

**Babergh & Mid Suffolk District
Councils**

**Stradbroke Neighbourhood
Plan 2024-2044
SEA Screening Opinion**

Final report
Prepared by LUC
June 2026

Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils

Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan 2024-2044 SEA Screening Opinion

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Stradbroke Parish Council is in the process of preparing an updated Neighbourhood Plan to replace the existing Neighbourhood Plan which was adopted ('made') in March 2019. Stradbroke is a village located in the north of Suffolk, within Mid Suffolk District. The B1117 runs through the Parish from east to west leading into Horham to the west and Ashfield Green to the east. LUC has been appointed by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils to consider whether there is a need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan Review.

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

1.3 Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have commissioned LUC to carry out SEA Screening of the Pre-Submission Draft version of the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Review 2024-2044 (March 2026) (hereafter referred to as 'the Neighbourhood Plan Review') in order to determine whether an assessment is required under European Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive), transposed into UK law through the SEA Regulations².

1.4 In October 2023 the Levelling up and Regeneration Act received royal assent, setting out detailed reforms to the planning system. Amongst other things, the Act allows for the replacement of the current SEA regime with a new requirement for an Environmental Outcomes Report. The specific requirements will be set out in forthcoming regulations, along with information about transition arrangements; however, at present the requirement for SEA remains as set out in existing legislation.

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

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

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

Chapter 2

SEA Screening

Scope of the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Review

2.1 Stradbroke Parish Council has prepared a Pre-Submission Draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan Review for consultation.

2.2 The Neighbourhood Plan Review covers the entire Parish of Stradbroke, which was designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Area by Mid Suffolk District Council in September 2014. The Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan Review (March 2026) includes a vision for the long-term future of Stradbroke along with 12 objectives that fall under two themes, through which the vision will be achieved:

Place

- 1. Infrastructure and Services:** Support the community of Stradbroke with first rate infrastructure that includes an expanded range of utilities, improved highways, telecom and internet services.
- 2. Built Environment:** Allocate sites for development that retain the historic crossroads shape and character of the village and manage parking and traffic issues.
- 3. Transport and Movement:** Mitigate and manage critical highway pinch points and reduce travel by car or lorry within the village by improving internal connectivity and alternative travel options.
- 4. Business:** Support the vitality of retail facilities to both provide employment generating opportunities and contribute to the welfare of the community.
- 5. Design:** Ensure development respects the historical build pattern and style whilst also encouraging design for the future through innovation.
- 6. Environment:** Reduce the drivers of climate change as much as possible from a social, economic and environmental perspective with the ambition to be carbon neutral during the lifetime of the plan.

People

- 7. Education:** Support the growing and changing needs of education for all ages and in particular, provide for the needs of the local primary and secondary schools.

8. **Health:** Expand the range of health care services available to local residents, as well as addressing the residential and care needs of the community as it ages.
9. **Sport and Leisure:** Deliver facilities that promote leisure and recreation facilities for all ages and abilities.
10. **Community:** Increase community self-sufficiency and resilience by expanding the retail base and range of village community services.
11. **Housing:** Provide homes that meet the changing needs of Stradbroke in terms of affordability, size, type and tenure that will allow families and single people to settle, grow and continue to live in the village.
12. **Transport:** Achieve improved transport to services at distance, especially educational services for post-16 students.

2.3 The Neighbourhood Plan then sets out 15 policies (STRAD1-15) to realise and deliver the vision for Stradbroke.

2.4 The Neighbourhood Plan allocates four sites for new housing as outlined in STRAD1 and allocated through the following policies:

- STRAD2: Land south of Mill Road – 4 hectares for approximately 80 dwellings.
- STRAD3: Land north of Laxfield Road – 1.9 hectares for approximately 28 dwellings.
- STRAD4: Land at Grove Farm – 3 hectares for approximately 45 dwellings.
- STRAD5: Land off Laxfield Road (Adjacent Strawberry Field) – 3.23 hectares for approximately 60 dwellings.

2.5 Policy STRAD1: Development strategy and principles stipulates that new development in Stradbroke during the Plan period will be focused within the settlement boundary of Stradbroke village and on the four site allocations in Policies STRAD2-5. Education and health infrastructure, community and retail provision will be permitted in the countryside immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary in accordance with other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan Review.

