

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan

SEA Environmental Report

March 2024

Quality information

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Non-Technical Summary

Background

AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan (RNP). The RNP is being prepared under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and in the context of the local planning framework of the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk. Once 'made', the RNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications in the neighbourhood area, as part of the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk 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 potential negative effects and maximising potential positive effects.¹

This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) provides a summary of the full Environmental report for the RNP. It is published alongside the submission version of the Plan, under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).

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 adopted and emerging Local Plan for Kings Lynn and West Norfolk does not envisage significant growth in Ringstead over the plan period and does not allocate any development sites in the neighbourhood area. The Local Plan Review currently undergoing examination expects developments in Ringstead to come forward over the plan period as either small-scale windfall applications or as neighbourhood plan allocation sites.

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. The RNP was informally screened in as requiring SEA and this opinion was formally shared with Statutory Consultees alongside a suggested scope for the SEA in November 2023.

The vision of the RNP is as follows:

“Our vision is based on a desire to achieve organic growth that will be sustainable and will protect and enhance Ringstead’s special characteristics by achieving a balance between social, environmental, and economic factors.

- *Social – The community will be strengthened by achieving a good balance in the housing stock to include people of a diverse range of incomes, ages, and circumstances to complement one another and encouraging well-being from the benefits of the environment.*
- *Environment – The character of the natural and built environment will be conserved and improved appropriately to reflect the parish’s location within an AONB and designation as a Conservation Area, and to enhance the local economy.*
- *Economic – The local economy will be sustained for the future by enhancing the natural and social capital of the parish and encouraging opportunities for local employment to ensure future prosperity.”*

What is the scope of the SEA?

The scope of the SEA is reflected in a list of topics and objectives, which, taken together indicate the parameters of the SEA and provide a methodological ‘framework’ for assessment. Each option/ proposal of the RNP will be assessed consistently using this framework, presented below.

SEA topic	SEA objective
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
Climate change and flood risk	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the 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.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.
Transportation and movement	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 RNP. 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 following a process of considering how much growth, and where growth should be located.

This work identified that there is no strategic need to allocate sites for development within the RNP. However, the Parish Council recognise that there are a few small sites which could deliver additional growth to support local needs. Three sites are identified and form the options for SEA:

- **Option 1:** Land Off Peddars Way North
- **Option 2:** Land Off Holme Road
- **Option 3:** Land Between Docking Road and Burnham Road

Assessment method and outcomes

The three options identified are subject to high-level assessment and the findings are discussed below. For each of the options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability topics and objectives identified through scoping (see Table 3.2) as a methodological framework. Where appropriate neutral effects, or uncertainty will also be noted.

Within the summary table, for each row (i.e., for each of the topics that comprise the SEA framework) the columns to the right-hand side seek to both **rank** the alternatives in order of performance and **categorise** the performance of each option in terms of effects on the baseline. Effects are written within the columns supported by colour coding. **Red** indicates a significant negative effect and **green** a significant positive effect. **Grey** indicates uncertainty.

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. 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. Also, '=' is used to denote instances where the alternatives perform on a par.

Summary findings

SEA Theme		Option 1: Land Off Peddars Way North	Option 2: Land Off Holme Road	Option 3: Land between Docking Rd and Burnham Rd
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
	Rank	3	2	1
Climate change and flood risk	Significant effect?	No	No	Yes - negative
	Rank	1	1	2
Community wellbeing	Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
	Rank	1	1	2
Historic environment	Significant effect?	No	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
	Rank	1	2	2
Land, soil, and water resources	Significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	2	2	1
Landscape	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
	Rank	=	=	=
Transportation and movement	Significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	3

A detailed narrative for each of the SEA topics is provided in the main report.

Developing the preferred approach

The Parish Council's preferred approach is Option 1 (Site 1 – Land off Peddars Way North). This reflects the outcomes of the Site Options Assessment, the SEA, and community consultation and feedback. Notably, the SEA will inform policy development and mitigation for the progression of Site 1 and (reflecting the assessment) a HRA will assess the draft plan proposals and design mitigation will be developed.

Assessment findings at this stage

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

Overall, no potential significant negative effects have been identified through the appraisal of the RNP. Significant positive effects are considered likely in relation to the SEA topic 'Community wellbeing', given the plan seeks to deliver small-scale affordable housing to meet the identified need of the local community, provide garden space, allocate green spaces, and provide employment spaces.

Minor positive effects are considered likely for biodiversity and geodiversity and the historic environment. This is due to the focus of the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan on maintaining and enhancing green infrastructure – which will protect and improve biodiversity connectivity and contribute to the setting of heritage features and the historic character of the neighbourhood area. The provision of additional car parking spaces, and the inclusion of active travel networks in new development is also likely to lead to minor positive effects for transportation and movement.

Neutral effects are considered likely for climate change and flood risk, given the low level of growth the plan seeks to bring forward, and the inclusion of policies that will mitigate against the effects of climate change.

Minor negative effects are concluded as most likely in relation to landscape and land, soil, and water resources. This reflects the development of greenfield and agricultural land within the protected National Landscape. Alongside the small-scale development proposed, policy mitigation is likely to ensure that these effects are not significant.

One recommendation is made – to increase site-specific landscaping requirements in the site allocation policy and develop a masterplan of the allocated site. However, uptake of this recommendation will not lead to changes to the likely overall effects.

Next steps

Following submission, the Plan and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation (Regulation 16), and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the RNP 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 RNP will then be subject to a referendum, organised by the Borough Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the RNP, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the RNP will become part of the Development Plan for Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, 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 the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan (RNP). The RNP is being prepared under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and in the context of the local planning framework of the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk. Once 'made', the RNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications in the neighbourhood area, as part of the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk local development framework.
- 1.2 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

- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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

- 1.5 This report is the Environmental Report for the RNP. 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.⁴ 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 RNP was screened in as requiring SEA March 2023.

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

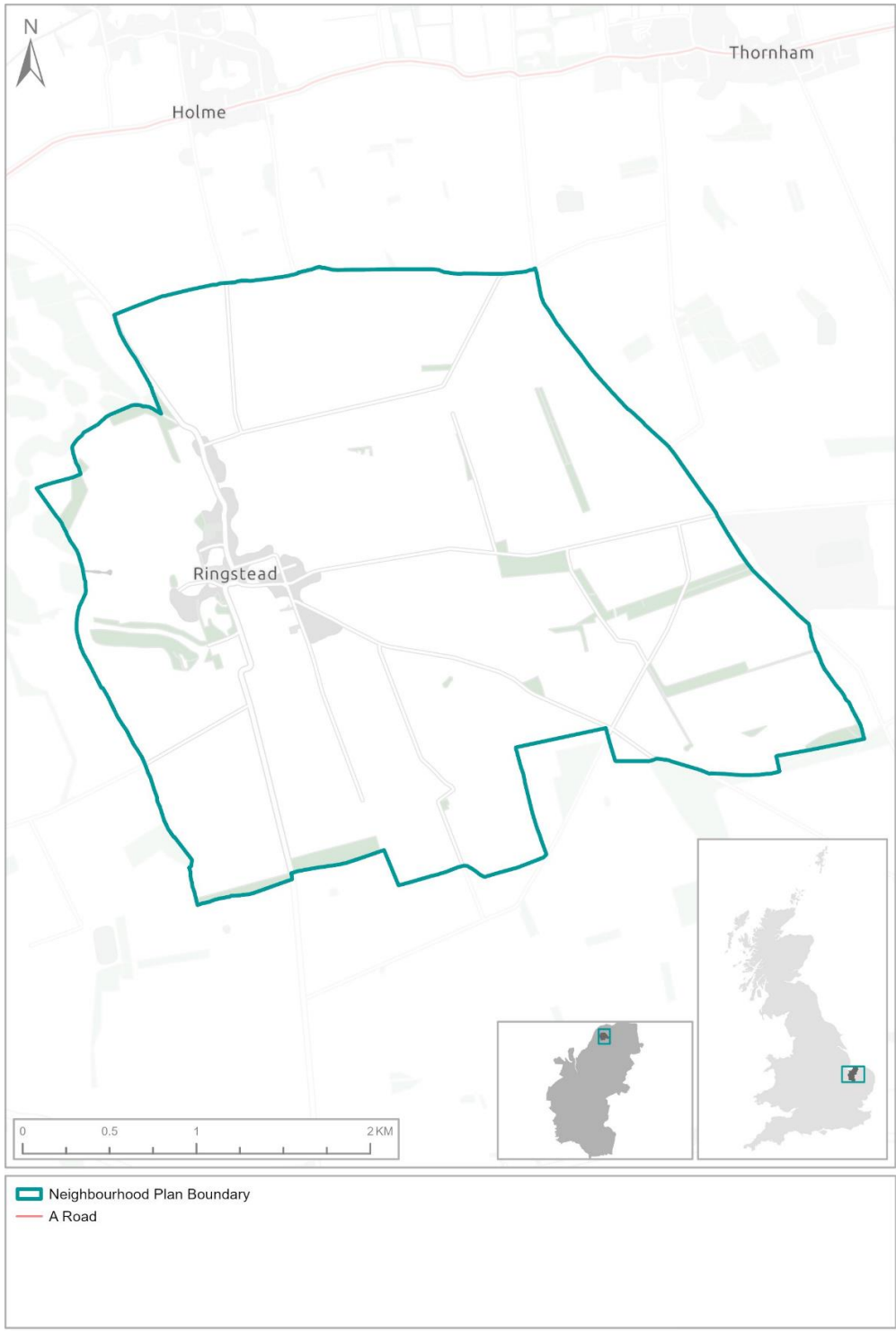
⁴ See **Appendix A** for further explanation of the regulatory basis for answering certain questions within the Environmental Report, and a 'checklist' explaining more precisely the regulatory basis for presenting certain information.

