

# Watlington Neighbourhood Plan



**SEA and HRA Screening Assessment  
Update October 2022**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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1. Watlington Parish Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for Watlington parish, known as WNP throughout this document. The planning period will be 2019-2036. The designated area (See Figure 1) is located within King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council area. [Collective Community Planning](#) has been appointed by the parish council to consider whether there is a need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be undertaken on WNP. This is required under European Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive), transposed into UK law through the SEA Regulations<sup>1</sup>.
2. SEA may be required for a Neighbourhood Plan, if it is likely to have significant environmental effects. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is like an SEA but includes assessment of the likely significant effects of a plan or programme on economic and social factors, as well as environmental factors. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) clarifies that there is no legal requirement for a Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to a SA, but that SA can be used to demonstrate how the plan will contribute to sustainable development.
3. This report will also determine whether or not the contents of the Neighbourhood Plan require a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Article 6 (3) of the EU Habitats Directive<sup>2</sup> and with Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017<sup>3</sup>. A HRA would be required when the implementation of the contents of the Neighbourhood Plan are likely to cause significant negative effects on a designated protected European Site (Natura 2000 sites).

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<sup>1</sup> The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/1633), as amended by the Environmental Assessment and Miscellaneous Planning (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018 (SI 2018/1232). It should be noted that the purpose of the amendments to the SEA Regulations is to ensure that the law functions correctly after the UK has left the European Union. No substantive changes are made to the way the SEA regime operates.

<sup>2</sup> [EUR-Lex - 31992L0043 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

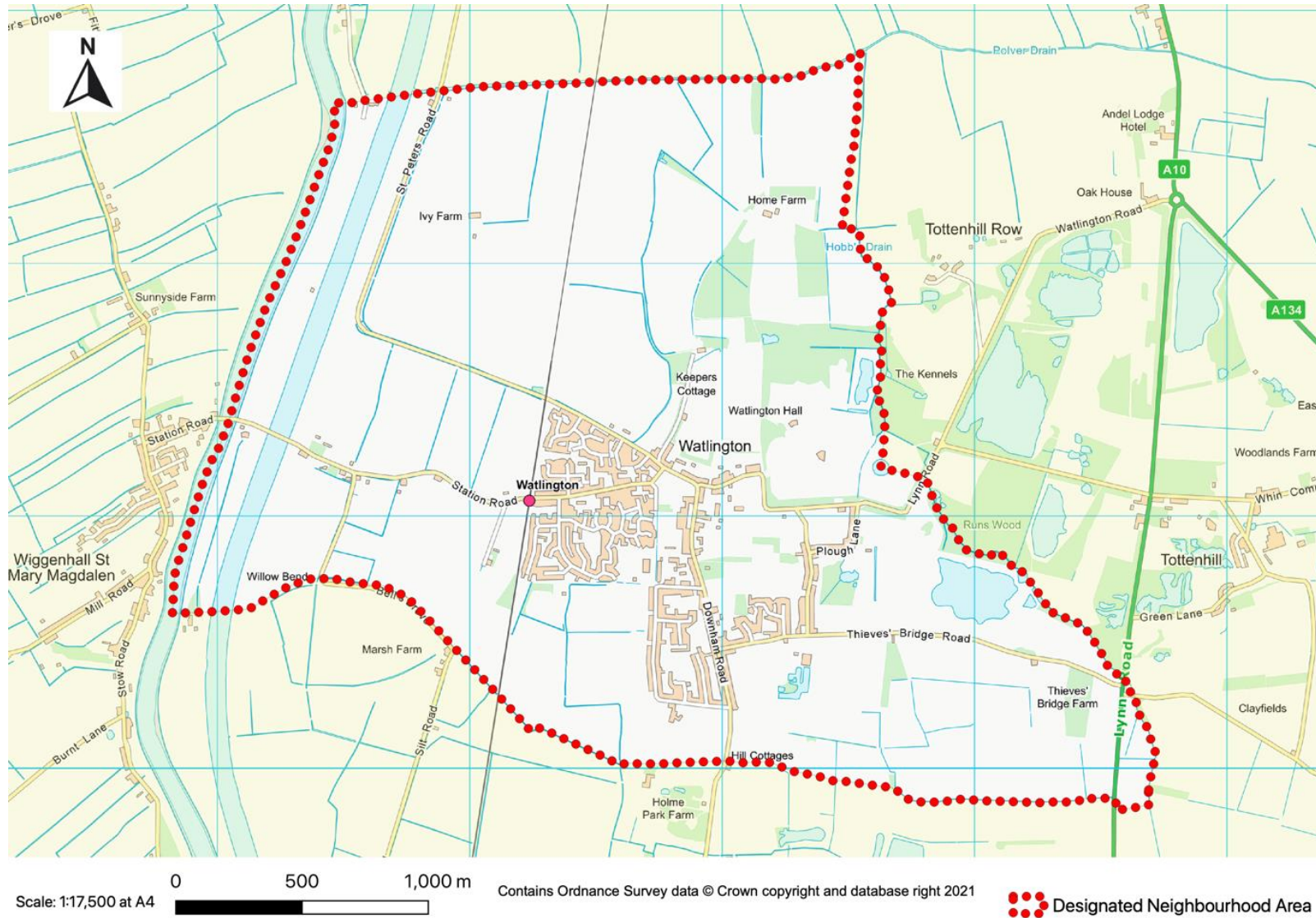


Figure 1: Designated Neighbourhood Area

## 2 SEA SCREENING

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### 2.1 SCOPE OF THE WATLINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

4. A draft (Regulation 14) version of WNP is currently being prepared. It is intended that this is subject to public consultation in 2022.
5. WNP includes a vision for the long-term future of Watlington, along with aims to support delivery of this vision. The current draft vision is:

*The rural character and special identity of Watlington will be protected and enhanced. The rural character is defined by many features, but especially habitats and green infrastructure for wildlife, the openness of the landscape, historic buildings, and the tranquillity of the parish and village.*

