takes account of the guidance in the Hoxne Conservation Area Appraisal (2012).

Appraisal of the HNP

Air quality

- 9.14 There are no AQMAs declared within the neighbourhood area, or significant air pollution issues associated with the main B1118 trunk road north of the Parish. However, localised congestion is a minor issue in Hoxne. Community Policy A (CPA) (Traffic Management) aims to tackle the impacts of traffic in targeted areas of Hoxne, including Hoxne Green Street, Low Street and Hoxne Cross Street/Heckfield Green.

- 9.15 Minor negative effects associated with an increase in housing in the neighbourhood area (provided through site allocations PH13 (Shreeves Farm) and PH14 (Land between Denham Low Road and Hoxne Playing Field)) include the possibility of increased congestion and reduced air quality due to the likely increase in additional cars on the road.
- 9.16 Although there are no AQMAs in the neighbourhood area, residents are likely to travel through Breckland AQMA (primarily via the A143 and A1066) to access goods, services, and employment opportunities, which has the potential to negatively impact this designated area.
- 9.17 However, the HNP also presents opportunities to enhance accessibility and support more local and sustainable journeys / connections around Hoxne. Both PH13 (Shreeves Farm) and PH14 (Land between Denham Low Road and Hoxne Playing Field) include improvements to local travel infrastructure that would encourage forms of active travel. These include a footway link and highway improvements on Denham Low Road and improved crossing facilities at the Primary School.
- 9.18 PH16 (Public Rights of Way (PRoW)) aims to preserve and further develop the existing PRoW network in the neighbourhood area. This policy may encourage more people to use forms of active transport instead of cars. Community Policy B (CPB) also aims to encourage active forms of transport through the introduction of Quiet Lanes.
- 9.19 On balance, it is considered that the HNP policy framework is likely to contribute positively towards addressing localised congestion issues, supporting active travel uptake, and connected places to encourage improvements in air quality. Whilst the site allocations may add more cars to the road, the number will likely only have a **minor indirect negative effect** on air quality at the Breckland AQMA.

Biodiversity

- 9.20 Hoxne's variety of habitats makes it highly diverse ecologically, offering a wide variation of habitats supporting protected/and or Priority species including amphibians, reptile, birds, mammals, invertebrates in addition to plants, which are extremely vulnerable to new development. To maintain and improve the condition of biodiversity in the future, it will be important to not only protect and enhance priority habitats but maintain the connections between them.
- 9.21 Growth in the neighbourhood area is immediately constrained by the proximity of the nationally designated site, Hoxne Brick Pit SSSI. This world-famous geological site is located to the northwest of the Hoxne neighbourhood area. Although there are no further designated SSSIs within the Hoxne Neighbourhood area, the Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) of Wortham Ling SSSI stretch across the western boundary of the Plan area (near Cookshill Wood).
- 9.22 The spatial strategy of the HNP directs most growth to the south of the settlement area (namely, PH13 – Shreeves Farm, and PH14 – Land between Denham Low Road and Hoxne Playing Field), reducing the potential for negative effects of significance in relation to Hoxne Brick Pit SSSI in the northwest of the settlement area, and Wortham Ling SSSI at its western boundary.

- 9.23 Whilst the size of the Shreeves Farm allocation exceeds one hectare, as a brownfield site and part of an urbanised area of the settlement, it is unlikely to require further consultation with Natural England. However, there is uncertainty noted in relation to the potential additional traffic generation from both sites along Eye Road which intersects the SSSI, and any potential mitigation required in this respect should be discussed with Natural England.
- 9.24 There are also six County Wildlife Sites (CWS) associated with the Hoxne Neighbourhood area. Five are located within the Parish boundary. In accordance with the Hoxne Neighbourhood Plan Landscape and Wildlife Evaluation⁹: under current planning policy there is a presumption against granting permission for development that would have an adverse impact on a CWS – a policy direction provided by the JLP.
- 9.25 Policy PH7 affirms that ecological assets should be protected, restored, and enhanced. Development proposals should demonstrate the measures proposed to achieve biodiversity net gain. Opportunities should be taken to reconnect the ecological network including:
- Linear features such as the rivers and streams and their associated habitats; hedgerows, mature trees, and ditch networks; and
 - Links between ponds, meadows, and woodlands should be created and enhanced.
- 9.26 It is considered unlikely that CWSs will be impacted by future development since they are collectively situated outside of the settlement area and do not intersect the proposed allocation sites.
- 9.27 A series of habitat network maps have been collated by Natural England to provide a baseline for habitat creation, enhancement, and restoration. They also identify a number of 'Network Enhancement Zones' that are presented on Defra's Magic Map software. Sections of the Hoxne Plan area (around Eye Road) fall within Network Enhancement Zone 2: 'land which is unlikely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat but where other types of habitat may be created'. However, the allocated sites do not intersect the enhancement or expansion zones and have low potential to support habitat enhancements in these areas given the expectation for on-site biodiversity enhancements and net gains.
- 9.28 All development proposals (with or without the HNP) are soon expected to deliver demonstrable 10% net gains in biodiversity in support of nature recovery (in line with the Environment Act 2021).
- 9.29 Overall, broadly **neutral** effects are considered likely through the effective coordination of the delivery of housing, employment, and infrastructure, largely avoiding or minimising impacts in relation to biodiversity. However, a degree of uncertainty is noted, and discussions with Natural England with regards to additional traffic generation along Eye Road (intersecting Hoxne Brick Pit SSSI) are **recommended**.