2. What is the plan seeking to achieve?

Introduction

2.1 This section is an introductory chapter to consider the context provided by both the Borough Council's local development framework, and the vision and objectives of the RNP. The designated neighbourhood area is depicted in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Ringstead neighbourhood area



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Local development framework

- 2.2 The strategic policy context is set by the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk's local development framework, consisting predominately of the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Core Strategy 2011⁵, and the Site Allocation and Development Management Policies Plan 2016⁶. This plan recognises Ringstead as a smaller village / hamlet secondary settlement town in which it would be inappropriate to seek further development.
- 2.3 The Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk are in the process of reviewing the Local Plan, and this review will replace the existing Local Development Framework upon its adoption⁷. The Local Plan Review (2016-2036) was submitted for examination in March 2022. The examination is currently adjourned whilst the Council undertook further work to justify the spatial strategy and distribution of housing in the Local Plan Review, which is currently the subject of further consultation. The submitted plan continues to identify Ringstead as a Smaller Village / Hamlet where no specific site allocations are made and only modest levels of development are expected over the plan period, through either windfall development or NP allocation sites. The Review also identifies a tight development boundary around the existing settlement area. The additional evidence that is currently being consulted upon does change the status of some settlements in the settlement hierarchy, but these changes do not affect the position identified for Ringstead.

RNP vision and objectives

- 2.4 The vision of the RNP is as follows:

“Our vision is based on a desire to achieve organic growth that will be sustainable and will protect and enhance Ringstead’s special characteristics by achieving a balance between social, environmental, and economic factors.

- *Social – The community will be strengthened by achieving a good balance in the housing stock to include people of a diverse range of incomes, ages, and circumstances to complement one another and encouraging well-being from the benefits of the environment.*
- *Environment – The character of the natural and built environment will be conserved and improved appropriately to reflect the parish’s location within an AONB and designation as a Conservation Area, and to enhance the local economy.*
- *Economic – The local economy will be sustained for the future by enhancing the natural and social capital of the parish and encouraging opportunities for local employment to ensure future prosperity.”*

⁵ [Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Core Strategy document](#)

⁶ [Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan](#)

⁷ [Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Plan Review \(2016-2036\)](#)

2.6 To support this vision, the following objectives have been identified:

- **Community:** To maintain the village's vitality, including the local amenities to promote the well-being of the community, and particularly by addressing issues relating to the balance between residents and non-residents and older and younger age groups.
- **Landscape:** To conserve and enhance the local AONB landscape valued for its peace and tranquillity and its wide and naturally dark skies and to conserve important local views and enhance and protect green spaces of particular value to the local community, whilst seeking ways to enhance and exploit these natural assets.
- **Natural environment and ecology:** To conserve and enhance the natural environment, reversing decline, reducing pollution, and promoting biodiversity including habitats of ecological significance for protected and threatened species, includes promoting awareness of nearby sites with special environmental designations, the surrounding countryside and associated biodiversity networks characterised by trees and hedgerows, ponds, and ditches.
- **Heritage:** To respect our predecessors' contributions to the village by identifying, conserving and where possible enhancing our heritage assets for the benefit of the local residents, visitors, and future generations.
- **Built environment:** To conserve and enhance the traditional form and character of the village and to encourage sustainable infill development in accordance with Local Plan policy ensuring that the scale of both new and replacement buildings respects the character of their context and the community's needs.
- **Economy:** To reinforce the existing local economy largely based on tourism by conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment and encouraging low impact employment opportunities consonant with the AONB setting and special designations of the parish.
- **Transport:** To ensure that the village is as safe as possible for all pedestrians and road users, to reduce traffic conflict and to prevent unnecessary growth in vehicle traffic, congestion, emissions and on-street car parking which tends to damage the fabric of the village and contributes to the degradation of the natural and residential environment.

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 topics and objectives that should be a focus of the assessment of the Plan and reasonable alternatives.
- 3.2 The SEA Scoping Report (November 2023) sets out the policy context and baseline information that has informed the development of key issues and the identification of appropriate sustainability objectives.

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 Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England⁸. These authorities were consulted on the scope of the SEA over the period Monday 20th November 2023 to Friday 5th January 2024.
- 3.4 The comments provided by the consultees on the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan SEA Scoping Report, and how they have been addressed, can be read in **Table 3.1** below.

Table 3.1: Scoping consultation responses

Consultation response	How the response was considered and addressed
<p>Historic England</p> <p><i>Historic Places Advisor (email response received on 7th December 2023)</i></p>	
<p>We would refer you to the advice in <i>Historic England Advice Note 8: Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment</i>, 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.</p>	<p>Comment noted. This document has been reviewed and used to inform this Environmental Report.</p>

⁸ These consultation bodies were selected “by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effect of implementing plans and programmes” (SEA Directive, Article 6(3)).

Consultation response	How the response was considered and addressed
<p>We would also refer you to <i>Historic England Advice Note 3: Site Allocations and Local Plans</i>. 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.</p> <p>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/</p>	<p>Thank you for highlighting this document.</p>
<p>We are pleased to note the inclusion of local non-designated heritage assets as a specific part of the scope for this SEA. Please note that we normally recommend that the HER is directly consulted at Scoping Stage, rather than Heritage Gateway. Heritage Gateway is not as up to date, and may therefore not provide sufficiently useful evidence regarding the potential risks and impacts to the historic environment in order to inform the SEA process itself.</p>	<p>Comment noted. HER will be utilised where available.</p>
<p>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, 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.</p>	<p>Comment noted with thanks.</p>

Environment Agency

Planning Officer (email response received on 20th December 2023)

We regret that at present, we are unable to review this consultation in detail. We are currently managing our resource capacity and have identified a screening risk bar for responding to neighbourhood plans.

Comment noted. Thank you providing the linked resource.

We have had to prioritise our limited resources and must focus on influencing plans where the environmental risks and opportunities are highest. Previously at the screening stage, we highlighted some environmental constraints in this area and we have no further comments to make.

We encourage you to seek ways in which your neighbourhood plan can improve the local environment. For your information, together with Natural England, Historic

England and Forestry Commission, we have published joint guidance on neighbourhood planning, which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans. This is available at: [How to consider the environment in Neighbourhood plans - Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#)

Natural England

Advisor, Consultations Team (email response received on 3rd January 2024)

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping request: Natural England has no specific comments to make on the scope of this neighbourhood plan's SEA.

Thank you for your response. The attached annex has been reviewed and the information used in the Environmental Report.

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.

SEA framework

3.5 The SEA framework presents a list of topics and objectives that together comprise a framework to guide the appraisal. Each option/ proposal of the NP will be assessed consistently using this framework. It is provided in Table 3.2 below. The key issues that have informed these objectives are presented in Appendix B.

Table 3.2: SEA framework

SEA topic	SEA objective
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
Climate change and flood risk	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the 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.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.
Transportation and movement	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

4. Introduction (to Part 1)

Overview

- 4.1 Whilst work on the RNP 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 development (or alternative sites). Whilst the RNP may not wish to allocate land for housing development purposes, it is recognised that there are a few small sites in the village that have been promoted through the plan-making process.
- 4.3 The decision was taken to develop reasonable alternatives in relation to the matter of allocating land for development given that housing growth is known to be a matter of key interest amongst residents and other stakeholders, and that the delivery of new homes is most likely to have significant effects compared to other proposals within the Plan. National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects. Wider thematic policy is explored in Part 2 of this report.

Structure of this part of the report

- 4.4 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 alternatives and thereby present “*an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with*”.⁹
- 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 RNP). These parameters are then drawn together in order to arrive at ‘reasonable alternatives’.

How much growth?