*In protecting and enhancing this rural character, the plan will result in a more coherent, connected, and expansive ecological network of key habitats that delivers a significant net ecological gain for wildlife over the plan period. The plan will ensure that the openness of the landscape is retained for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike, adding as it does to the tranquillity of parish, and that the parish's historic and heritage assets continue to provide a sense of place. There is a real vibrancy within the community, and the plan builds on this by protecting green spaces and community facilities, which help people to stay in the parish, and create opportunities for people to meet, interact, and get to know each other.*

*Finally, the plan will make a key contribution towards addressing climate change, both through reducing greenhouse gas emissions and overseeing a radical change in the development of a network of trees and hedgerows to absorb CO<sub>2</sub>.*

6. The draft plan currently includes nine specific aims to deliver this vision:
  - A. *Ensure the natural environment is a key consideration in all decisions about how Watlington changes;*
  - B. *Conserve and enhance Watlington's ecological network;*
  - C. *Ensure any future housing development meets the needs of current and future residents of the parish;*
  - D. *Promote sensitive development that responds to local character and protects and enriches the landscape of the parish, and safeguarding key views;*

- E. Respond meaningfully to climate change, promoting sustainable development and energy efficiency;*
- F. Conserve the significance of heritage assets;*
- G. Protect important green spaces;*
- H. Promote access to the countryside for recreation and enjoyment; and*
- I. Reduce the impact of traffic through the village, investigating ways to emphasise entrances to the village, signifying the change from rural roads to speed restricted areas.*

7. WNP will have a range of non-strategic planning policies to realise and deliver the above vision and aims. This includes policies:

- To ensure the housing mix, including affordable housing, on new development sites meets local need;
- To achieve high quality design with the input of Watlington design guide, that reinforces and complements local distinctiveness;
- Ensuring proposals will have due regard to surface water flooding, the incorporation of SuDS and maximising biodiversity opportunities
- Identifying green corridors in Watlington which will be a focus for protection and biodiversity enhancement;
- To protect local green spaces and non-designated heritage assets within the plan area for future enjoyment;
- To promote improvements to the core footway network, including new and existing walking/cycling routes;
- To protect the loss of community facilities for the vitality of the parish;
- Enhance the provision of open recreational space through providing allotment land when required;
- Supporting the provision of micro/small businesses in the development boundary;
- To tackle the issue of non-residential parking by setting parking standards.

8. The plan does not allocate land for development.

## 3 BASELINE INFORMATION

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9. This section summarises baseline information for the WNP area, drawing on the Evidence Base which will accompany the Neighbourhood Plan.

### 3.1 CONTEXT

10. Watlington is a village in Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough, with a resident population of around 2,532 according to the mid-year population estimates from the Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2019). It's located 6 miles north of Downham Market and South of King's Lynn. The majority of the parish falls west of the A10, with part of the designated area falling into the A10 on Lynn Road in the Southeast of the boundary. The parish also has part of the Great River Ouse relief channel and the river itself running through this designated area to the west.
11. The village is served by Watlington railway station (on the Fen Line between London Kings Cross- King's Lynn stopping at destinations including Ely and Cambridge) which is less than a mile from the centre of the village. Watlington provides a local employment base which has developed from its role in serving the local agricultural community<sup>4</sup>. It is a thriving village with a reasonable range of facilities, including a GP surgery, primary school, bus route, railway station, post office/shop, pub, village hall, parish church, food, and retail.

### 3.2 BIODIVERSITY, FLORA AND FAUNA

12. There are no international or national statutory designated sites in Watlington. There are however three non-statutory wildlife designations within the Neighbourhood Plan area known as County Wildlife Sites (CWS):
- a) Watlington Railway Sidings CWS;
  - b) Runs Wood Meadow CWS and;
  - c) Thieves Bridge Meadow CWS
13. County Wildlife Sites are areas of land rich in wildlife outside of nationally protected areas such as National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). County Wildlife Sites do not receive statutory protection but are given some protection

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<sup>4</sup> King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Plan – adopted 2016 [Adopted plan | Adopted plan | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk \(west-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#)

through the planning system. Norfolk Wildlife Trust advises planning authorities, developers and landowners on the protection and management of the sites<sup>5</sup>.

14. Parts of Watlington contain Priority Habitats, meaning they have been identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation under UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). There are two priority habitat areas – one ‘traditional orchard’ and one ‘no main habitat’. There are also priority habitats adjacent to the neighbourhood plan area including habitat networks, and traditional orchards. Approximately 4.5km outside of the neighbourhood plan area is the SSSI at Setchey which was designated because of its importance for studies of Flandrian sea-level change as part of a network of Fenland sites.

