

# North Wootton Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2036



SEA and HRA Screening  
Assessment February 2023

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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1. North Wootton Parish Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for North Wootton parish, known as NWNP throughout this document. The planning period will be 2022-2036. 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 NWNP. 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).

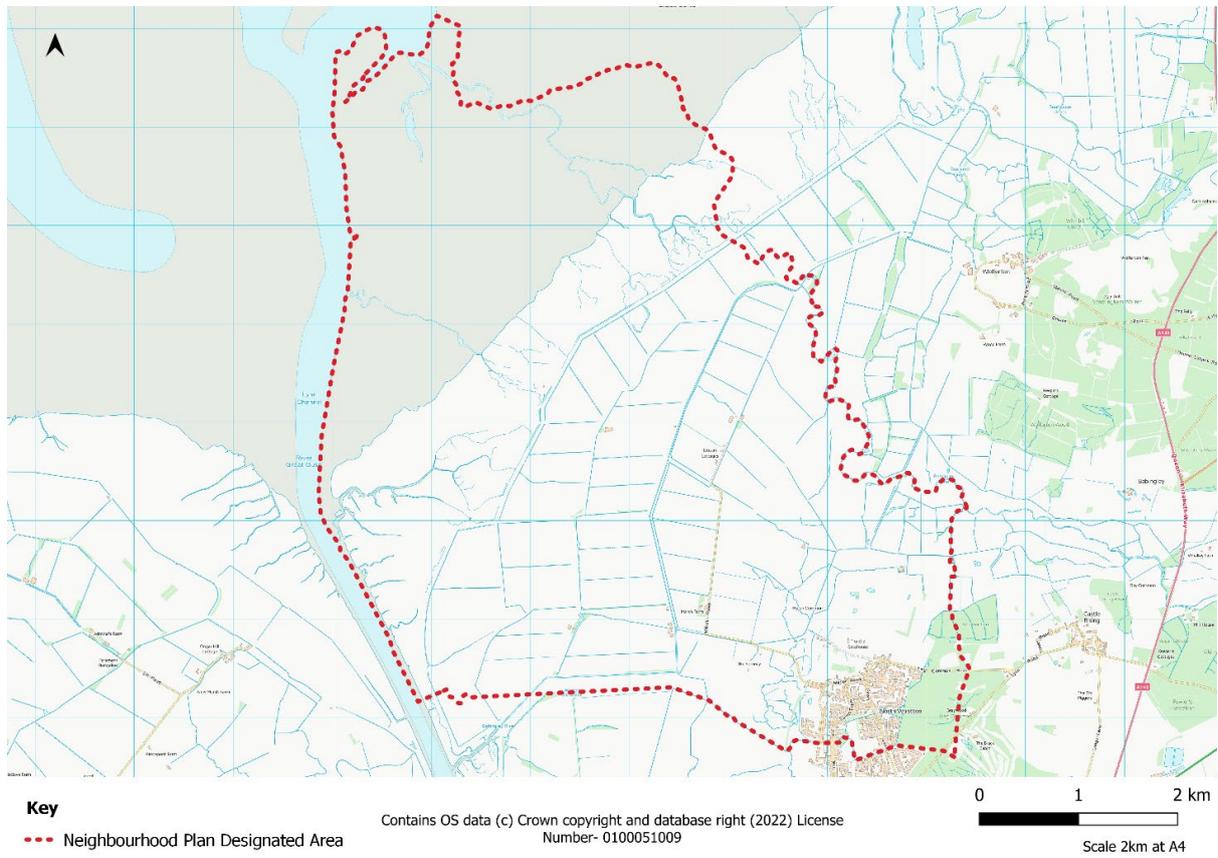
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<sup>1</sup> The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/1633), as amended by the Environmental Assessment and Miscellaneous Planning (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018 (SI 2018/1232). It should be noted that 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 NORTH WOOTTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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

*North Wootton will retain its rural village identity, despite being adjacent the King's Lynn urban area. The parish is characterised by natural beauty, with its unique surroundings, part of the Norfolk Coast AONB, cherished by local people.*

*Any future development will be sensitive to the historic nature of the settlement and its location within and adjacent to the Norfolk Coast AONB. It will be of a high-quality design and tailored to meet the needs of the local community.*