- 5.3 As noted in Chapter 2, both the adopted and emerging Local Plan for Kings Lynn and West Norfolk do not make site allocations in the Ringstead neighbourhood area. The emerging Local Plan Review (currently at examination) identifies future growth in Ringstead will likely be through small-scale windfall applications or neighbourhood plan allocations.
- 5.4 A Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) has also been developed as part of the evidence base for the RNP. This assessment highlights a local need for more affordable housing, that is unlikely to be met in the absence of Local Plan strategic housing requirements for the neighbourhood area.

Where could growth be located?

- 5.5 As part of the building the evidence base for the RNP, three sites have been identified as available for development over the plan period. This was following a ‘call for sites for affordable housing’ in late 2022. These sites have been subject to informal consultation with the local community, and formal assessment. They are as follows:
- Site 1: Land off Peddars Way North
 - Site 2: Land off Holme Road
 - Site 3: Land between Docking Road and Burnham Road
- 5.6 The Site Options Assessment (SOA) has identified key concerns with two of the sites, relating to landscape impacts (at Site 2) and flood risk (at Site 3).

⁹ Schedule 2(8) of the SEA Regulations

Options for assessment

5.7 Whilst there is no strategic need to allocate land for housing development in the RNP, it is recognised that the Parish Council are exploring opportunities to deliver more affordable housing. The three affordable housing sites that have been identified therefore form the three options for SEA which are taken forward for assessment in Chapter 6. To be clear these options are:

- **Option 1:** Site 1 – Land off Peddars Way North
- **Option 2:** Site 2 – Land off Holme Road
- **Option 3:** Site 3 – Land between Docking Rd and Burnham Rd

6. Assessing reasonable alternatives

6.1 This chapter presents the appraisal of the three options identified for assessment in Chapter 5. To reiterate, these options are:

- **Option 1:** Site 1 – Land off Peddars Way North
- **Option 2:** Site 2 – Land off Holme Road
- **Option 3:** Site 3 – Land between Docking Rd and Burnham Rd

Methodology

6.2 The three options identified are subject to high-level assessment and the findings are discussed below. For each of the options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability topics and objectives identified through scoping (see Table 3.2) as a methodological framework. Where appropriate neutral effects, or uncertainty will also be noted.

6.3 Within the summary table, for each row (i.e., for each of the topics that comprise the SEA framework) the columns to the right-hand side seek to both **rank** the alternatives in order of performance and **categorise** the performance of each option in terms of effects on the baseline. Effects are written within the columns supported by colour coding. **Red** indicates a significant negative effect and **green** a significant positive effect. **Grey** indicates uncertainty.

6.4 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. 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. Also, '=' is used to denote instances where the alternatives perform on a par.

6.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted considering the criteria presented within the Regulations.¹⁰ So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects.

¹⁰ Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Summary findings

SEA Theme		Option 1: Land Off Peddars Way North	Option 2: Land Off Holme Road	Option 3: Land between Docking Rd and Burnham Rd
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
	Rank	3	2	1
Climate change and flood risk	Significant effect?	No	No	Yes - negative
	Rank	1	1	2
Community wellbeing	Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
	Rank	1	1	2
Historic environment	Significant effect?	No	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
	Rank	1	2	2
Land, soil, and water resources	Significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	2	2	1
Landscape	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
	Rank	=	=	=
Transportation and movement	Significant effect?	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	3

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- 6.6 It is noted that all three sites are located within the Zone of Influence for the North Norfolk Coast internationally designated biodiversity sites (Ramsar, Special Protection Area (SPA)). A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will be progressed to support the RNP and identify any potential significant effects in relation to internationally designated sites.
- 6.7 Option 1 is also located within proximity to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs): the Ringstead Downs SSSI (located within 2km southwest of the site), and the Hunstanton Park Esker SSSI (located within 1km west of the site). The site does overlap with SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) for the types of development likely to come forward through the RNP (e.g., rural residential, residential, and rural non residential); however, consultation with Natural England may not be required depending on the level of growth that comes forward. The Living England Habitat Map classes the site as arable and horticultural land; there are no Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats within the site boundaries or within proximity, though it is noted there are hedgerows on three of the four site boundaries. The southwest corner is within a Network Expansion Zone this is land with potential for expanding, linking and / or joining networks across the landscape.
- 6.8 Option 2 is located within 2km of the Ringstead Downs SSSI (to the southwest of the site), and within 1km of the Hunstanton Park Esker SSSI (to the west of the site). Again, the site does overlap with SSSI IRZs for the types of

development likely to come forward through the RNP, but consultation with Natural England will depend on the level of growth that comes forward. Most of the site is considered to be arable and horticultural land under the Living England Habitat Map, though the western and eastern edges of the site are classed as acid, calcareous, neutral grassland. There are no BAP priority habitats within the site or in proximity to it, though there are hedgerows on three of the four site boundaries. The whole site is within a Network Expansion Zone.

- 6.9 Option 3 is within 2km of Hunstanton Park Esker SSSI, and the Ringstead Downs SSSI – both of which are to the west of the site. Like the other two options, the site does overlap with SSSI IRZs for the types of development likely to come forward through the RNP, but consultation with Natural England will depend on the level of growth that comes forward. The site is classed as arable and horticultural land under the Living England Habitat Map, and there are no BAP priority habitats within or in proximity to the site. Additionally, there are no features that contribute to biodiversity on the site boundaries. The whole site is within a Network Expansion Zone.
- 6.10 Recognising the need for HRA, the potential for significant effects is identified under all options at this stage. In terms of biodiversity features, Option 1 and Option 2 do have hedgerows on three of their four site boundaries which could contribute to biodiversity connectivity in the neighbourhood area. Comparatively Option 3 does not have any features with the site or on its boundaries. As such, Option 3 is ranked best, as taking forward this option for development would be unlikely to impact upon biodiversity and geodiversity value and connectivity. This also reflects the greater distance between the site under this option and the international designations covering the North Norfolk Coast area. Though Option 1 and Option 2 are similar in that they have features on their site boundaries that could contribute to biodiversity and geodiversity connectivity in the neighbourhood area, Option 2 is located further away from the international designations to the north of the Great Ringstead neighbourhood area. Given this, Option 2 is ranked second. Option 1 is ranked last, given it is closer to the international designations and could contribute to biodiversity connectivity throughout the neighbourhood area.

Climate change and flood risk

- 6.11 Any increase in development across the Ringstead neighbourhood area will result in an increase in emissions. This is linked to a growth in the built footprint of the neighbourhood area, and its associated domestic emissions. It is also due to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions linked to travel into, through, and out of the neighbourhood area in order to access facilities and services. In this way, the options all perform equally; they each put forward a site for small-scale housing development, but as Ringstead does not have many services / facilities or public transportation opportunities, new residents will need to travel by private vehicle to access a greater service provision. The increase in number of vehicles on the road will increase the emissions released in the neighbourhood area and minor impacts are expected in this respect.
- 6.12 In terms of flood risk, all options put forward sites that are within fluvial Flood Zone 1, given the lack of waterbodies within the neighbourhood area. Option 1 and Option 2 also put forward sites that have a very low risk of surface water flooding. However, Option 3 is at low-medium risk of surface water flooding –

as such, the site should be considered in the context of sequential testing and measures to avoid development within areas at risk of flooding. Given the surface water flood risk covers the whole site, significant negative effects are considered likely under Option 3 pre-mitigation.

- 6.13 Considering the above, Option 1 and Option 2 are ranked best reflecting the lower flood risk. Option 3 is ranked last reflecting the potential for significant negative effects here pre-mitigation.

Community wellbeing

- 6.14 All options would likely lead to significant positive effects for the population and the local community of Ringstead by providing additional land for affordable housing delivery. Whilst it is noted that a smaller level of growth through any of the options would be unlikely to impact upon the existing community infrastructure in the neighbourhood area, it is recognised that the services and facilities are limited, and new residents will need to travel outside of the neighbourhood area to access a greater provision.
- 6.15 None of the options seek to bring forward development within or adjacent to a green space. Option 1 would develop a site adjacent to existing affordable housing development – as such, if the site was allocated it would allow for a good level of community integration. The same can be said of Option 2, given that it proposes a site between two existing rows of residential properties. However, taking forward Option 3 would represent backland development given the site is positioned behind existing residential development. This is not a common development type within Ringstead and may impact upon the feel of the community.
- 6.16 Considering the above, Option 1 and Option 2 are ranked best. This is due to proposing development adjacent to existing housing development, which would allow for a good level of community integration. Option 3 is ranked last, given it would bring forward development that may impact upon the feel of the community.