⁹ Hoxne Parish Council (2022) Landscape and Wildlife Evaluation Available at: <http://www.hoxneneighbourhoodplan.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Supporting-Document-8-Hoxne-Landscape-and-Biodiversity-Evaluation-Submission-Draft-Stage.pdf>

Climate change

- 9.30 New development in Hoxne could have the potential to increase flood risk through factors such as changing surface and ground water flows, overloading existing inputs to the drainage and wastewater networks or increasing the number of residents exposed to areas of existing flood risk. It is further recognised that climate change has the potential to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events. This has the potential to put residents, property, and development at increased risk of flood exposure.
- 9.31 The Hoxne area is partially affected by areas of high and medium fluvial and surface water flood risk, notably adjacent to the river Dove and the river Waveney. Much of the flood risk area lies to the west of the main settlement but there is flood risk where the Gold Brook and its tributary Chickering Beck merge in low-lying meadow land. This is a key area of separation between Low Street and Cross Street and PH1 seeks to restrict development in this area to preserve the original character of the Village and to avoid risks of flooding.
- 9.32 Overall, the HNP has the potential to direct growth away from all areas of current, or potentially future flood risk. In areas of surface water flood risk, development which provides improved drainage could also reduce flood risk in the long-term. In this regard, Policy PH8 is the main policy providing development guidance relating to this theme.
- 9.33 None of the allocated sites intersect an area of high fluvial flood risk area. There is some evidence of surface water flood risk further along from the Denham Low Road site but the provisions of Policy PH8 in addition to Policy P14 should ensure negative effects are avoided. Policy PH8 also suggests that a site-specific flood risk assessment may be required to demonstrate that risk will not be increased elsewhere.
- 9.34 In line with the NPPF (2021) sequential testing is likely to ensure that any additional development within the settlement area avoid areas of high flood risk, and development is likely to deliver mitigation such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Policy PH8 advises that proposals should include the use of above-ground open SuDS which may include wetland and other water features, rainwater and stormwater harvesting and recycling, and other natural drainage systems where easily accessible maintenance can be achieved.
- 9.35 Development in Hoxne should also play its part in reducing adverse effects on the environment and in particular global warming. In this regard Policy PH9 sets out provisions to guide development of the allocated sites and contribute towards sustainable construction. This includes but is not limited to, maximising the benefits of solar gain in site layouts and orientation of buildings, incorporating best practice in energy conservation through a 'fabric first' approach, and utilising heat recovery mechanical ventilation in well-sealed properties.
- 9.36 Overall, by recognising growth will occur with or without the HNP, the increase in the built footprint of the neighbourhood area and absolute emissions are not considered a consequence of the HNP. On this basis, and alongside the avoidance of significant effects in relation to flood risk, no significant deviations from the baseline are anticipated, and broadly **neutral effects** are concluded.