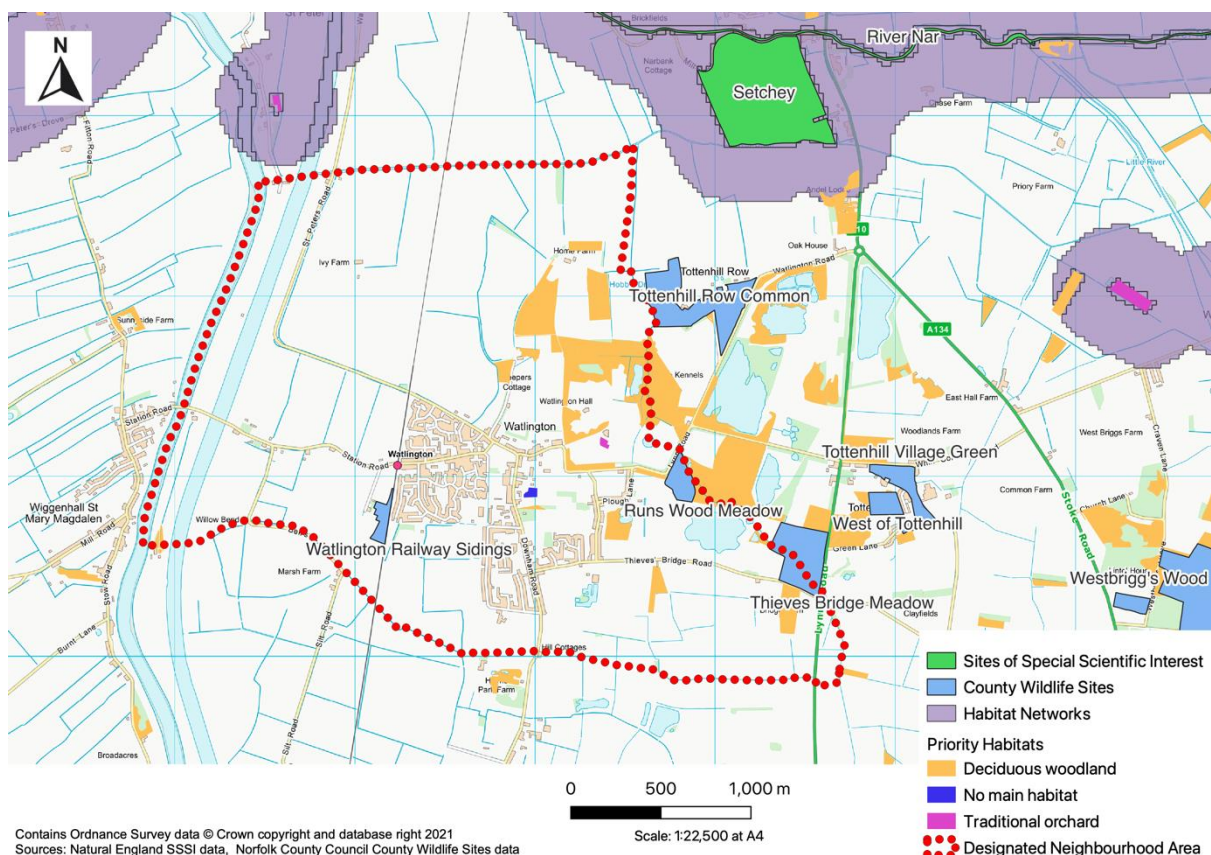


Figure 2- Wildlife designations and habitat

15. Adjacent to the neighbourhood plan area and on the outskirts of Watlington is the Watatunga nature reserve. Comprised of 170 acres of woodland, grassland, and lakes the reserve provides a unique environment for ungulate and rare bird species to roam free. The reserve has breeding programmes for species including the Malayan

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife-in-norfolk/county-wildlife-sites>



sambar, hog deer, barasingha and great bustard. Access to the reserve is via guided tour only.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.3 POPULATION

16. According to mid-year population estimates from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), Watlington has a current population of 2,532. There has been an upward trend since the year 2001 with the population rising from 2019 to 2532 people in the year 2019. Although more recently the rise has levelled off. The population has aged over this time with the proportion of people in the Watlington aged 60 and above increasing from 25% to 27% between 2011 and 2019.
17. There has been a similar increase in the 45-59 age group. There is a slightly higher proportion of older females than males, with the over 60 population in Watlington in 2019 split 54%/46% female to male. This difference has increased since 2011 when the split was 52%/48% female to male. The data indicates there has been a decline in all of the younger age groups (45 and below). People aged 25-44 made up 26% of the Watlington population in 2011 but dropped to 23% in 2019.

### 3.4 HUMAN HEALTH

18. Provision of age-related services is likely to become an increasing consideration for the neighbourhood plan area over time as the proportion of over 65s is growing.

### 3.5 SOIL

19. The parish contains some of the best and most versatile agricultural land in England, as identified by the Agricultural Land Classification Scale. Of the areas not covered by settlement a good proportion is identified as Grade 2 or Grade 3. National policy is to retain high value land such as this for its economic and other benefits. Where land of this quality is in active farming use, it could constrain future growth within the parish.

### 3.6 WATER

20. According to the Environment Agency's future flood risk modelling, the whole plan area is at a relatively low risk from surface water flooding, however, there are pockets

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<sup>6</sup> [Watatunga Wildlife Tours and Accommodation in Norfolk](#)

of medium risk flooding in the built-up area of Watlington, and some individual roads/properties are at higher risk. Of note are small areas on Fendley Close, John Davis Way, Stone Close, Lake Close, Britton Close, Langridge Circle, and Downham Road<sup>7</sup>. Environment Agency modelling does not account for blocked drains or very heavy rainfall, so sites in a low-risk flood zone may still experience flooding.

21. In terms of fluvial flood risk, much of the parish falls within Flood Zone 1; this means there is a less than 0.1% chance of flooding from rivers or the sea in any given year. To the western periphery of the designated area the extent of fluvial flooding is considered to be medium risk which means there is a chance of flooding each year between 1-3.3%. This is land west of Watlington train station covering areas such as St Peters Road, Station Road and north towards Ivy Farm.
22. These flood zones have been defined following a national modelling project and are regularly updated using recorded flood extents and local modelling. The flood zones are based on the likelihood of an area flooding, with Flood Zone 1 areas least likely to flood and flood zone 3 areas more likely to. The modelling does not account for blocked drains or very heavy rainfall, so sites in a low-risk flood zone may still experience flooding.
23. Mapping from the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Strategic Flood Risk Assessment shows that flood risk is predominantly from tidal/fluvial sources because the western part is located within Flood Zone 3. There are several watercourses that flow through the area from Ordinary Watercourses; these are managed by an IDB so may not be accounted for in the Environment Agency Flood Zone mapping. There is the potential that the settlement could flood from one or more of these watercourses, independently to tidal flooding. However, there are a number of flood walls, embankments, and bridge abutments along the River Great Ouse, which have a standard of protection of 1% AEP. However, residual flood risk remains if these defences fail/overtop over time.
24. Mapping for surface water flood risk shows that in Watlington this is predominantly from water ponding on roads, gardens, and other open spaces throughout the settlement. There is additional sporadic flooding to properties across the settlement beginning in 1% AEP event. Properties within the vicinity of Stone Close are shown to be at risk of surface water flooding in 0.1% AEP event<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> [Learn more about this area's flood risk - GOV.UK \(check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk)