2.6 Policy STRAD2: Land South of Mill Road states that this site was granted planning permission in August 2024, and this policy sets out criteria for proposals if the planning permission is not delivered or alternatives proposed.

2.7 Policy STRAD3: Land North of Laxfield Road states that the site was granted planning permission in March 2025, and this policy sets out criteria for proposals if the planning permission is not delivered or alternatives proposed.

2.8 Policy STRAD4: Land at Grove Farm states that planning permission was granted in December 2025, and this policy sets out criteria for proposals if the planning permission is not delivered or alternatives proposed. The criteria specifically states that developments should preserve and enhance, where possible, the setting of the Conservation Area.

2.9 Policy STRAD5: Land off Laxfield Road (Adjacent Strawberry Field) sets out criteria for development proposals. This site does not have planning permission.

2.10 Other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan address a range of topics including utilities, green space and community services.

Baseline Information

2.11 This section summarises the baseline information for the Parish of Stradbroke, drawing from the information set out in the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan Review (March 2026).

Context

2.12 Stradbroke is a small village located within the District of Mid Suffolk, within four miles of the border with South Norfolk. The B1117 runs through the Parish from east to west leading into Horham to the west and Ashfield Green to the east.

2.13 The closest larger settlement to Stradbroke is Bury St Edmunds which is about 30 miles south west.

Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

2.14 There are no internationally or nationally designated sites within the Parish. Stradbroke Parish does, however, partially fall within the Chippenhall Green SSSI Impact Risk Zone, which identifies areas where development could potentially affect the ecological integrity of this SSSI.

2.15 There are 3 Country Wildlife Sites (CWSs) in the Parish. These are:

- Stradbroke Cemetery;
- Stradbroke Meadow; and
- Deeperhaugh Wood.

2.16 Stradbroke has approximately 3-6% tree canopy cover, compared to the UK average of 13%. There are Priority Habitats within the Parish, including deciduous woodland and good quality semi improved grassland.

2.17 Additionally, there are protected species and other wildlife found in pockets around the Parish and within the village.

Population

2.18 At the time of the 2021 Census, the population of Stradbroke was 1,482, comprising 656 households. The 16-64 age bracket accounted for 52% of the total population. Stradbroke has seen a 30% increase in residents aged 65 and older between 2011 and 2021, which reflects trends found in many villages and the Mid Suffolk District as a whole, with an increasing proportion of elderly residents. It also shows a smaller proportion of children living in the village.

2.19 The majority of residents own their own home, comprising 77% of households. Between 2011 and 2021, the proportion of households in social rented accommodation decreased from 14.3% to 12.5%, while those in private rented accommodation increased from 9.3% to 10.2%.

2.20 Household composition data for Stradbroke from the 2011 and 2021 Censuses indicates a decreased percentage of single family households between 2011 and 2021 Census. However, Stradbroke Parish still has a higher percentage than Suffolk as a whole.

Human Health

2.21 In terms of the health of Stradbroke residents, according to the 2021 Census, 43.4% of people classified themselves as in 'very good health', 36.7% as 'good', and 15.1% as 'fair', while 3.4% considered themselves to be in 'bad health' and 1.3% as 'very bad'.

2.22 Stradbroke has an ageing population which is likely to lead to more cases of residents suffering from age-related conditions such as dementia.

Soil

2.23 The Parish lies within the South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands (National Character Area 83). The landscape surrounding Stradbroke is designated by the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment as 'Plateau Claylands', which is defined as gently rolling heavy clay plateaux. These soils are slowly permeable, seasonally wet, slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils. The Parish's land is primarily classified as Grade 3 – good to moderate – agricultural land. It is not known whether the Grade 3 land is the high-quality Grade 3a or lower quality Grade 3b.

Water

2.24 The majority of Stradbroke lies within Flood Zone 1, outside of the highest areas of risk from flooding. Therefore, the risk of surface water flooding from river water for most of

the Parish is low. However, there are some pockets of the Parish that fall within Flood Zones 2 and 3 that are associated with watercourses that run from the River Waveney.

Air Quality and Climatic Factors

2.25 There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) that have been declared within Stradbroke, the closest being the nearby town of Ipswich.