Historic environment

- 6.17 Option 1 is unlikely to impact upon the historic environment, given the site does not have any heritage features within its boundaries, or in proximity. However, it is noted that the nearest heritage feature (a Grade II listed building approximately 150m northwest of the site) could have longer distance views across the site, which could be impacted by development here. It is likely existing vegetation between the site and the structure would provide a level of visual screening.
- 6.18 Option 2 would not impact upon listed buildings or scheduled monuments, as there are no such features on the site or within proximity to it. However, the site under this option is approximately 150m southeast of a Grade II registered park and garden (Hunstanton Hall), and it is possible it contributes to the longer distance views from this designation. It is noted that boundary vegetation along Hunstanton Road and between fields would likely provide a level of visual screening. This option would bring forward development within proximity to the Ringstead Conservation Area – which is located less than 10m away across Holme Road. As such, this option has the potential to impact on the setting of

the conservation area – which could impact the wider historic significance of the designation through changes to views and the interpretation of important features. Given this, there is the potential for significant negative effects pre-mitigation.

- 6.19 Option 3 is also removed from heritage features, due to existing development being positioned between the site and specific historic structures. However, the option would bring forward development adjacent to the Ringstead Conservation Area. As such, this option has a greater potential to impact on the setting of the conservation area – which could impact the wider historic significance of the designation through changes to views and the interpretation of important features. Given this, there is the potential for significant negative effects pre-mitigation.
- 6.20 Considering the above, Option 1 is ranked best. This is due to promoting growth on a site removed from historic features – though it is possible development could impact on views from a listed building, it is likely existing vegetation provides screening. Recognising the constraints to Options 2 and 3 these options are ranked last and the potential for significant negative effects pre-mitigation is recognised.

Land, soil, and water resources

- 6.21 None of the options put forward sites that overlap with the Norfolk County Council Minerals and Waste Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD). Additionally, none of the options propose sites with a likelihood of being contaminated, as all three sites are currently used as arable fields. Given that no waterbodies run through the neighbourhood area, taking forward any option is unlikely to impact upon the chemical and / or ecological statuses of waterbodies and their associated catchment areas. It is noted that whilst none of the sites are within a source protection zone, or a drinking water safeguarding or protection zone (for surface water or groundwater), the whole neighbourhood area is within a nitrate vulnerability zone (NVZ). The NVZ is considered unlikely to be significantly impacted by the small-scale housing development proposals.
- 6.22 In terms of agricultural land and soil quality, Option 3 is within an area of Grade 3 'Good to Moderate' agricultural land classification (ALC) land, though it is not possible to determine whether this is Grade 3a or Grade 3b land, where Grade 3a is of better quality. However, Option 1 and Option 2 promote development on sites within Grade 2 'Very Good' ALC land. As such, taking either of these two options forward for development has greater potential to result in the loss of productive higher-quality land.
- 6.23 Given that all sites have similar baseline conditions linked to water quality and mineral resources, differentiating them comes down to the ALC of the associated sites. Based on this, Option 3 is ranked best, given the likely slightly lower quality of the soil – whereas Option 1 and Option 2 are ranked last given a greater potential for higher-quality soil loss. Despite this, none of the options are considered likely to lead to significant effects.

Landscape

- 6.24 All options are within the Norfolk Coast National Protected Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, AONB). This landscape is characterised by long views across open farmland, a network of hedgerows providing structure to the landscape and remnant areas of chalk grassland of high ecological value.
- 6.25 The site under Option 1 is adjacent to part of the Post World War I Development character area identified within the Ringstead Design Guidance and Codes document. It slopes gently upwards in an eastern direction away from the road. Given the incline is gentle, it is unlikely development of this site would result in impacts to longer distance and important views that contribute to the local and national landscape character, as well as the Norfolk Coast National Protected Landscape. Additionally, as the site is adjacent to development to the north, taking forward this site could be regarded as infill development – with potential to limit the landscape and townscape impacts, given the level of surrounding development.
- 6.26 Option 2 includes a site that is located between the Conservation Area character area and part of the Post World War I Development character area. The site gently inclines in a north-northeast direction and offers a number of views: towards the Grade II listed Ringstead Mill (identified as a key view in the RNP), and across the surrounding landscape in the southern part. Given this, development through this option has the potential to impact upon the sense of openness in this part of the neighbourhood area, especially along Holme Road. However, it is noted that developing this site would not extend the Ringstead settlement into the open countryside given there is existing development adjacent to the site. It is considered likely the significant negative effects could come forward pre-mitigation if this site was to be allocated for development.
- 6.27 Option 3 focuses on an enclosed site adjacent to areas within the Post World War I Development character area. It is located behind existing development, set back from the road – as such, this site would not extend the settlement into the surrounding open countryside. Additionally, the existing development would likely prevent the site impacting on views of the landscape; but given the site is broadly level, taking forward development at this location would interrupt views from neighbouring houses.
- 6.28 Considering the location within the National Landscape, all options are considered to have the potential for significant negative effects pre-mitigation. All options have potential to integrate with the existing settlement pattern but will need to consider design and locational aspects. As such, it is difficult to rank the options which are considered overall to perform broadly on par with each other – with a need for design mitigation.

Transportation and movement

- 6.29 None of the options would provide opportunities to engage with sustainable transportation or with public rights of way (PRoW). This is due to there being no sustainable transportation services operating in the neighbourhood area, as well as the options including sites that are a distance from PRoWs and the wider footpath network.

- 6.30 In terms of access to the local road network, Option 1 is situated adjacent to the Peddars Way North Road, which also provides pavement access for safe pedestrian movement. Access to the site would need to be created from this road, but it looks feasible. Option 2 is located adjacent to Holme Road, which allows for safe pedestrian movement through the existing pavement on the other side of Holme Road. There is existing field access to the site, and individual dwelling access could also be created. Option 3 is not as well situated – it is positioned further back from Burnham Road and Docking Road, and as such access would need to be created for this site. It is noted both these roads have pavement provision which would allow for safe pedestrian access.
- 6.31 Overall, any of the options would result in an increase in private vehicles on the road due to the lack of sustainable transport opportunities in the neighbourhood area, and the distance of the sites from PRowS. Despite this, the small-scale growth proposed is unlikely to lead to significant effects. Reflecting on the above, Option 2 is ranked best – though the pavement is on the opposite side of the road and would require residents to cross over to access it, there is already access to the site and individual dwelling access could be achieved. Option 1 is ranked second due to access being easier to achieve than at Option 3. Option 3 is ranked last given that access would need to be created, as the site is positioned further back from the road network.

7. Developing the preferred approach

- 7.1 The Parish Council's preferred approach is Option 1 (Site 1 – Land off Peddars Way North). This reflects the outcomes of the Site Options Assessment, the SEA, and community consultation and feedback. Notably, the SEA will inform policy development and mitigation for the progression of Site 1 and (reflecting the assessment) a HRA will assess the draft plan proposals and design mitigation will be developed.

8. Introduction (to Part 2)

8.1 This chapter presents an appraisal of the submission draft of the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan under the seven SEA topic headings, reflecting the established assessment framework (see **Chapter 3**).

Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan policies

8.2 The RNP contains 14 policies to guide future development in the neighbourhood area. These are listed in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1: Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan policies

Policy Reference	Policy Name
1	Housing Mix
2	Affordable Housing
3	RNP1 – Land off Peddars Way North
4	Principal residence housing
5	Design
6	Extensions, Outbuildings (including Garages) and Annexes
7	Biodiversity
8	Local Green Space
9	Landscape Quality
10	Surface Water Management
11	Conversion of Rural Farm Buildings
12	Ringstead Conservation Area
13	Non-Designated Heritage Assets
14	Residential and Commercial Parking Standards

Methodology

- 8.3 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see Table 3.2) 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 Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- 9.1 The neighbourhood area does not intersect any international biodiversity and geodiversity designations. However, it is noted the North Norfolk Coast Ramsar and Special Protection Area (SPA) designations are approximately 1.4km north of the neighbourhood area, and The Wash Ramsar and SPA designations are approximately 2km north-west of the neighbourhood area. Additionally, The Wash and Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is approximately 2.5km north of the neighbourhood area, and the North Norfolk Coast SAC is approximately 1.7km north-east. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been developed alongside the RNP that identifies one recommendation for the plan that Policy 3: RNP1- Land off Peddars Way North makes specific reference to the need for net new residential dwellings within the Neighbourhood Area to contribute to the GIRAMS tariff. This recommendation has been addressed in the latest version of the RNP.
- 9.2 Whilst there are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within the neighbourhood area, Hunstanton Park Esker SSSI and Ringstead Downs SSSI area within proximity to the western neighbourhood boundary. Additionally, the Hunstanton Cliffs SSSI and The Wash SSSI are within 2km north-west of the neighbourhood area, and the North Norfolk Coast SSSI is approximately 1.5km north. Given the proximity of these SSSIs, the entire neighbourhood area overlaps with SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) for the types of development likely to come forward through the RNP (i.e., residential). As such, further consultation with Natural England would likely be required. It is also noted that the Holme Dune National Nature Reserve (NNR) is approximately 2.4km north of the neighbourhood area.
- 9.3 Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats in the neighbourhood area are comprised of good quality semi-improved grassland, lowland calcareous grassland, and deciduous woodland. With regards to the National Habitat Network¹¹, the majority of the Ringstead neighbourhood area is within the Network Expansion Zone - this is land with potential for expanding, linking and / or joining networks across the landscape. In addition, part of the neighbourhood area overlaps with Network Enhancement Zone 1; this is land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitats which is likely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat.
- 9.4 The site allocated under Policy 3 does not overlap with any BAP Priority Habitat, and only a small section within the south-western corner overlaps with the Network Enhancement Zone. It is an arable and horticultural site, according to the Living England Habitat Map. It has hedgerows on three of the four site boundaries. Policy 3 makes stipulations for the biodiversity and