<sup>8</sup>JBA Consulting. Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1 (2017) Available at: [2017s5962 BCKLWN SFRA Final Report v3.0.pdf](#) Accessed 01.03.22 Page 67

25. There are also reported issues of foul sewage escaping from the drainage system. There is concern that sewage capacity may be exceeded during heavy rainfall and that further growth will exacerbate this. Evidence from the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Strategic Flood Risk Assessment<sup>9</sup> indicates that Watlington's postcode PE33 0 has had four recorded flood sewer incidents.

### 3.7 AIR AND CLIMATIC FACTORS

26. As part of the National Air Quality Strategy all local authorities are obliged to establish air quality levels in their area that meet national air quality objectives. If an area does not meet these objectives Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) are declared. The King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council Air Quality Annual Status Report (2021) confirms that there are two Air Quality Management Areas in the borough these are within King's Lynn at Gaywood Clock and Town Centre. These AQMAs are approximately 7 miles north to the WNP area<sup>10</sup>. This would suggest that air quality is generally not of a concern in the WNP area, and indeed the report confirms that air quality could be improved but a number of measures have been put in place to improve local air quality.

### 3.8 MATERIAL ASSETS

27. There is reasonable access to a range of services and facilities as measured by distance, many within walking distance. The availability of local services provides good accessibility for people and provides the opportunity for many residents, and visitors, to walk or cycle.

28. Watlington is a popular village with a reasonable range of facilities including a Post Office/shop, public house, village hall, sports and social club, community primary school, parish church, food, and retail all within reasonable walking distance of residents. Watlington Sports and Social Club, which is opposite the village hall, is a family members club offering sports and social activities to all ages. Activities include food/drink, big screen sports games, pool, darts, football, bowls, and cribbage. Watlington has a range of clubs and services for children and young people including a primary school, pre-school, under-fives, youth club, Beavers/Cubs/Scouts,

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<sup>9</sup>JBA Consulting. Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1 (2017) Available at: [2017s5962\\_BCKLWN\\_SFRA\\_Final\\_Report\\_v3.0.pdf](#) Accessed 01.03.22 Page 52

<sup>10</sup>Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Air Quality Annual Status Report (2021) Available at: [Kings Lynn ASR 2021 v1.pdf](#) Accessed on 01.03.22

Guides/Brownies, youth football and Watlington Young Players. The village has a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and football pitch at the recreation ground as well as two other play areas with equipment located at Warren Close and Stone Close.

29. There is also good access to public transport including the railway station and bus services. The Great Northern train service runs through Watlington which is the London King's Cross to King's Lynn train stopping at Ely and Cambridge. This service runs approximately once an hour in both directions. Furthermore, two bus services run in Watlington to King's Lynn to Downham Market: the 37 Lynx service and the 47 Go To Town Service. The 37 and 47 allows people to board from the Angel Public House in Watlington however both services show to only be once a day from Monday to Saturday leaving in one direction in the morning then the following direction in the afternoon.<sup>1112</sup> These services are not considered very sustainable for one to not rely on a private car.
30. Within the built-up-area of the village the roads are subject to 30mph speeds limits, there are footways for people to use to get access to local services, areas of open green spaces and the wider countryside, however these are somewhat fragmented. Although Watlington has some local services as described previously, for higher order services people will need to travel to either King's Lynn or Downham Market, such as for high school. Both locations are quite close to Watlington, being around 6 miles to King's Lynn and 11 miles to Downham Market, which should take roughly 15-20 minutes or so, depending on traffic via car or train. Although King's Lynn, with its wider range of services, is within a reasonable cycling distance being only 6 miles, the traffic speeds on most accessible roads are 60mph and are rural or busy such as the A10 so would deter all but the most determined.
31. Strategic traffic will generally be kept to the A10 (only part of the A10 runs through the southeast of the parish). These roads generally keep much of the through traffic out of the village.

### 3.9 CULTURAL HERITAGE

32. The parish has a long history, having first appeared in records in 1166 but with evidence of human activity dating back to Mesolithic and Neolithic times (Stone Age). Norfolk Heritage Service's Heritage Explorer described Watlington's name as coming from the Old English for "settlement of wacol people" with wacol meaning watchful.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> [37-april-2021.pdf \(lynxbus.co.uk\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Service-47-A4-NEW-timetable-2nd-Dec-2019.pdf \(gtt-online.co.uk\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Parish-Summary-Watlington-\(Parish-Summary\) - Norfolk Heritage Explorer](#)

The church, St Peter and St Paul's is the oldest surviving building in the parish; a medieval church with Norman origins, built almost entirely from carstone. Only the base of the Norman tower remains. The church was rebuilt around 1300 and the chancel added around 1340. The building was further altered in the 15<sup>th</sup> century including a new west window in the tower and a small spire (now gone). The Victorians restored the church between 1900-1902 with much of the medieval interior surviving. The tower has six bells: two date back to 1450 and the others to 1910. All were restored in the 1990s. The clock in the tower is from 1920 and was given in thanks for the return of soldiers after World War One.