Landscape

- 9.37 The village of Hoxne consists of two main settlement areas: to the north Low Street and to the south Cross Street. These sit on two spurs of higher land separated by a small stream, the Gold Brook, which flows westwards between them and provides an array of locally valued views across the river. As discussed previously, the quality and character of the local landscape, the topography, and valued long-distance views are key constraints for growth and new development in Hoxne.
- 9.38 The settlement Boundary for Hoxne have been defined to recognise the separate settlements of Low Street and Cross Street and continued growth in these areas is informed by Policy PH1. This policy confirms that development outside the distinct the two boundaries will only be supported where it meets national and strategic policies regarding development in the countryside. This will help to ensure that further erosion of the gap between these two settlements is avoided, and wider landscape features and values are largely retained.
- 9.39 Hoxne's unique settlement character is also afforded a high level of protection under Policy PH6, which steers future development by highlighting the distinctive and important features within the village and protecting its valuable landscape. Policy PH3 also upholds that the rural setting of Hoxne should be reflected in appropriate levels of landscaping and boundary screening and planting.
- 9.40 Important viewpoints emerging from the evidence base have been identified and protected via Policy PH4, and a supporting document (Supporting Document 6) provides insight into their importance. Positive effects are anticipated by means of the new policy provisions seeking to retain such features in future development.
- 9.41 New development that is appropriately designed has the potential to support the area's inherent landscape character and quality. Including, for example, the regeneration and brownfield development proposed at Shreeves Farm in the west of the site (Policy PH13).
- 9.42 Whilst greenfield loss is anticipated at Denham Low Road (Policy PH14) and in the east of Shreeves Farm (Policy PH13) the site allocation policies seek to protect the setting of the area by promoting substantial planting and new green space provisions, which incorporate screening for views from the south.
- 9.43 Furthermore, development at the proposed allocation sites is expected (via the site allocation policies) to accord with the Hoxne Design Codes and indicative masterplans developed alongside the HNP.
- 9.44 Overall, the spatial strategy avoids significant impacts arising, and the policy framework provides good mitigation to reduce the impacts of development and retain key landscape features which contribute to landscape character. The proposed greenfield development and settlement expansion is considered likely to lead to residual negative effects, but these will not be significant. **Minor negative effects** are therefore concluded.

Historic environment

- 9.45 There are many important buildings in Hoxne Parish with one listed as Grade I, six listed as Grade II* and 69 listed as Grade II. Many are timber framed rendering them more vulnerable to future development.
- 9.46 The necessity to protect Hoxne's heritage is emphasised by the 'Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment' commissioned by Mid Suffolk District Council (2018). It describes Hoxne as "*a rare surviving example of a polyfocal village*" which is very vulnerable to change, and none of the designated assets within the Hoxne Neighbourhood area are known to be 'at risk' (from neglect or decay).¹⁰
- 9.47 In relation to the allocations made in the HNP, notably there is a listed barn at Shreeves Farm, the setting of which falls in the vicinity of both housing allocation sites. The site allocations stipulate that the site should be developed in accordance with the Hoxne Design Codes and indicative masterplans which seeks to minimise impacts on heritage settings. Abbey Farm Business Site is also retained for employment use, and Policy PH15 seeks to ensure that any change of use at this site fully considers potential heritage impacts arising (with a Scheduled Monument adjacent) and consults with the necessary authorities.
- 9.48 Policy PH2 (Heritage Assets) stipulates that if there is reasonable likelihood of archaeological remains being found within or adjacent to a development site, an archaeological assessment by Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service will be required. Policy PH2 also highlights the need for development proposals to demonstrate how they take account of the guidance in the Hoxne Conservation Area Appraisal (2012) and the Hoxne Neighbourhood Design Codes (2021) or any other successor documents.
- 9.49 Continued communication with Historic England has sought to ensure the policy framework mitigates any potential significant effects arising, and, as a result of this work, **residual neutral effects** are considered achievable and likely.

Land, soil, and water resources

- 9.50 Hoxne Brick Pit is listed in the Geological Conservation Review (GCR) which is produced by the UK's Joint Nature Conservation Committee and is designed to identify those sites of national and international importance. These sites display sediments, rocks, minerals, fossils, and features of the landscape that make a special contribution to an understanding and appreciation of Earth science and the geological history of Britain, which stretches back more than three billion years.
- 9.51 The spatial strategy of the HNP directs most growth to the south of the settlement area (namely, Policy PH13 – Shreeves Farm, and Policy PH14 – Land between Denham Low Road and Hoxne Playing Field), reducing the potential for negative effects of significance in relation to Hoxne Brick Pit in the northwest of the settlement area.
- 9.52 The Land at Shreeves Farm makes use of regeneration and brownfield development opportunities and performs positively in this respect. Loss of

¹⁰ Historic England (2022) Risk Register Available at: [Search the Heritage at Risk Register | Historic England](#)

greenfield land is anticipated across the wider site (in the east) as well as at the Denham Low Road site, though these areas are not known to be in active agricultural use.