2.26 Climate data are not available at the Parish level, but within Mid Suffolk District as a whole, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions of 44% were achieved between 2005 and 2023. This reduction was mostly due to progress in reducing emissions from domestic sources, closely followed by industrial and commercial sectors, with minimal progress on transport emissions. Transport makes the largest contribution to carbon emissions in the Mid Suffolk District.

Material Assets

2.27 Stradbroke benefits from a number of services and facilities including the primary and secondary schools, medical centre, library and post office, and retail shops. Stradbroke also has the Stradbroke Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre, Stradbroke Cricket Club, football pitches, tennis courts, community centre, All Saint Church, two pubs/restaurants, fire station, and allotments.

2.28 The Parish contains a network of Public Rights of Way which run throughout the village, connecting to the neighbouring Horham, Fressingfield and Wilby. The footpath network provides access to the countryside, with opportunities for extensive views across the landscape and into the village.

2.29 There are few bus routes that service the Parish. The main route is the 482 running from Framlingham to Diss, stopping at Stradbroke on route.

2.30 The Neighbourhood Plan has designated four Local Green Spaces through Policy STRAD13: Local Green Spaces:

1. Playing field at Wilby Road;
2. Westhall Green and Play Area;
3. Village Gardens and Allotments; and
4. Bowling green at Wilby Road.

Cultural Heritage

2.31 Stradbroke village is listed under the Domesday Book of 1066 under the name Stetebroc³. The village has evolved since

then around the central staggered crossroads with the Church of All Saints as the focal point dominating the village centre.

2.32 There are 69 listed buildings or structures within the Parish, 66 of which are Grade II and three of which are Grade II*. These are predominately focused within the village of Stradbroke. There is also a Conservation Area in the core of the village of Stradbroke, which was designated in 1973. There is one designated heritage asset included on Historic England's "Heritage at Risk" Register, this is the Church of All Saints.

Landscape

2.33 There are no designated landscapes within or near to the Parish, the nearest being Suffolk Coast and Heaths National Landscape which is around 18 km to the east.

2.34 The Parish lies within the Plateau Claylands landscape character area, as defined by the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment. This landscape features gentle roll and large fields as well as scattered farmsteads and Lombardy poplars.