33. Other medieval buildings have not survived but traces of former moats remain in places. Of the post-medieval buildings to survive in the village, the earliest is Church Farmhouse (also known as The Old Manor House) on Lynn Road from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. Watlington Hall Park is a late 18<sup>th</sup> century historic parkland which is shown in records from 1839 as being a pleasure grounds with stables and a kitchen garden. Plantations were established around the parkland by 1869 and lodges built at the ends of the east and west drives by 1885.<sup>14</sup> The most historically recent entry in the Norfolk Heritage Explorer records for Watlington is a World War Two pillbox south of Church Road. Ariel photographs from 1946 show the earthworks of an anti-aircraft or searchlight battery in the same place.<sup>15</sup>
34. Watlington does not contain any conservation areas and there are no Scheduled Monuments nor buildings on the national at-risk register. There are 6 listed buildings within the area which include one Grade I building, being the Church of Saints Peter & Paul. Other listed buildings are the two Garden Walls (Manor Farmhouse), Manor Farmhouse, 33 Downham Road, and a War Memorial.

#### 4. LANDSCAPE

35. The West Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment<sup>16</sup> identifies that the plan area falls within the 'Settled Farmland with Plantations' character area (Type H). The landscape is described as *forming the transition between the low-lying flat landscape of The Fens – Open Inland Marshes and the more elevated, variable landform of The Brecks – Heathland with Plantations*. The character area has a range of key characteristics including medium/large field units interspersed by woodland and belts that offer enclosure, flat topography with localised areas of gentle sloping dropping towards the Great River Ouse. Arable production is considered the predominant land use, areas

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<sup>14</sup> [MNF31972 - Norfolk Heritage Explorer](#)

<sup>15</sup> [MNF40107 - Norfolk Heritage Explorer](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Landscape Character Assessment | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk \(west-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#)

of mixed woodland bringing textural qualities, field margins range from ditches, dykes, hawthorn hedges scrub and lines of poplar. The landscape is considered to have scattered farm dwellings, small scale settlements of low density which are dispersed throughout connected majorly by rural roads. The characteristics of buildings being buff coloured brick and clay roof tiles.

36. There is also a patchwork of grazed parkland, with views to historic halls and a moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area. A number of main routes cut through the landscape whilst away from these main routes the landscape is, for the most part, peaceful. In addition to the main roads, a network of rural lanes connects scattered farms, small hamlets and villages that make up the majority of settlements in the area. One of the key forces for changes noted for the area is the pressure for expansion of Watlington associated with the mainline railway corridor.

## 4 SEA SCREENING

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### Legislative Background

#### Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

37. The European Directive 2001/42/EC<sup>17</sup> is the basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation, which was transposed into English secondary legislation by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 otherwise known as the SEA Regulations. A SEA would be required if the implementation of the contents of the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan are likely to cause significant environmental effects.

38. The assessment undertaken will follow and answer specific questions using criteria drawn from the European SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 when determining the likely significance of effects as shown in Figure 3<sup>18</sup>.

39. Figure 4 presents the flow diagram entitled Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes which is taken from the Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, published in September 2005<sup>19</sup>. Figure 5 below assesses whether WNP will require a full SEA. The questions in the first column are drawn from Figure 4 which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

#### Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)

40. It is required by Article 6 (3) of the EU Habitats Directive and by regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended 2017) that an appropriate assessment is carried out with regard to the Conservation Objectives of the European Sites and with reference to other plans and projects to identify if any significant effect is likely for any European Site.

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<sup>17</sup> [EUR-Lex - 32001L0042 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> [The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>19</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/7657/practicalguides\\_ea.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguides_ea.pdf)

41. To fulfil the legal requirements if likely significant effects will occur with the implementation of a neighbourhood plan upon the European Sites (Natura 2000 sites) a screening assessment has been undertaken.

42. An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the draft WNP requires an SEA or HRA in accordance with the above regulations. The results can be viewed below.

Figure 3-Schedule 1 Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects

SCHEDULE 1- CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:
  - a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;
  - b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;
  - c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;
  - d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and
  - e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of [F1retained EU law] on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).
  
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:
  - a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;
  - b) the cumulative nature of the effects;



- c) the transboundary nature of the effects;
- d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);
- e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to—
  - (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;
  - (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or
  - (iii) intensive land-use; and
- g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