¹¹ The National Habitat Network is a spatial dataset that describes the geographic extent and location of habitat networks for 18 priority habitats based primarily, but not exclusively, on the Priority Habitat Inventory. The Priority Habitat Inventory is a spatial dataset that describes the geographic extent and location of Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 habitats of principal importance. This inventory replaces Natural England's previous separate BAP habitat inventories. Additional data has also been added in relation to habitat restoration-creation, restorable habitat, plus fragmentation action, and network enhancement and expansion zones.

geodiversity on the site – indicating that the hedgerows on the site boundaries should be retained, and future boundary treatment should consist of hedgerows. This will allow for continued and enhanced biodiversity connectivity by connecting the site to more biodiverse areas through the hedgerow network, creating safe species movement through the site and further afield. Additionally, Policy 3 indicates that sustainable drainage measures for the site should contribute to the biodiversity of the development. This could include more natural flood mitigation techniques, such as vegetation planting, which would likely contribute to biodiversity and geodiversity by adding to the biodiversity network – bringing forward more habitat coverage and improving connectivity.

- 9.5 The Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan has a specific policy linked to biodiversity and geodiversity. Policy 7 indicates all development proposals will need to achieve at least a 10% biodiversity net gain – for example, through enhancing, restoring, or maintaining green infrastructure; reducing habitat fragmentation; and the use of native British species of flora and fauna that are local to the area. This will ensure biodiversity benefits are integrated fully into development, by bringing forward habitat areas, and improving connectivity within development sites and further afield.
- 9.6 The wider Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan policies also make provision for biodiversity and geodiversity. Policy 5 sets out that boundary treatments are key considerations for the design of new development on any level, and that appropriate boundary treatments include hedgerows and trees. By ensuring hedgerows and trees are used wherever possible, this policy works to enhance biodiversity connectivity by creating safe routeways for species. This is reiterated in Policy 14. Additionally, Policy 5 indicates appropriate garden space will be provided, and that front gardens should also be well planted. This will support biodiversity by supporting species that rely on plants, like various insects. Furthermore, Policy 8 focuses on designating local green spaces – by designating these spaces, areas are protected and allow for continued connectivity between important sites and habitats. Policy 9 makes stipulations for biodiversity by ensuring light pollution mitigation is deployed where it could impact upon the habits of protected bird and bat species in the local area. This ensures these important populations are not placed under unnecessary stress linked to new development. Policy 10 seeks to ensure surface water management should have a focus on natural Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) that integrate into the green infrastructure of the Ringstead neighbourhood area – thus contributing to biodiversity connectivity.
- 9.7 Overall, the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan works well to implement a biodiversity and geodiversity focus. The site allocation policy requires the existing hedgerows to be maintained and added to through development, and sustainable drainage measures should be as nature based as possible – both these stipulations work to retain and enhance the biodiversity value of the site. Furthermore, the wider plan policies work to strengthen the biodiversity provision in the neighbourhood area by boosting connectivity and protecting important areas, habitats, and features. With the recommendations of the HRA incorporated, **minor positive effects** are concluded most likely under the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan. This reflects the relatively low biodiversity value of the site allocation, and the stipulations made for maintaining and

enhancing biodiversity across the policies, including delivering on-site biodiversity net gains.

Climate change and flood risk

- 9.8 The RNP provides an opportunity to include policies to help reduce carbon emissions created by new development and to adapt to climate change impacts. While it is recognised that there is little value in duplicating planning policies which are already set out in the Local Plan, the RNP could focus on what could be strengthened and respond to local considerations. This can include vulnerability to overheating, flooding or water stress impacts, car dependency, opportunities for renewable energy, sustainable design, and construction.
- 9.9 In terms of climate mitigation, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk emits more carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions per capita when compared to Norfolk, the East of England region, and England itself. When examining CO₂ emissions linked to different sectors, the industrial sector and the land use, land use change, and forestry (LULUCF) sector contribute the greatest level of emissions across Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, though it is noted the industrial sector contributions have decreased over time.
- 9.10 In terms of climate change adaptation, there are no fluvial flood risk zones located within the neighbourhood area. Surface water flood risk is the primary flooding concern for the neighbourhood area - whilst the majority of the Ringstead neighbourhood area is at low risk of surface water flooding, there are areas at medium and high risk.
- 9.11 The site allocation policy does include stipulations relating to climate change and flood risk. It indicates that existing hedgerows should be retained, and new ones planted where necessary, along the site boundaries. This will contribute a level of carbon capture through plant photosynthesis and will likely help mitigate potential flood risk by intercepting water as it flows across the surface of the site / through the soil. Additionally, the policy indicates sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) will be integrated into the development – this will reduce flood risk by including drainage networks for excess water and footpaths will be improved.
- 9.12 The wider Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan policies also make provisions for climate change and flood risk mitigation and adaptation. Policy 5 outlines the need for new developments to meet climatic targets for CO₂ emissions and be constructed in the most sustainable way as possible. This will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions linked to the development by cutting emissions linked to the construction phase, and potentially lower the embedded carbon associated with building materials. Policy 7 and Policy 8 aim to safeguard, retain, and enhance local green spaces, special areas for biodiversity and habitats for wildlife, as well as deliver biodiversity net gain. This will indirectly benefit climate change and flood risk in the neighbourhood area, as increased planting and retained green space will likely contribute to carbon offsetting / carbon capture and storage due to plant photosynthesis and their protection from future development. Additionally, increased planting could mitigate potential flood risk by intercepting water as it flows across the surface of the site / through the soil. Policy 10 is focused on surface water management – outlining the need for development proposals to be designed with flood risk

management in mind. It stipulates development must incorporate natural SuDS to help improve surface water drainage on development sites; these could include planting, rainwater harvesting and storage, and green roofs. As such, the plan demonstrates a clear focus on reducing flood risk. Additionally, planting and green roofs would also likely contribute to carbon offsetting / carbon capture and storage due to increased plant photosynthesis leading to an increased carbon intake. Finally, Policy 14 encourages development to provide opportunities for electric vehicle charging points wherever possible. By including electric vehicle charging points, development within the Ringstead neighbourhood area is encouraging a shift away from petrol and diesel cars and makes electric vehicles a more viable choice. A greater use of electric cars will reduce emissions linked to transportation in the area through lowered tailpipe emissions.

- 9.13 Growth within the Ringstead neighbourhood area will likely occur with or without the RNP. As such, the increase in the built footprint of the neighbourhood area and absolute emissions are not considered a consequence of the neighbourhood plan. However, it is recognised that growing and severe impacts of climate change mean that any plan made now that does not consider radical reductions in carbon and help build resilience, could be considered not fit for purpose¹².
- 9.14 Reflecting on the above, **broadly neutral effects** (i.e., no significant deviations from the baseline) are considered most likely overall, due to the very low level of growth and associated increase in emissions and the provisions of the plan policies.

Community wellbeing

- 9.15 Ringstead neighbourhood area has limited facilities, which includes a village store, a pub, the parish church, a village hall, and green spaces. There are also small businesses and social clubs. Given the lack of facilities, residents need to travel to other settlements to access a greater range of services, including educational facilities, health infrastructure and employment opportunities. This trend is expected to continue over the plan period in the absence of strategic interventions.
- 9.16 With regards to deprivation, the entire Ringstead neighbourhood area is within the 50% most deprived neighbourhoods for overall deprivation. It is also within the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods for deprivation linked to barriers to housing and services, which reflects house prices and availability, and ease of access to community infrastructure. Given this, allocating a site for affordable housing development has good opportunity to address deprivation.
- 9.17 The RNP allocates one site to deliver affordable residential development of up to six dwellings to rent, on an approximate 0.6-hectare site. This is under Policy 3. The policy indicates housing development on the site will be 100% affordable, and proposals will need to submit an updated housing needs survey to the satisfaction of the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk, to demonstrate the need of residents. This policy would bring forward benefits for community wellbeing by contributing to the local housing need. Additionally, Policy 3 indicates development will be supported where it would bring forward

¹² [Neighbourhood Planning in a Climate Emergency](#)

improvements to the existing footway along Peddars Way North and provide new footpaths and connections. This further benefits community wellbeing by bringing forward greater opportunities to engage in physical activity through active transportation – which promotes better physical and mental health.