- 9.53 Building construction could have an impact for soil and water runoff – potentially affecting polybrominated diphenyl ether (PBDE) release around watercourses – plan policies including Policy PH8 (Flood Risk) provides sufficient mitigation to avoid impacts on water quality in this respect and Policy PH9 (Sustainable Construction) seeks to minimise any detrimental construction impacts on buildings or the land and soil around them. The spatial strategy also avoids development within the immediate vicinity of the watercourses to further prevent such issues arising.
- 9.54 With the promoted application of SuDS (through Policy PH8 and wider strategic policies including the NPPF), no significant effects are anticipated in relation to this SEA theme. The loss of greenfield land at development sites will inevitably lead to residual **permanent minor negative effects**, however mitigation is in place to reduce the extent of these effects, including policy requirements for substantial planting and new green spaces.

Community wellbeing

- 9.55 Through consultation, the residents of Hoxne identified several green and open areas they value, including: the green adjoining the Primary School; Brakey Wood; the community orchard off Wittons Lane; the area leading up to St Edmunds monument; and Cross Street meadow. All of which are now being designated as Local Green Spaces in the HNP. Policy PH5 seeks to prevent development that would harm the open character of Local Green Space within the parish. Furthermore, growth at the allocation sites is required through the policy framework to deliver new Local Green Space. Minor positive effects are anticipated as a result of the above provisions.
- 9.56 The allocation at Shreeves Farm notably seeks to deliver expansion space for the adjoining primary school, as a key community benefit arising from the HNP and supporting future growth in the area. Future residents will also benefit from easy access the primary school from both of the proposed housing development sites, which will also contribute to reducing traffic at peak hours around the school and improving safety.
- 9.57 Policy PH16 (Public Right of Way) seeks to preserve and improve the area's public rights of way (PROW) network. This includes prohibiting development that would damage the current PROW network, unless an alternative of equivalent value is arranged. Policy PH16 also supports further developing the current PROW network by adding additional links to improve connectivity between settlements in the area.
- 9.58 Additional benefits arise from Policy PH17 (Infrastructure requirements) which seeks to improve access to the playing field with improvements to car parking and access by footpath (including one leading to the school). This includes the reinstatement of the multi-sports area in the playing field, delivered through the allocation at Land between Denham Low Road and Hoxne Playing Field. The site also seeks to improve safety in the area by reducing carriageway width outside the school.

- 9.59 Furthermore, the site-specific policies seek to provide housing compliant to policies PH11 (Affordable Housing Provision) and PH12 (House Types and Sizes), with homes suitable for older people and improved access to car parking. The Land between Denham Low Road and Hoxne Playing Field site aims to provide seven homes suitable for older people such as bungalows or adaptable and accessible homes and five affordable homes with provisions also being made for access to the playing field.
- 9.60 Considering these points, **significant positive effects** are considered a likely outcome in relation to this theme.

Transportation

- 9.61 In the absence of strategic interventions, residents are likely to continue to travel to larger settlements to access a wider range of services, facilities, and employment opportunities. In this respect, the A143 provides Hoxne residents access to larger towns and villages throughout Suffolk and beyond.
- 9.62 Though the highway network provides good connections with surrounding areas, the HNP seeks to distribute growth to accessible locations to support localised journeys where possible. Both housing allocation sites connect well with the primary school providing good opportunities to promote active travel when accessing the school and improve safety. Both allocation sites also connect well with existing bus stops at Cross Street.
- 9.63 Furthermore, the HNP identifies interventions that will be necessary to accommodate the proposed growth, through Policy PH17 Infrastructure Requirements. This includes, PH17 point a, (improvements to safety at the Denham Low Road/Cross Street Junction are desirable) and PH17 point d, (Traffic management to reduce the impact of through traffic and improve safety).
- 9.64 There are some areas of local congestion highlighted in the HNP, including areas surrounding St. Edmund's Primary School. Community Policies A and B (Quiet Lanes and Traffic Management) seek to reduce the impact of traffic locally, including through traffic calming measures and new parking provisions are proposed at the Shreeves Farm allocation to contribute to alleviating these issues. The re-development of Shreeves Farm also makes suitable provision that allow pedestrians and cyclists safe routes and easy access to the wider village.
- 9.65 Policy PH16 supports the development of the current PROW network in the area, for example, by adding new links to connect settlements in the area. Improvements such as these may lead to more people using active forms of travel, thus reducing need to use cars.
- 9.66 A lack of parking has been highlighted as a key concern for existing residents through community consultation to date. There is limited parking in the village centre, and on-street parking notably reduces pedestrian safety. This is recognised through Policy PH17, which seeks improvements to car parking. In addition, Policy PH14 Land between Denham Low Road and Hoxne Playing Field seeks to provide parking for the Playing Field and land for a multi-use games area; with Policy PH13 Design indicating that all parking should adhere to standards set out in Suffolk Guidance for Parking (2019), or any other