Figure 4-Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

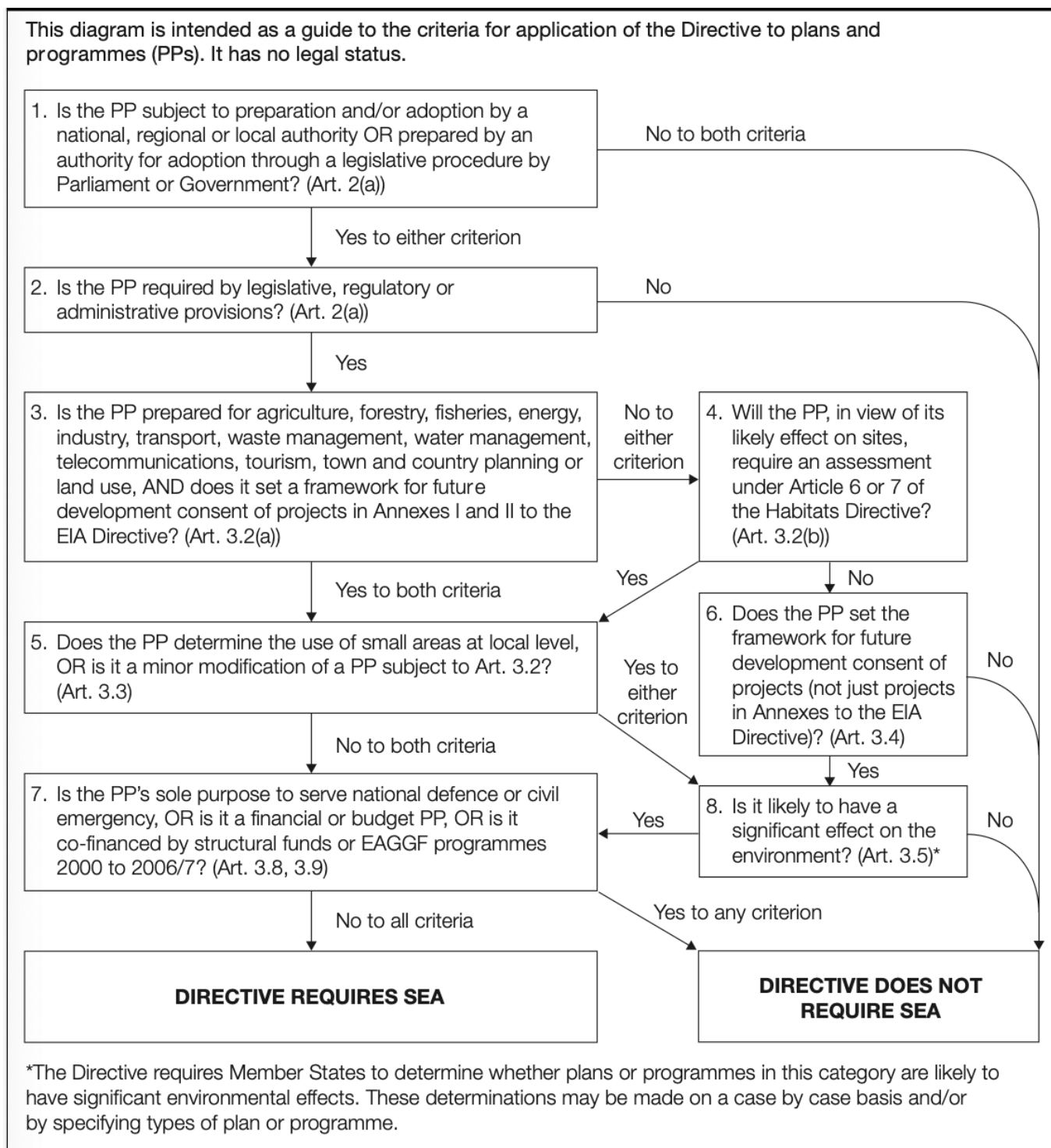


Figure 5-Application of SEA Directive to WNP

\*PP in this instance refers to Neighbourhood Plan

Stage		Y/N	Justification
1	Is the Neighbourhood Plan (PP) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government (Art. 2(a))	Y	<p>The NP is being prepared by the parish council (as the “relevant qualifying body”) and will be made by the Borough Council of King’s Lynn &amp; West Norfolk the local authority which falls within the designated area subject to Watlington passing an independent examination and local community referendum.</p> <p>The preparation of the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan is allowed under primary legislation: The Town and Country Planning Act (1990) as amended by the Localism Act (2011).</p> <p>The preparation of NP’s are subject to several relevant regulations as shown below (not intend to be a complete list):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012,</li> <li>• the Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012</li> <li>• the Neighbourhood Planning (General)(Amendment) Regulations 2015</li> <li>• the Neighbourhood Planning (General)and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2016</li> <li>• the Neighbourhood Planning (General)and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2017</li> </ul> <p>GO TO STAGE 2</p>
2	Is the Neighbourhood Plan (PP) required by legislative, regulatory or	Y	Whilst it is not a requirement for a parish to create a Neighbourhood Plan under the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) and Localism

	administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))		<p>Act (2011), the NP will eventually be “made” and form part of the Development Plan for the Borough Council of King’s Lynn &amp; West Norfolk. This authority is directed by legislative processes, and it is important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether an SEA is required under the Directive.</p> <p>GO TO STAGE 3</p>
3	<p>Is the Neighbourhood Plan (PP) prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art. 3.2(a))</p>	Y/N	<p>Developments that fall within Annex I are ‘excluded’ development for Neighbourhood Plans (as set out in Section 61(k) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as subsequently amended)<sup>20</sup> and the Localism Act 2011 Schedule 9 Part 2 Para 7 Section 38 B (1)(b),(6)<sup>21</sup>.</p> <p>A Neighbourhood Plan is prepared for Town and Country Planning and Land use. The Watlington neighbourhood plan can include at a neighbourhood level, through different policy areas, the framework for development that would fall within Annex II of the EIA Directive. This neighbourhood plan has not set out a framework to manage for future development of the scale and nature envisaged by Annex II of the EIA Directive.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared to set out a framework for town and country planning and land use within the Parish of Watlington. Its intention is to complement the higher order strategic framework that already exists for land use planning across the Borough Council of King’s Lynn &amp; West Norfolk. The</p>

<sup>20</sup> [Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>21</sup> [Localism Act 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)

			<p>Neighbourhood Plan seeks to align and be in general conformity with the strategic framework.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan is not allocating any development itself but anticipates being one of the key tools to manage future development of Watlington.</p> <p>GO TO STAGE 4</p>
4	Will the Neighbourhood Plan (PP), in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.3)	N	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan could potentially have impacts on sites covered by the Habitats Directive. The Neighbourhood Plan is not proposing to make site allocations for residential housing or business purposes. Please see section 5 of this report for further detail.</p> <p>GO TO STAGE 6</p>
5	Does the Neighbourhood Plan (PP) determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Y	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan can determine the use of small areas at a local level. The Watlington Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any sites for development. However, proposes to include a variety of policies to create sustainable development through location, design, and environmental protections such as designating Local Green Spaces and Green Corridors.</p>
6	Does the Neighbourhood Plan (PP) set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)	Y	<p>Once a Neighbourhood Plan is adopted this forms part of the statutory Development Plan and will be used by the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk in the determination of planning applications. The intention is that the Neighbourhood Plan will provide a land use policy framework for future development at a local level.</p>
7	Is the Neighbourhood Plan (PP)'s sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR		<p>Does not apply to a Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>SKIPPED AS PER FIGURE 4</p>

	is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art. 3.8, 3.9)		
8	Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	SEE FIGURE 4 – PLAN DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA

43. Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations sets out the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects. These are listed in Figure 6 below along with comments on the extent to which the WNP meets these criteria.