- 9.18 The other housing policies within the RNP also have a community wellbeing focus. Policy 1 is concerned with bringing forward an appropriate housing mix – indicating that housing development proposals will need to reflect local housing need and present evidence to support this. Additionally, Policy 1 also stipulates new housing development should offer a housing mix where at least 90% of homes have three bedrooms maximum. In this way, Policy 1 contributes to community wellbeing in the neighbourhood area by ensuring housing need is met. This allows for the community to stay together – younger and older people would have the opportunity to remain in the area due to the presence of affordable and smaller housing. Local housing needs are also addressed by ensuring the housing mix reflects the wants of the community – allowing for younger people, small families and older people who need smaller homes to remain in the area.
- 9.19 Maintaining and enhancing this community cohesion is reiterated in Policy 2, which focuses on the mix of affordable housing that development proposals should bring forward. It also focuses on introducing local eligibility criteria, which aims to establish a local connection as a preference for First Homes – including current and ex-residents of the neighbourhood area that want to buy or rent within the area, people who live outside the neighbourhood area but have caring responsibilities within, those employed by the Parish Council, and people who live and / or work in the area and in proximity. Again, this works to ensure the community can be retained and grown in a sustainable way – and benefits mental health and wellbeing by encouraging family groups to stay close. This is echoed in Policy 4, which indicates new housing development proposals will be supported where the occupation is restricted in perpetuity to ensure each new dwelling is occupied as principal residence. This will aid in making sure there is enough housing for local people and new houses are not bought as second homes and left vacant and redundant outside of peak times.
- 9.20 The wider RNP policies also make provision for community wellbeing. Policy 5 includes stipulations around the design of new development – including ensuring streets and public spaces have good levels of natural surveillance from adjacent buildings and providing front and back garden space. This contributes to enhanced community wellbeing by ensuring resident safety is maintained through good visibility and provides space for contained exercise – which is beneficial to physical and mental health. It also provides safe spaces for community events and gatherings, which contributes to mental health and wellbeing by providing safe places to socialise in. This links to Policy 8, which seeks to allocate local green spaces; this will safeguard areas from development and provide space for engagement with exercise and community activity. This is a benefit for community wellbeing by maintaining and enhancing physical and mental health. Policy 9 also identifies that any development leading to coalescence with neighbouring settlements will not be supported which will help to maintain the separate community and settlement identity. Finally, Policy 11 indicates the enlargement of redundant farm buildings for commercial and community use will be viewed favourably – this includes office space, workshops, and nurseries. This would be a benefit for

community wellbeing by providing greater levels on infrastructure, allowing for residents to stay within the neighbourhood area and not have to travel to access services and facilities.

- 9.21 In conclusion, the RNP is considered likely to lead to **significant positive effects** for community wellbeing. This is through seeking to deliver affordable housing that meets local need and reflects the community's wants, whilst also maintaining and enhancing community wellbeing by bringing forward policies that safeguard and provide opportunities for important community infrastructure.

Historic environment

- 9.22 The historic environment within the Ringstead neighbourhood area comprises of 16 listed buildings (15 Grade II, and one Grade II*), one scheduled monument, part of a registered park and garden, and the Ringstead Conservation Area.
- 9.23 The site allocation policy makes stipulations for the historic environment. Policy 3 indicates development proposals will need to fully regard the World War I features (and their associated character area) that are in proximity to the site. By ensuring considerations for these features are included within the proposals put forward for the site, development will ensure the features and their settings are maintained as far as possible. This will limit the potential for negative effects. Additionally, the policy sets out the requirement for a heritage statement to be included alongside any development proposals to help ensure any development does not adversely impact the setting of the Grade II Ringstead Mill feature. This will protect the feature and its setting from the loss of significance linked to developing the site. Policy 3 also requires the submission of an archaeological field evaluation, based upon the potential to recover medieval findings through developing this site. This part of the policy seeks to ensure the archaeological importance of the site is maintained, and important features and finds are recovered and interpreted in an appropriate manner. This will contribute to the wider historic environment of the Ringstead neighbourhood area, by providing further historical context and information.
- 9.24 There are historic environment specific policies within the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan. Policy 12 is focused on development proposals that could come forward within the Ringstead Conservation Area. It sets out a number of requirements development proposals should particularly regard, including the potential effect of development on designated and non-designated heritage features, townscape and streetscape features that contribute to the setting of important heritage features, and the use of locally distinct building materials. It also outlines the need for all proposals to identify opportunities to bring forward enhancements for the Ringstead Conservation Area. Through this policy the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan is ensuring development respects the Ringstead Conservation Area, its important features, and their setting – protecting features and the wider historic context of the neighbourhood area by safeguarding against significance loss.
- 9.25 Policy 13 also has a historic environment focus. It names 13 locally significant non-designated heritage assets and outlines the need for development to avoid harming them whilst fully regarding their contribution to the historic feel of the area. Development that has the potential to affect these features and / or their

setting must demonstrate they will not harm these assets (or have minimised the potential harm). Through this policy the RNP is seeking to protect locally important heritage assets and their contribution to the wider historic context of the neighbourhood area.

- 9.26 Wider policies in the RNP also work to maintain and enhance the heritage features and the historic environment of the neighbourhood area. Policy 5 indicates materials and colours used by new development should respect the existing surrounding built environment. This will help maintain the historic environment by guiding new development to be in keeping with the surroundings, thus reducing potential impacts to heritage assets through visual changes to their settings. Additionally, Policy 5 outlines the preference for appropriate boundary treatments to be used (for example, vegetation based, low red brick, and stone), and the planting of additional trees and vegetation. These considerations would likely bring forward benefits to the historic environment of Ringstead through positively influencing the settings of heritage assets. Finally, Policy 8 designates green spaces – retaining these green spaces could have a positive impact on the historic environment of Ringstead by maintaining the setting of historic features.
- 9.27 In conclusion, the site allocation policy within the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan does include stipulations for the historic environment, which will help ensure the contribution of the site to the historic environment is retained and enhanced through new development. Additionally, the inclusion of heritage specific policies and the wider Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan policies help to maintain and enhance the historic environment of the neighbourhood area through protecting specific features and encouraging improvements to the built environment. As such, **broadly neutral / minor positive** effects are concluded as most likely.

Land, soil, and water resources

- 9.28 The majority of the Ringstead neighbourhood area is considered to be Grade 3 'Good to Moderate' agricultural quality land, however, it is not possible to determine whether this is Grade 3a (i.e., Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land) or Grade 3b (poorer quality agricultural land). There is also a strip of Grade 2 'Very Good' in the north-western corner. Ringstead neighbourhood area sits within the North West Norfolk Rivers Operational Catchment, and within the catchment of the Heacham River Water Body – which was awarded a poor ecological status in 2019 and a failed chemical status in the same year. However, it is noted that a recent change in the assessment process in 2019 means that all waterbodies in England have a 'fail' with regards to chemical status, so this is not out of the ordinary.
- 9.29 The site allocation policy does not make specific stipulations for land, soil, and water resources. It is acknowledged that this site is currently in agricultural usage – and that the development of it could result in the loss of better quality and productive agricultural land.
- 9.30 The wider plan policies make provision for these resources and their quality. Policy 7 indicates that developments will include vegetation and tree planting. Increased levels of planting will help safeguard land and soil resources directly under and in proximity, though it is noted the development of sites will result in a level of loss. Policy 8 also has the potential to safeguard land and soil

resources by designating green spaces, which protects the soil and land resources from development and likely loss. Furthermore, Policy 12 indicates development within the Ringstead Conservation Area will make use of locally distinct building materials. This would encourage the use of resources that are more abundant and / or common within or in proximity to the neighbourhood area and would avoid the extraction and potential loss of other materials that are perhaps inappropriate to use.

- 9.31 In conclusion, the site allocation policy does not set out requirements that would help safeguard land, soil, and water resources within the boundaries. Whilst the proposed level of growth is small, taking the allocated site forward for development would likely remove productive agricultural land from use. However, the wider RNP policies do make provisions for the protection of land, soil, and water resources – through planting, designating green spaces, and focusing on the use of local materials. Whilst significant effects are not anticipated, **minor negative effects** are concluded as most likely.