successor documents. Overall, with growth anticipated in the neighbourhood area with or without the HNP, increases in vehicle use on local roads are an inevitable evolution of the baseline. Despite this the settlement is relatively well connected to support future residents with opportunities for active travel and to use more sustainable modes of transport. Supported by the policies of the HNP which seek to address any localised impacts of growth and enhance safety, parking, and active travel opportunities, **minor long-term positive effects** are anticipated.

Cumulative effects

9.67 Alongside the provisions of the JLP and NPPF, the HNP seeks to support housing delivery in line with forecasted needs over the Plan period whilst avoiding significant impacts in relation to the range of SEA theme explored above. **Positive cumulative effects** are anticipated are therefore anticipated.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

- 10.1 The appraisal considers that the only significant effects likely to arise in implementation of the HNP are positive in nature and relate to the SEA theme of community wellbeing. This reflects the main plan objective to coordinate the anticipated future growth in the neighbourhood area and maximise the potential benefits it can bring for both existing and future residents. This includes by delivering development that targets locally identified housing needs (such as providing homes suitable for older people), delivering new school expansion space and new green spaces, and improving access and car parking.
- 10.2 Some greenfield loss is anticipated, and minor negative effects are expected in this respect in relation to both the landscape and land, soil, and water resources SEA themes. However, the policy framework and supporting evidence base (include design guide and masterplanning) provide mitigation that is likely to minimise impacts and avoid significant effects arising.
- 10.3 There are notably heritage constraints associated with both the housing and employment development sites. However, the Steering Group have developed the policy framework in consultation with Historic England with the intention of ensuring no significant residual impacts for the historic environment.
- 10.4 Residual neutral effects are concluded in relation to the SEA themes of biodiversity, and climate change, reflecting the Plan's avoidance and mitigation measures which should ensure that new development integrates without causing significant deviations from the baseline situation. Although all allocated sites are a substantial distance from Hoxne Brick Pit SSSI, a degree of uncertainty is noted in relation to biodiversity, recognising the **recommendation** to consult with Natural England with regards to potential increases in vehicle use along Eye Road.
- 10.5 Finally, in recognising that growth in the Plan area is likely to occur with or without the HNP, inevitable increases in vehicle use in the neighbourhood area are anticipated as part of the future baseline. The policy provisions of the HNP provide support in minimising the impacts of growth and enhancing safety, parking, and active travel opportunities are considered for likely minor long-term positive effects. However, the site allocations are likely to add more cars to the road which is deemed likely to have a minor indirect negative effect on air quality at the Breckland AQMA.

Part 3: What are the next steps?

11. Next steps and monitoring

11.1 This part of the report explains the next steps that will be taken as part of plan-making and SEA.

Plan finalisation

11.2 Following submission, the HNP and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation, and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the HNP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

11.3 If the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the Neighbourhood Plan will then be subject to a referendum, organised by Mid Suffolk District Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the HNP will become part of the Development Plan for Mid Suffolk District, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

Monitoring

11.4 The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

11.5 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by Mid Suffolk District Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the HNP that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by the District Council.

Appendices

Appendix A Regulatory requirements

As discussed in **Chapter 1**, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) explains the information that must be contained in the Environmental Report; however, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. **Table AA-1** overleaf links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst **Table AA-2** explains this interpretation. **Table AA.3** identifies how and where within the Environmental Report the regulatory requirements have/ will be met.