Figure 6-Likely Significant Effects

SEA Directive Criteria (Annex II)	Comments	Likely Significant Effect? Y/N
1. Characteristics of the plan and programmes, having regard in particular, to:		
<p>a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources</p>	<p>Once made, WNP will become part of the statutory development plan and will guide the delivery of development within the designated plan area.</p> <p>The parish of Watlington falls within the district of King’s Lynn &amp; West Norfolk area, the Borough Council of King’s Lynn &amp; West Norfolk Core Strategy (2011) sets to accommodate at least 2,880 homes within or adjacent to key rural service centers including within Watlington. In the Sites Allocations and Development Management Policies Document (2016) one site has been allocated for development within the neighbourhood area which is policy G112.1- Land south of Thieves Bridge Road, this has been carried forward into the emerging local plan review and is land of around 1.8 hectares and allocated for residential development of at least 32 dwellings. An indicative housing requirement for WNP has been set as zero as justified in the emerging BCKLWN Local Plan Review (LP02) within para 4.1.22-4.1.23 because provision of housing is being met in this parish and elsewhere.</p> <p>The local authority has indicated that Watlington can allocate in</p>	<p>N</p>

	<p>addition to this, but they have chosen not to. In terms of the degree to which WNP sets a framework, it does not allocate land for development.</p>	
<p>b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy</p>	<p>The Watlington Neighbourhood Plan will be adopted alongside the higher order adopted Local Plans and National Planning Policy Framework and form part of the Borough Council's Development Plans. The Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity to the strategic framework and will expand upon some of the Local Plan policies, providing supplementary information on a local scale.</p> <p>It does not have influence over other plans. However, once made WNP will form part of the statutory development plans for Watlington and will be used in conjunction with the current development plans to determine planning applications.</p>	N
<p>c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development</p>	<p>One of the Basic Conditions which WNP must meet is to contribute towards sustainable development. Several policies within the plan will focus on environmental protection and mitigation, including identification of green corridors, designation of Local Green Spaces and non-designated heritage assets. These aim to ensure effects on the environment are minimised within the plan area and promote positive action. Given the non-strategic nature of the WNP this</p>	N



	does not have the potential to restrict the delivery of other plans or programmes.	
d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	<p>Baseline information relating to WNP was described earlier in this Screening Document. There are a few areas of conservation value, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watlington Railway Sidings CWS</li> <li>• Runs Wood Meadow CWS</li> <li>• Thieves Bridge Meadow CWS</li> </ul> <p>The plan seeks to provide protection and achieve improvement by strengthening ecological connectivity to these areas and beyond in the parish through the establishment of green corridors and designating Local Green Spaces. The biodiversity and Green Corridors policy (Policy 5) will be the focus of conservation and biodiversity improvement.</p> <p>The plan itself will not specifically allocate land for development and will not exacerbate any significant known environmental problems.</p>	N
e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (eg plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	The implementation of community legislation is unlikely to be significantly compromised by the Neighbourhood Plan.	N

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to

a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	WNP does not contain any site-specific development proposals that will result in complex, widespread, long lasting or serious environmental effects.	N
b) The cumulative nature of the effects	As it will not allocate land for development WNP will not lead to any cumulative effects in combination with existing or emerging plans.	N
c) Transboundary nature of effects	The emerging WNP area provide supplementary policy areas on a local scale. The impacts for transboundary effects beyond the parish are unlikely to be significant.	N
d) The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	WNP is unlikely to produce any significant effects to human health or the environment.	N
e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The WNP area has a total population of around 2532 according to the mid-year population estimates (ONS, 2019). This sits within the context of a total population in King's Lynn & West Norfolk of 143,500 (Core Strategy, 2011). WNP remains a non-strategic plan and the principle of development that will take place has already been established within the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Local Plan.	N
f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to – i. Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; ii. Exceeded environmental quality	i) There are no statutory natural designations which fall within Watlington. However, there are three non-designated county wildlife sites and two priority habitats within the plan area. As the plan does not allocate land for development it is not	N

<p>standards or limit values; or</p> <p>iii. Intensive land-use</p>	<p>anticipated to have likely significant effects on the natural characteristics of the area. In addition, WNP has put forward environmental policies including green corridors to recognise and protect wildlife areas.</p> <p>The area has a few historic features, including 6 Listed Buildings, one of which is Grade I- Church of Saints Peter &amp; Paul. The plan intends to identify and protect non-designated heritage assets through Policy 11, including buildings and structures of local significance. It is not anticipated to have likely significant effects on heritage.</p> <p>ii) WNP is unlikely to result in exceedance of environmental quality standards, such as those relating to air, water, and soil quality.</p> <p>iii) WNP is unlikely to bring forward development of an extent that would result in a significant intensification of Local land Use</p> <p>The emerging WNP does not include site allocations and therefore are not anticipated to have likely significant effects on the parish.</p>	
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<p>g) The effects on areas of landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status</p>	<p>There are no areas in Watlington which have a recognised international or national protection status. However, community protection status at a nature conservation value can be recognised through the designation of county wildlife sites.</p> <p>The BCKLWN Landscape Character Assessment (2007) identifies the importance of Area Type H Settled Farmland with Plantations which Watlington falls within. Key forces for change which are made apparent in the assessment is the pressure for expansion of villages such as Watlington due to its association with the main railway corridor. The overall strategy for the area type is to conserve and enhance the landscape pattern, its historic value and management of areas to improve biodiversity and wildlife corridors.</p> <p>WNP is not anticipated to have likely significant effects on these areas given the plan will not allocate land for development and it contains various protective policies, including green corridors.</p> <p>This emerging policy aims to ensure that: <i>The importance of the area for wildlife will be safeguarded, retained and habitats enhanced through positive action as part of the development process. All development proposals will need to demonstrate at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity, which should be achieved through</i></p>	<p>N</p>
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	<p>clauses including biodiversity net gain plan, planning obligations, contribute towards enhancing or maintaining existing GI such as CWS, priority habitats or corridors and through high quality design.</p> <p>The environmental effects on areas of biodiversity designations have also been considered through the Local Plan but are not relevant to WNP.</p>	
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## 5 HRA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

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44. It is required by Article 6 (3) of the EU Habitats Directive and by regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended 2017) that an appropriate assessment is carried out with regard to the Conservation Objectives of the European Sites and with reference to other plans and projects to identify if any significant effect is likely for any European Site.