Landscape

- 9.32 Most of the neighbourhood area is within the Norfolk Coast Protected Landscape (previously Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or AONB). According to the latest management plan for this designation, key qualities include (but are not limited to): strong and distinctive links between land and sea; nationally and internationally important geology; a sense of remoteness, tranquillity, and wildness; and diversity and integrity of landscape, seascape and settlement character.
- 9.33 The Ringstead neighbourhood area overlaps with one National Character Area (NCA) – North West Norfolk. The North West Norfolk NCA is characterised by a very open and rolling topography – and is very important for agricultural activities, given its large-scale arable and grassland features. Many of the villages are centred on greens or ponds and built from local vernacular materials – carstone and chalk in the west with flint becoming characteristic further east, reflecting the underlying geology. Aquifers underlying the NCA and extending well beyond its boundaries provide water both locally and regionally.
- 9.34 In terms of local landscape character, the Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Local Character Assessment (LCA) classifies the area of Ringstead as ‘rolling open farmland’ – which is represented by open rolling arable farmland, with a few areas of woodland that break up the long expansive views. The LCA has split the area into two different sub sections: Ringstead and Ringstead Downs. Landscape setting, the built character and the use of traditional building materials, and the settlement density and pattern are some of the sensitivities across these two subsections.
- 9.35 In terms of the site allocation, there are constraints associated with the site included under Policy 3. It is within the Norfolk Coast Protected Landscape and is a greenfield site in agricultural use. There is a level of screening from the road (Peddars Way North) and on the northern and southern site boundaries through the presence of hedgerows. The site is largely level, though it is noted the topography declines across the site towards the west. Policy 3 does not include specific provisions for landscape but does indicate development must regard the key points outlined in Policy 5.

9.36 Policy 5 sets out the requirement for new development to be in line with the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan Design Guidance and Codes (2022) document, including three specific character areas – CA1: Conservation Area, CA2: Post WWI Development, and CA3: Countryside. Policy 5 indicates the following:

- New residential developments will need to take into consideration the aforementioned conservation areas and their specifications – including their low to medium housing density levels. Additionally, it will need to respect the linear settlement pattern and building layouts in the character areas. This will help ensure development that comes forward is appropriate and respects the identified character areas, which would contribute to reducing landscape impacts by preventing character erosion and protecting key features and views that contribute to landscape.
- New development needs to ensure building heights and rooflines are in line with existing and generally low profile of buildings in the neighbourhood area. This should include one and two storey buildings with pitched or hipped roofs depending on the identified character area. Additionally, the materials and colours used in new development should respect the surrounding built environment. This will help to maintain landscape and townscape character by avoiding inappropriate development that will disrupt important views and vistas.
- Boundary treatments for new development should use features that are relevant to the character area and use local materials as far as possible – including hedgerows and trees. Additionally, development should provide front and back gardens; existing landscape features should be protected, retained, and enhanced (including gardens and green spaces), and new development should integrate new trees and vegetation. By making provision for these green landscape features, Policy 5 is maintaining and enhancing views through breaking up development and is maintaining landscape character by protecting important features.
- New developments within the Norfolk Coast Protected Landscape designation will need to take the Integrated Landscape Guidance Assessments (2021) documents. This will help guide development to be considerate of the special qualities that contribute to the designation and reduce the potential for negative impacts.

9.37 Policy 9 is focused on landscape quality. It includes the need for development proposals to conserve and enhance the scenic beauty and special qualities of the Norfolk Coast Protected Landscape. The policy also identifies key views that are important to the local community and stipulates that development proposals that will adversely impact them will not be supported. Additionally, development will need to be of a form and scale that avoids or mitigates any harm to these key views. This demonstrates that the RNP recognises the importance of views to the landscape and the local community and is committed to retaining these key views. Policy 9 is also focused on dark skies – it seeks to minimise light pollution through providing conditions for external lighting. This includes the use of white light low-energy lamps, and the exclusion of dusk to dawn lamps. These conditions will help to maintain and enhance the integrity of the night landscape.

9.38 The wider RNP policies also make provision for landscape. Policy 6 indicates proposals for housing extension, annexes, and outbuildings, will be permitted

where they are appropriate to the location. This will help protect the landscape and its character by ensuring this kind of development does not occur in parts of the neighbourhood area that are more landscape sensitive. This is reiterated in Policy 11, which indicates extensions should not detract from the character and appearance of the surroundings – thus helping to protect the landscape value. Policy 8 seeks to protect several local green spaces. This will have an indirect benefit for landscape character and quality by retaining spaces that will help break up development.

- 9.39 The policies within the RNP have a large landscape focus. This is evident through its design focused policy (Policy 5), the landscape quality policy (Policy 9), and the wider plan policies – all of which work to protect key views and vistas, and the landscape character of the neighbourhood area. However, it is noted the site allocation policy (Policy 3) does not make specific stipulations for landscape. Whilst the policy is focused on bringing forward a low level of growth (six new dwellings) and includes the need for development proposals to be in line with the design stipulations under Policy 5, the site could benefit from site-specific landscape provisions and masterplanning. This could help ensure development to the north of the site is not negatively impacted by development (for example, due to changes in views to and from the houses), as well as reducing impacts to the Norfolk Coast Protected Landscape designation.
- 9.40 Overall, the development of an undeveloped area in the National Landscape will lead to **negative effects**, but the policy mitigation provided is likely to ensure that residual impacts are **minor** in nature.

Transportation and movement

- 9.41 With regards to the road network, part of the M40 intersects the northeastern part of the neighbourhood area. The only A road that intersects the neighbourhood area is the A4095, whilst B roads include the B430, B4030, and B4100. Notably, increases in volumes of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) traffic are currently impacting the small rural roads within the neighbourhood area. This is because routing agreements are not enforced, and there is dissatisfaction locally with the council's attempts to mitigate this issue.
- 9.42 In terms of sustainable transportation opportunities in the neighbourhood area, Ringstead is not served by any bus service, nor is there a train station within the neighbourhood boundaries. The nearest train station is located in Kings Lynn, which is approximately 20km south-west of the neighbourhood area. This station allows for connections to London Kings Cross, and Liverpool Street. The nearest bus stop to the Ringstead neighbourhood area is located to the north of the village in Holme. From here it is possible to join the coastliner bus route which goes from Kings Lynn to Fakenham, which runs from Monday to Sunday. From Wells and Wells-next-the-Sea it is also possible to join the CoastHopper bus route, from which it is possible to reach Cromer. It is noted these services do not connect well to one another, which further encourages the use of private vehicles in Ringstead. It is noted that there are a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within the neighbourhood area, as well as two long distance trails – these allow for safe active transport opportunities within Ringstead and further afield through footpath and bridleway connections.
- 9.43 The site allocation policy does make provision for transportation and movement. Policy 3 indicates safe highways access to the site will come from

Peddars Way North and will need to meet the standards set by Norfolk County Council. This will allow for safe vehicular access to and from the site to other parts of the neighbourhood area, and to the strategic road network: Peddars Way North connects to the A149 to the north outside of Ringstead, which connects Kings Lynn to Great Yarmouth. The policy also indicates development of the site will bring forward a suitable level of parking – both for residents and for visitors. This will reduce inappropriate parking along roadsides and on road verges, which could contribute to traffic issues such as congestion (linked to vehicles having to wait for the right moment to pass parked vehicles). Though not included as a key component that development proposals need to be compliant with, Policy 3 does demonstrate that the Great Ringstead Parish Council would support the improvement of the existing footway along Peddars Way North, and a potential linkage to connect it to the footway along Holme Road. This would allow for better active transportation opportunities and connectivity around the neighbourhood area.

- 9.44 The wider RNP policies make provision for transportation and movement. Policy 5 indicates development proposals should improve active travel opportunities wherever possible, through linking existing PRowS to new pedestrian and cycle routes that new development will create. This will improve active transportation connectivity by providing new routes and linkages within the Ringstead neighbourhood area and in proximity to it. Policy 14 is focused on ensuring there is suitable parking provision for new development coming forward within Ringstead neighbourhood area and includes the need for passing bays where on-street parking is used. This would likely reduce inappropriate parking within the neighbourhood area and could help alleviate experienced traffic issues linked to parking (such as lack of parking spaces, congestion due to waiting to pass parked vehicles etc). This will be especially important given the neighbourhood area experiences issues with parking and congestion in the summer linked to tourist movements and the holiday season on the coast.
- 9.45 Overall, the requirements set out through the site allocation policy and the wider policy framework seek to maintain and enhance active transportation provision, provide safe access to the road network, and contribute additional parking. This will likely improve connectivity within the Ringstead neighbourhood area and in proximity, as well as help alleviate the identified stress the neighbourhood area experiences during the summer months. Recognising that more strategic transport issues (like the lack of sustainable transportation opportunities within the neighbourhood area) are beyond of the scope of the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan, **minor positive effects** are concluded likely through the plan.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

- 10.1 Overall, no potential significant negative effects have been identified through the appraisal of the RNP. Significant positive effects are considered likely in relation to the SEA topic 'Community wellbeing', given the plan seeks to deliver small-scale affordable housing to meet the identified need of the local community, provide garden space, allocate green spaces, and provide employment spaces.
- 10.2 Minor positive effects are considered likely for biodiversity and geodiversity and the historic environment. This is due to the focus of the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan on maintaining and enhancing green infrastructure – which will protect and improve biodiversity connectivity and contribute to the setting of heritage features and the historic character of the neighbourhood area. The provision of additional car parking spaces, and the inclusion of active travel networks in new development is also likely to lead to minor positive effects for transportation and movement.
- 10.3 Neutral effects are considered likely for climate change and flood risk, given the low level of growth the plan seeks to bring forward, and the inclusion of policies that will mitigate against the effects of climate change.
- 10.4 Minor negative effects are concluded as most likely in relation to landscape and land, soil, and water resources. This reflects the development of greenfield and agricultural land within the protected National Landscape. Alongside the small-scale development proposed, policy mitigation is likely to ensure that these effects are not significant.
- 10.5 One recommendation is made – to increase site-specific landscaping requirements in the site allocation policy and develop a masterplan of the allocated site. However, uptake of this recommendation will not lead to changes to the likely overall effects.