Table AA-1 Questions answered by this Environmental Report, in-line with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

	Questions answered	As per regulations... the Environmental Report must include...	
Introduction	What's the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes 	
	What's the SEA scope?	What's the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance
		What's the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance
		What are the key issues and objectives that should be a focus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment
Part 1	What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach) The likely significant effects associated with alternatives Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives assessment / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan 	
Part 2	What are the SEA findings at this current stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan 	
Part 3	What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A description of the monitoring measures envisaged 	

Table AA-2: Questions answered by this Environmental Report, in-line with regulatory requirements

<u>Schedule 2</u>	<u>Interpretation of Schedule 2</u>	
<i>The report must include...</i>	<i>The report must include...</i>	
(a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	i.e. answer - <i>What's the plan seeking to achieve?</i>
(b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'context'?</i>
(c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;		
(d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>
(e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan'	
(f) the likely significant effects on the environment including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;	The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	
(g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues & objectives?</i>
(h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information	Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal	
(i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (i.e. an explanation of the 'reasonableness of the approach)	i.e. answer - <i>What has Plan-making / SA involved up to this point?</i> [Part 1 of the Report]
	The likely significant effects associated with alternatives, including on issues such as... ... and an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives considered / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan.	
	The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan	i.e. answer - <i>What are the assessment findings at this current stage?</i> [Part 2 of the Report]
	The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan	
	A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring	i.e. answer - <i>What happens next?</i> [Part 3 of the Report]

Table AA-3: 'Checklist' of how (throughout the SA process) and where (within this report) regulatory requirements have been, are and will be met.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
Schedule 2 of the regulations lists the information to be provided within the SA Report	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	Chapter 2 ('What is the plan seeking to achieve') presents this information.
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;	These matters have been considered in detail through scoping work, which has involved dedicated consultation on a Scoping Report. The 'SEA framework' – the outcome of scoping – is presented within Chapter 3 ('What is the scope of the SEA?'). More detailed messages, established through a context and baseline review are also presented in Appendix B of this Environmental Report.
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.;	
5. The environmental protection, objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The SEA framework is presented within Chapter 3 ('What is the scope of the SEA'). Also, Appendix B presents key messages from the context review. With regards to explaining " <i>how...considerations have been taken into account</i> ", Chapter 7 explains the Steering Group's 'reasons for supporting the preferred approach', i.e. explains how/ why the preferred approach is justified in light of alternatives appraisal.
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects);	Chapter 6 presents alternatives appraisal findings (in relation to housing growth, which is a 'stand-out' plan policy area). Chapters 9 presents an appraisal of the plan. With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 8 explains the role of the SEA framework/scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions, e.g., timescale.
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;	The assessment highlights certain tensions between competing objectives, which might potentially be actioned by the Examiner, when finalising the plan. Also, specific recommendations are made in Chapter 10.
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;	Chapters 4 and 5 deal with 'Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with', in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues and options. Also, Chapter 7 explains the Parish Council's 'reasons for selecting the preferred option' (in-light of alternatives assessment).

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10;	Chapter 11 presents measures envisaged concerning monitoring.
10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings	The NTS is provided at the beginning of this Environmental Report.
The SA Report must be published alongside the Draft Plan, in accordance with the following regulations	
authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2)	At the current time, this Environmental Report is published alongside the 'submission' version of the Hoxne Neighbourhood Plan, with a view to informing Regulation 16 consultation.
The SA must be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.	
The environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 shall be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure.	Assessment findings presented within this Environmental Report, and consultation responses received, have been fed back to the Steering Group and have informed plan finalisation.

Appendix B Scoping Information

As detailed in Chapter 3 of the main report, this appendix provides the scoping information. Scoping consultation was undertaken during the period Tuesday 15th March to Tuesday 19th April 2022 and the responses received from statutory consultees are provided in **Table AB-1**. No response was received from the Environment Agency.

Following the consultation responses, the SEA framework that has been used in the report has been provided in **Table AB-2**.