45. To fulfil the legal requirements if likely significant effects will occur with the implementation of a neighbourhood plan upon the European Sites (Natura 2000 sites) a screening assessment has been undertaken.

46. An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the draft WNP requires an SEA or HRA in accordance with the above regulations.

47. There are no designated European wildlife sites (Natura 2000) in the Neighbourhood Area.

48. This screening assessment has also considered the impact on European Sites within 20km of the plan area, as an in-combination assessment area. These include three sites which are within 2km of the north of the parish:

Figure 7-European Sites within 20km of Watlington

Special Areas of Conservation	Special Protection Areas	Ramsar Sites
The Wash & North Norfolk Coast Roydon Common & Dersingham Bog Norfolk Valley Fens Breckland Ouse Washes	The Wash Ouse Washes Breckland	The Wash Roydon Common Dersingham Bog Ouse Washes

49. Each European site has a set of interest features which are the ecological features for which the site is designated or classified, and the features for which Member States should ensure the site is maintained or where necessary restored. Each site also has a set of conservation objectives.

50. European sites are at risk if there are possible means by which any aspect of a plan can, when being taken forward for implementation, pose a potential threat to the wildlife interest of the sites. This is often referred to as the 'impact pathway'.

51. Potential impact pathways considered for this assessment include:

- Increased recreational pressure
- Air quality impacts
- Water issues
- Urban effects

52. WNP does not allocate land for development and therefore will not directly result in an increase in the number of new dwellings within the vicinity of European Sites. An assessment of potential impacts of draft policy contained within WNP is provided in Figure 8.

Figure 8- HRA Screening Assessment

Policy	Description	Likely Significant Effects	Potential Risks	Recommendation at Screening Stage
Policy 1: Housing Mix	Requirements that ensure future housing development meets the needs of local people.	No LSE – does not promote development but relates to	N/A	None

	Sets a tenure split for affordable housing and the discount required for First Homes.	qualitative criteria for development		
Policy 2: Design	Requiring high quality design that accords with the Watlington Design Codes/Guide	No LSE – policy is qualitative and does not promote development	N/A	None
Policy 3: Infill Development	Policy setting requirements for new infill development	No LSE – policy is qualitative and does not promote development	N/A	None
Policy 4: Residential Parking Standards	Policy setting requirements for parking for new residential development	No LSE – policy does not promote development	N/A	None
Policy 5: Biodiversity and Green Corridors	Requirement to deliver at least a 10% net gain in ecological value and conservation of existing natural features and creation of green corridors.	No LSE – mitigation policy for growth	N/A	None
Policy 6: Local Green Space	Protection of green spaces of local importance from future development.	No LSE – supports retention of green open spaces, conserving the natural environment	N/A	None
Policy 7: Surface Water Management	Protective policy requiring appropriate flood risk and ecological assessment.	No LSE – protective policy	N/A	None
Policy 8: Protection of Community Facilities	Policy protects the use of the listed community facilities.	No LSE – does not promote development	N/A	None

Policy 9: Provision of Recreational Open Space	Policy requires residential development that must provide open recreational space must provide allotment land unless the need is met, unviable, provision too small for use or other needs override this.	No LSE – does not promote development	N/A	None
Policy 10: Economic Development	Policy encourages and supports new development facilities for micro or small businesses in principle.	No LSE – does not promote development	N/A	None
Policy 11: Walking and the core footway network	Policy expects new development to support the improvement of suitable new or improved links to the core footway network.	No LSE – does not promote development	N/A	None
Policy 12: Non- Designated Heritage Assets	Development to conserve the historic character, appearance and setting of designated and non-designated heritage assets.	No LSE – mitigation policy for growth that seeks to protect heritage assets	N/A	None



## 6 HRA SCREENING CONCLUSION

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53. The HRA Screening Assessment concludes that no significant effects are likely to occur with regards to the integrity of European Wildlife Sites within 20km of the WNP area. Statutory bodies were consulted by the Local Planning Authority between the dates 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Natural England responded stating that the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitats Regulation Assessment is not required in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The Environment Agency and Historic England did not respond at this stage. For this reason, a full SEA/HRA and Appropriate Assessment is not required at this point and is screened out.

## 7 APPENDIX STATUTORY STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES

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No response for the Environment Agency or Historic England.

## 7.1 NATURAL ENGLAND RESPONSE

Date: 18 August 2022  
Our ref: 402465  
Your ref: Watlington Neighbourhood Plan

Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council  
[Vanessa.Rowell@West-Norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:Vanessa.Rowell@West-Norfolk.gov.uk)

**BY EMAIL ONLY**



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Dear Sir or Madam

Watlington Neighbourhood Plan SEA / HRA Regulation 14

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 27 July 2022 which was received by Natural England on 27 July 2022

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

### **Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment**

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils) are concerned, that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in light of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), is contained within the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#). The guidance highlights three triggers that may require the production of an SEA, for instance where:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that in our view the proposals contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies / proposals within the plan. It remains the case, however, that the responsible authority should provide information supporting this screening decision, sufficient to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected.

Notwithstanding this advice, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all potential environmental assets. As a result the responsible authority should raise environmental issues that we have not identified on local or national biodiversity action plan species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites or local landscape character, with its own ecological and/or landscape advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local landscape and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by this plan, before determining whether an SA/SEA is necessary.

Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA/SA screening stage, should the responsible authority seek our views on the scoping or environmental report stages. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact [Click here to enter text.](#) on [Click here to enter text.](#) For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

Yours faithfully

Julian Clarke  
Consultations Team