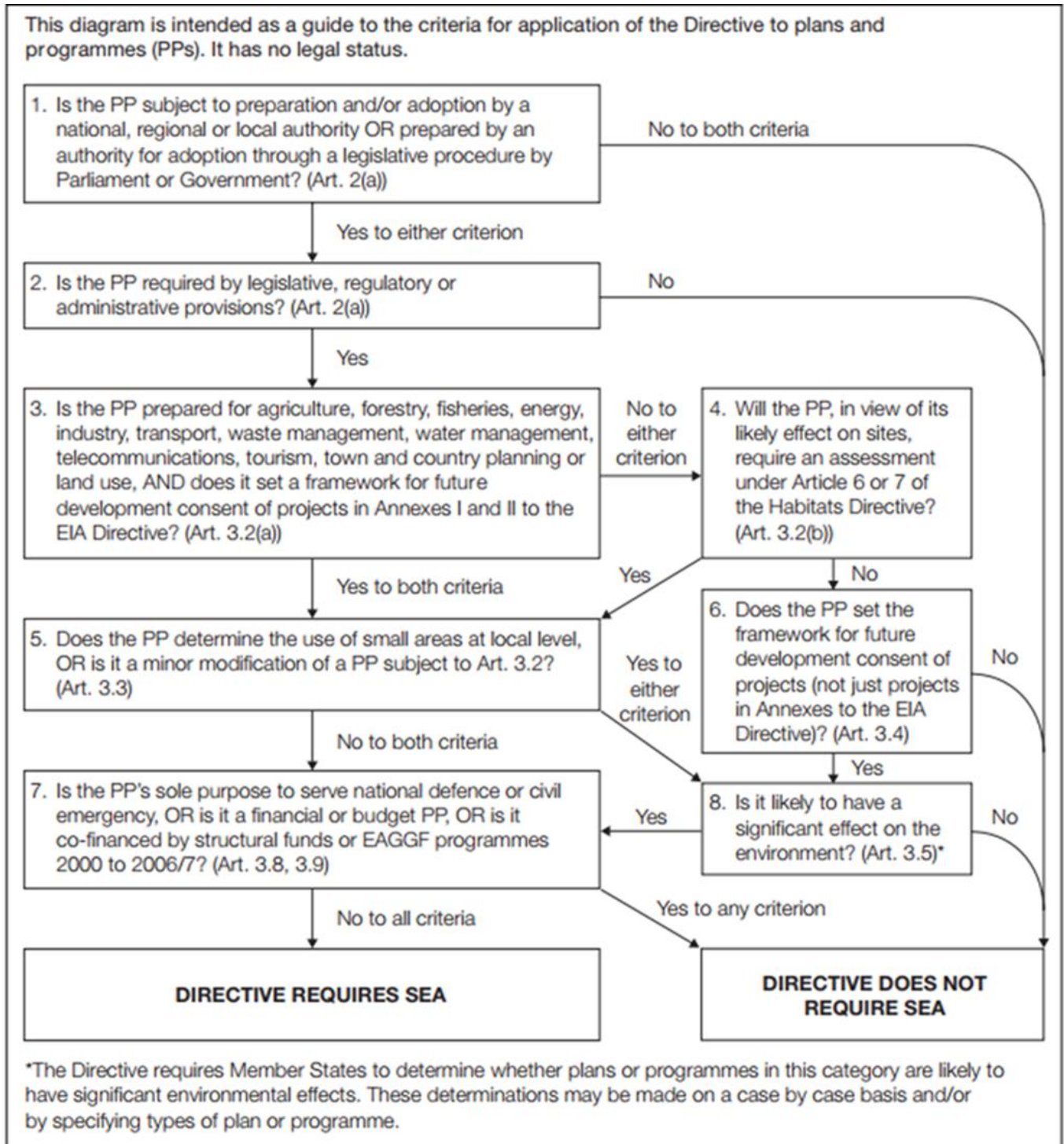
SEA Screening

2.35 An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the Pre-Submission Draft Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan Review (March 2026) requires SEA in accordance with the SEA Regulations.

2.36 **Figure 2.1** overleaf presents the flow diagram entitled 'Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes' which is taken from the Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive⁴, published in September 2005. This is a useful guide when considering whether a plan should be subject to SEA (The Practical Guide has been superseded by the Planning Practice Guidance; however, it still provides a useful and relevant guide to the process to use in making SEA screening decisions).

⁴ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

Figure 2.1 Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes



2.37 Table 2.1 below presents the assessment of whether the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan will require a full SEA. The questions in the first column are drawn from the diagram above which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

Table 2.1 Application of SEA Directive to the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan

Stage	Yes/No	Reason
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Article 2(a))	Yes	The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and will be adopted ('made') by the Local Authority (Mid Suffolk District Council) as part of the statutory development plan. Move to Q2.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Article 2(a))	No	The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. However, there is no requirement to produce a Neighbourhood Plan; it is an optional plan. Once made it will become part of the statutory development plan. Therefore, it should continue to be screened. Move to Q3.
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Article 3.2(a))	Yes & No	The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared for town and country planning and land use. While it does allocate four sites for housing development, it does not set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive. Move to Q4.
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Article 3.2 (b))	Yes	Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening of the Neighbourhood Plan has been undertaken separately on behalf of Mid Suffolk District Council and has concluded that likely significant effects from the Neighbourhood Plan on European sites cannot be ruled out and Appropriate Assessment is therefore required. Move to Q5.
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at a local level. OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2?	Yes	The Neighbourhood Plan allocates four sites for housing development. Move to Q8.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Article 3.5)	Yes	See Table 2.2. SEA IS REQUIRED.

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

Table 2.2 Likely Significant Effects of the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan

SEA Requirement	Comments
The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular to:	
1. The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the statutory development plan and will guide the delivery of development in Stradbroke, including in terms of design. The Neighbourhood Plan allocates four sites for residential development. These are: ■ STRAD2: Land south of Mill Road – 4 hectares for approximately 80 dwellings (has planning permission). ■ STRAD3: Land north of Laxfield Road – 1.9 hectares for approximately 28 dwellings (has planning permission). ■ STRAD4: Land at Grove Farm – 3 hectares for approximately 45 dwellings (has planning permission). ■ STRAD5: Land off Laxfield Road (Adjacent Strawberry Field) – 3.23 hectares for approximately 60 dwellings. The previously adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008)⁵ identified Stradbroke as a key service centre under Policy CS1: Settlement Hierarchy. The Policy stipulates that the majority of new development will be directed to towns and key service centres, although some provision for meeting local housing needs, in particular affordable housing, will be accommodated for in primary and secondary villages. The Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review (2012) updated parts of the 2008 Core Strategy, including replacing Policy CS8 with Policy FC2: Provision and Distribution of Housing, which allocated provision for 450 to be delivered at Key Service Centres over the plan period to 2031. The adopted Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 1 (Nov 2023) does not set out a settlement hierarchy. Following the examination of the Joint Local Plan it was decided that an up-to-date settlement hierarchy would come forward in Part 2 of the Plan. However, in March 2025 a revised Local Development Scheme introduced the Councils' decision to not continue with a Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 2 Development Plan Document, but to produce a full new Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan. This is at an early stage in its development and is unlikely to be adopted for some time.
2. The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The making of this Neighbourhood Plan must not result in less housing development taking place in its area than if it was not made. The Neighbourhood Plan must also have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework. The Neighbourhood Plan does not have influence over other plans. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory development plan for Stradbroke Parish and will be used in conjunction with the adopted Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 1 and the emerging new Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (once adopted) to determine planning applications.
3. The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in	One of the Basic Conditions which the Neighbourhood Plan must meet is to contribute to sustainable development.

⁵ Core Strategy with CSFR label and insert sheet 07 01 13.pdf

SEA Requirement	Comments
particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	
4. Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	Baseline information relating to Stradbroke Parish was described earlier in this report. Key issues of relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan are the presence of land within Flood Zones 2 and 3, County Wildlife Sites and designated heritage assets, including 66 Grade II and three Grade II* listed buildings.
5. The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).	N/A
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:	
6. The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The Neighbourhood Plan allocates four sites for residential development, although three of these already have planning permission. The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period up to 2044. The effects of the Neighbourhood Plan are expected to be direct, arising from the allocation of these sites, and would be long-term and permanent.
7. The cumulative nature of the effects.	Cumulative effects could result from the Neighbourhood Plan in combination with development that takes place in the surrounding towns and villages. The Plan allocates four sites for residential development, which could contribute to these cumulative effects, although three of these already have planning permission. The previously adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008) identified Stradbroke as a Key Service Centre in the settlement hierarchy, anticipating that it will accommodate some development to help meet the needs within them. The adopted Part 1 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan does not identify a minimum housing requirement for Stradbroke.
8. The transboundary nature of the effects.	The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on Stradbroke Parish only. Transboundary effects under the SEA Regulations refers to transboundary effects on other EU Member States; therefore, they are not relevant to this Neighbourhood Plan.
9. The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	There are no anticipated risks to human health or the environment from the Neighbourhood Plan.
10. The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The Neighbourhood Plan covers the entirety of Stradbroke Parish. The population of the Parish at the time of the 2021 Census was 1,482.
11. The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: ■ Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; ■ Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; and	Stradbroke is home to Priority Habitats, including deciduous woodland and good quality semi improved grassland, and contains Grade 3 agricultural land. There are no internationally or nationally designated nature conservation sites within the Parish although there are three Country Wildlife Sites within the Parish. Additionally, there are 69 listed buildings within the Parish, and one Conservation Area that covers the core village of the Parish.

SEA Requirement	Comments
Intensive land-use.	
12. The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	There are no designated landscapes within or immediately surrounding Stradbroke Parish, the closest being Suffolk Coast and Heaths National Landscape which is around 18 km to the east.

SEA Screening Conclusion

2.39 A screening assessment has been undertaken by applying the criteria from the SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations to determine whether or not the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects when assessed against the topics listed in the SEA Regulations.

2.40 The Neighbourhood Plan Review sets out the vision and detailed planning policies to shape development in the Parish up to 2044 and decision makers will need to consider the criteria of these policies when determining future applications in the village. In addition, the Neighbourhood Plan Review allocates four sites for housing development, meaning it directly influences land use. However, three of these sites already have planning permission.

2.41 Given the allocation of development sites and the potential for associated environmental effects, it is considered that a full SEA will be required to assess the likely significant effects of the Stradbroke Neighbourhood Plan. The separate Habitats Regulations Assessment has identified potential likely significant effects on European sites; therefore, a full SEA is required.

Next Steps

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

LUC

June 2026