Scoping consultation

Table AB-1 Scoping consultation responses

Scoping consultation response	SEA update/ response
Historic England	
Edward James, Historic Places Advisor, East of England	
Thank you for your email requesting a scoping opinion for the Beyton Neighbourhood Plan SEA.	Noted, with thanks.
We would refer you to the advice in Historic England Advice Note 8: Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment, which can be found here: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/ . This advice sets out the historic environment factors which need to be considered during the Strategic Environmental Assessment or Sustainability Appraisal process, and our recommendations for information you should include.	
We would also refer you to Historic England Advice Note 3: Site Allocations and Local Plans. This advice note sets out what we consider to be a robust process for assessing the potential impact of site allocations on any relevant heritage assets. In particular we would highlight the Site Selection Methodology set out on Page 5. This is similar to the methodology used to assess potential impacts on the setting of heritage assets (Good Practice Advice 3) but is focused specifically on the site allocation process and is therefore a more appropriate methodology to employ in this context.	Noted, with thanks.
We would expect a proportionate assessment based on this methodology to be undertaken for any site allocation where there was a potential impact, either positive or negative, on a heritage asset, and the SEA consequently to advise on how any harm should be minimised or mitigated. Advice Note 3 can be found here: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans/ .	Noted, with thanks.
Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the relevant local planning authorities are closely involved throughout the preparation of the plan and its assessment. They are best placed to advise on; local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the Historic Environment Record (HER), which should be consulted as part of the SEA process. In addition,	Noted, with thanks.

Scoping consultation response**SEA update/ response**

they will be able to advise how any site allocation, policy or proposal can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets.

To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the SA/SEA process and, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan/guidance) where we consider that, despite the SA/SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

Noted, with thanks.

Natural England**Dominic Rogers, Consultations Team**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 15 March 2022

Noted, with thanks.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England is a statutory consultee in neighbourhood planning and must be consulted on draft neighbourhood development plans by the Parish/Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums where they consider our interests would be affected by the proposals made.

Natural England has no specific comments to make on this neighbourhood plan SEA scoping.

However, we refer you to the advice in the attached annex which covers the issues and opportunities that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Table AB-2 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) framework

SEA theme	SEA objective	Assessment questions (will the proposal help to...)
Air Quality	Improve air quality in the Hoxne Neighbourhood area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? Implement measures (such as appropriate planting and provision of green infrastructure) which will help support air quality in the Hoxne Neighbourhood area?
Biodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity sites and features, by avoiding impacts on regionally and locally designated sites, and delivering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance regionally and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites? Protect and enhance priority habitats and species and the areas that support them? Achieve a net gain in biodiversity? Support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Assessment questions (will the proposal help to...)
	demonstrable biodiversity net gains.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity? Protect and support Network Enhancement Zones?
Climate change	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Plan Area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the number of journeys made? Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling and public transport? Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources? Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources? Support proposals for EV charging infrastructure?
	Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Plan Area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that inappropriate development does not take place in areas at higher risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change? Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the plan area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? Sustainably manage water runoff, reducing surface water runoff (either within the plan area or downstream)? Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development in the Neighbourhood Plan area? Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?
Landscape	To protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and/ or enhance local landscape character and quality of place? Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity and settlement character? Identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place? Protect visual amenity and locally important views in the Plan area? Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the river setting, or rural setting, including trees and hedgerows?
Historic environment	To protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the Hoxne Neighbourhood Plan area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings? Conserve and enhance the Low Street Conservation area? Protect the integrity of the historic setting of key monuments of cultural heritage interest as listed in the Suffolk HER? Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies? Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the Neighbourhood Plan area?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Assessment questions (will the proposal help to...)
Land, soil and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid the loss of high-quality agricultural land resources? • Promote any opportunities for the use of previously developed land, or vacant/underutilised land? • Protect the integrity of mineral resources?
	Protect and enhance water quality in addition to the use and sustainable management of water resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid impacts on water quality? • Support improvements to water quality? • Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside development? • Protect waterbodies from pollution? • Support enhancements to sewerage and wastewater capacity? • Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/or water recycling?
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the Parish is aligned with the needs of all residents and capacity of the settlement and social infrastructure, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, and affordable housing? • Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes? • Meet the needs of all sectors of the community? • Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's needs? • Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including specialist services for disabled and older people? • Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities? • Facilitate green infrastructure enhancements? • Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction? • Minimise fuel poverty? • Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing local residents?
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the key objectives within the Suffolk Local Transport Plan to encourage more sustainable transport? • Enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements? • Ensure sufficient road capacity to accommodate new development? • Promote improved local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement? • Facilitate on-going high levels of home and remote working? • Improve road safety? • Reduce the impact on residents from the road network? • Improve parking facilities?

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