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 RNP and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation (Regulation 16), and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the RNP 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 RNP will then be subject to a referendum, organised by the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the RNP, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the RNP will become part of the Development Plan for Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, 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 RNP will be undertaken by the Borough 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 RNP that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by the Council.

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** 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 the Environmental Report, in accordance with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

Report section	Questions answered	Regulatory requirement met
Introduction	What is 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 is the scope of the SA?	<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. 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. 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/ SA 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 the alternatives assessment/ a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the Plan.
Part 2	What are the SA findings at this current stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likely significant effects associated with the Plan. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce, and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the 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 the Environmental Report, in accordance 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>	
1. 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>
2. 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>
3. the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level	
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;	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan'	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>
5. 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 environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	
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;	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>
7. the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;	Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal	
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	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]
9. a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	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 C: ‘Checklist’ of how (throughout the SEA process) and where regulatory requirements are or will be met.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how the requirement is met
Schedule 2 requirements:	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	Chapter 2 (‘What’s the plan seeking to achieve’) presents this information. The relationship with other plans and programmes is also considered in the SEA Scoping Report (2023).
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 were considered in detail at the scoping stage, which included consultation on a Scoping Report published in November 2023. The outcome of scoping was an ‘SEA Framework’, and this is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What’s the scope of the SEA’). More detailed messages from the Scoping Report - i.e., messages established through context and baseline review - are presented within Appendix B.
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, national, or community 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 Scoping Report (2023) presents a detailed context review and explains how key messages from the context review (and baseline review) were then refined to establish an ‘SEA framework’. The key issues established through scoping are presented in Appendix B. The context review informed the development of the SEA framework and topics, presented in Chapter 3, which provide a methodological ‘framework’ for appraisal. With regards to explaining “how... considerations have been taken into account” - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 explains how reasonable alternatives were established in-light of available evidence. • Chapter 6 sets out the detailed appraisal of options. • Chapter 7 explains the Council’s ‘reasons for supporting the preferred approach’, i.e., explains how/ why the preferred approach is justified in-light of alternatives appraisal (and other factors). • Chapter 9 sets out the findings of the appraisal of the draft plan and Chapter 10 provides a summary of the findings and any recommendations.
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,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 explains how reasonable alternatives were established in-light of available evidence. • Chapter 6 sets out the detailed appraisal of options. • Chapter 9 sets out the findings of the appraisal of the draft plan and Chapter 10 provides a summary of the findings and any recommendations.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how the requirement is met
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).	As explained within the various methodology sections, as part of appraisal work, consideration has been given to the SEA scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions.
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.	Where necessary, mitigation measures are identified within the alternatives appraisal (in Chapter 6) and appraisal of the draft Plan (Chapters 9 and 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.	Chapter 5 deals with 'Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with', in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues/ options. Also, Chapter 7 explains the Council's 'reasons for selecting the preferred option' (in light of alternatives appraisal). Methodology is discussed at various places, ahead of presenting appraisal findings, and limitations/ assumptions are also discussed as part of appraisal narratives.
9. A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10.	At this stage no additional monitoring measures are identified as being necessary over and above those already being considered by the Council.
10. A Non-Technical Summary of the information provided under the above headings.	A Non-Technical Summary (NTS) is provided separately.
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 SA Report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1 and 6.2).	At the current time, this SEA Environmental Report is being published alongside the Regulation 14 draft plan for public consultation.
The SA Report must be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the Plan. The SA 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.	The Council will take into account this SEA Environmental Report when preparing the submission version of the Plan.

Appendix B SEA Scoping

Air quality

Key issues

The closest AQMA to the neighbourhood area is the Gaywood Clock AQMA, which is designated for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) (annual mean) exceedances. However, this AQMA is circa 22 km southwest of Ringstead and no development is being planned for through the RNP that is likely to impact upon air quality objectives within surrounding AQMAs. With no exceedances recorded within the neighbourhood area, this theme is **SCOPED OUT** of the SEA for the RNP.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

Key issues

Existing ecological connections of international and national significance are predominantly found in the west of the neighbourhood area towards the coast. There will be a need to consider avoidance and mitigation for development in this part of the neighbourhood area. However, there is also the potential to focus biodiversity gains in this area too, as a recognised enhancement zone. Consideration will be given to the findings of the HRA at a later stage of plan making.

Climate change and flood risk

Key issues

CO₂ emissions associated with LULUCF remain high in West Norfolk, highlighting the importance of maintaining sustainable development within the area and adhering to policies regarding development within the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Whilst a certain level of development is required locally, it cannot be ignored that the site is recognised by the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Core Strategy as a smaller village / hamlet secondary settlement town, in which it would be inappropriate to seek further development.

As with much of the country, extreme heat events are likely to occur more frequently in the future. In addition to this, drought is likely to become an increasing issue in summer, whilst surface water / groundwater flooding is likely to increase during winter months. In this respect, climate change resilience should form an integral part of the RNP policy framework. As such, there is a need to consider flood risk, avoiding vulnerable development in areas of high surface water flood risk, and managing, and where possible, improving drainage rates.

Community wellbeing

Key issues

Norfolk is extremely popular with holiday makers and second homeowners and due to its location Ringstead also suffers the effects of this. Based on dwelling completions data to 2021 and ONS mid-2020 population estimates, it is calculated that in 2020 / 2021 there were 80 dwellings with no usual resident in Ringstead,

assumed to be second homes. This accounts for 38.8% of dwellings in the NA, a relatively significant increase on the proportion in 2011 of 31.5%. The high proportion of second home ownership makes a lack of affordable housing one of the key issues in the neighbourhood area.

The neighbourhood area has a declining population, which is likely linked to limited housing development. The population is also ageing, which could indicate a greater need for smaller housing developments to accommodate downsizing. There also may be a need for specialist housing for older people.

Historic environment

Key issues

The concentration of heritage assets in Ringstead presents a constraint to future development within the neighbourhood area, as any further development will need to be visually sympathetic to these features and be in line with design guidelines. The RNP can help overcome this by ensuring any development that comes forward during the plan period is sensitive to the historic features and setting of the neighbourhood area in terms of design and layout.

The RNP presents an ideal opportunity to provide policy that protects the key characteristics of this area, and identifies the significance associated with different settings and non-designated assets.

Land, soil, and water resources

Key issues

Heacham River was classified as 'moderate' from 2013 to 2016 but has been in 'poor' ecological status since 2019. It has also failed its most recent chemical assessment in 2019. However, the Environment Agency highlights that all water bodies failed for chemical status in this timeframe and that the 2019 assessments are not comparable to previous years.

It will be important that future development within the neighbourhood area does not lead to deterioration of the Heacham River. Keeping the water free of pollutants, contaminants, and litter would contribute to increasing water quality.

Development in Ringstead has the potential to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land. However, it is anticipated that small levels of development would occur, and this would likely be limited to within existing residential areas.

Landscape

Key issues

It will be important that the RNP seeks to protect the local landscape, particularly the AONB and Heritage Coast in future development, including their coherence and characteristics, through an appropriate spatial strategy and suitable design and layout. It will be important that the RNP strategy is in line with the aims of the AONB Management Plan.

Transportation and movement

Key issues

Congestion in the summer holidays can be a problem in the neighbourhood area, with only a small level of road infrastructure to support a large demand in the summer months (linked to tourist movements through Ringstead). Associated with this is the insufficient amount of car parks to support the tourism industry in the summer. Problems caused by the sheer number of visitors at peak occasions include on street parking within the town, the use of residents' spaces, parking on double yellow lines, and narrow roads being blocked. This causes congestion and pollution problems, and problems of overflow parking at existing car parks.

The neighbourhood area presents good opportunities for the RNP to build upon existing walking and cycling networks.