6. The draft plan currently includes eight specific aims to deliver this vision:
    - A. *Ensure new development in North Wootton respects its special location within the Norfolk Coast AONB.*
    - B. *Ensure future housing development meets the needs of the local population.*
    - C. *New development is designed to a high quality.*
    - D. *Protect and enhance North Wootton's natural environment, its green spaces, trees, and hedgerows that are important for wildlife.*
    - E. *Support future development of community facilities and protect existing services that are important to residents.*
    - F. *Address issues relating to a lack of off-street parking in the village centre.*
    - G. *Promote opportunities for sustainable travel including walking and cycling.*
    - H. *Reduce the impact of flooding and ensure that surface water flood risk is not worsened through new development.*

*Protect North Wootton's heritage*
  7. NWNP will have a range of non-strategic planning policies to realise and deliver the above vision and aims. This includes policies:
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- To ensure the housing mix, including affordable housing, on new development sites meets local need;
- To create effective policies to address local issues by restricting new development from being more second homes and furnished holiday lets;
- Ensure housing policies are addressing replacement dwellings, annexes etc and creating houses of an appropriate size for the area avoiding bungalow conversions into multiple large dwellings;
- To achieve high quality design with the input of North Wootton design codes/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 existing green spaces in North Wootton which will be a focus for protection and biodiversity enhancement;
- Tackling light pollution through an appropriate dark skies policy
- To protect the conservation area and important non listed buildings which hold heritage value to the local community
- To protect local green spaces within the plan area for future enjoyment;
- To protect the loss of community facilities for the vitality of the parish;
- To tackle the issue of non-residential parking by setting parking standards.
- Identifying existing and potential new circular walking routes to boost sustainable and recreational travel

#### **8. The plan does not allocate land for development.**

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## 3 BASELINE INFORMATION

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

### 3.1 CONTEXT

10. North Wootton is a village in Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough, with a resident population of around 2304 according to the mid-year population estimates from the Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2021). The Parish borders the Wash and the river Great Ouse and the village of North Wootton is now contiguous with the built-up area of King's Lynn. It is located 4 km north of the centre of King's Lynn, 60 km west of Norwich, and 50 km north-east of Peterborough. Due to its location on the Norfolk coast and at the mouth of the Great Ouse, the coastal areas in the west of North Wootton are protected by various designations whose areas mostly overlap: National Nature Reserve, Ramsar sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and Special Areas of Conservation. Most of the Neighbourhood Area is located inside the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Small areas of woodland east of the village are included in the Priority Habitat Inventory under the deciduous woodland and conifer categories.
  11. North Wootton is on a regular bus route to King's Lynn with frequent daily services including in the evenings. There is a mixture of bus stops in the village and only a couple provide shelter and seating for residents waiting for the bus. Due to its close proximity to the facilities and employment of King's Lynn town, North Wootton is classified as a settlement adjacent to King's Lynn rather than a Key Rural Service Centre. North Wootton is approximately 4 miles from King's Lynn centre and is well connected to the town via regular bus services and the cycle path network offering sustainable transport links. North Wootton has a good range of services and facilities locally. The village has a shop, primary school, GP surgery, church, village hall and a large park shared with South Wootton. Information provided by the District Council also shows that North Wootton is on a mobile library route.
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### 3.2 BIODIVERSITY, FLORA AND FAUNA

12. There are multiple Natural England statutory designated sites in the neighbourhood area, including:

- **Norfolk Coast- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**, Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Ramsar site;
- **Greater Wash Special Protection Area (SPA)**; National nature reserve (NNR), Ramsar site, Special area of conservation (SAC), Special protection area (SPA), Site of special scientific interest (SSSI)

13. **The North Norfolk Coast** has multiple overlapping designations, the AONB was designated in 1968 and includes the greater part of the remaining unspoiled coastal areas between the Wash (west of county) and Great Yarmouth (east of county). The Norfolk Coast landscape displays a striking diversity of scenery, embracing a rich mix of coastal features and contrasting inland agricultural landscapes, of which are influenced by the proximity of the sea. Much of the character and quality of the AONB landscape can be attributed to the contrasts which arise from its diversity.

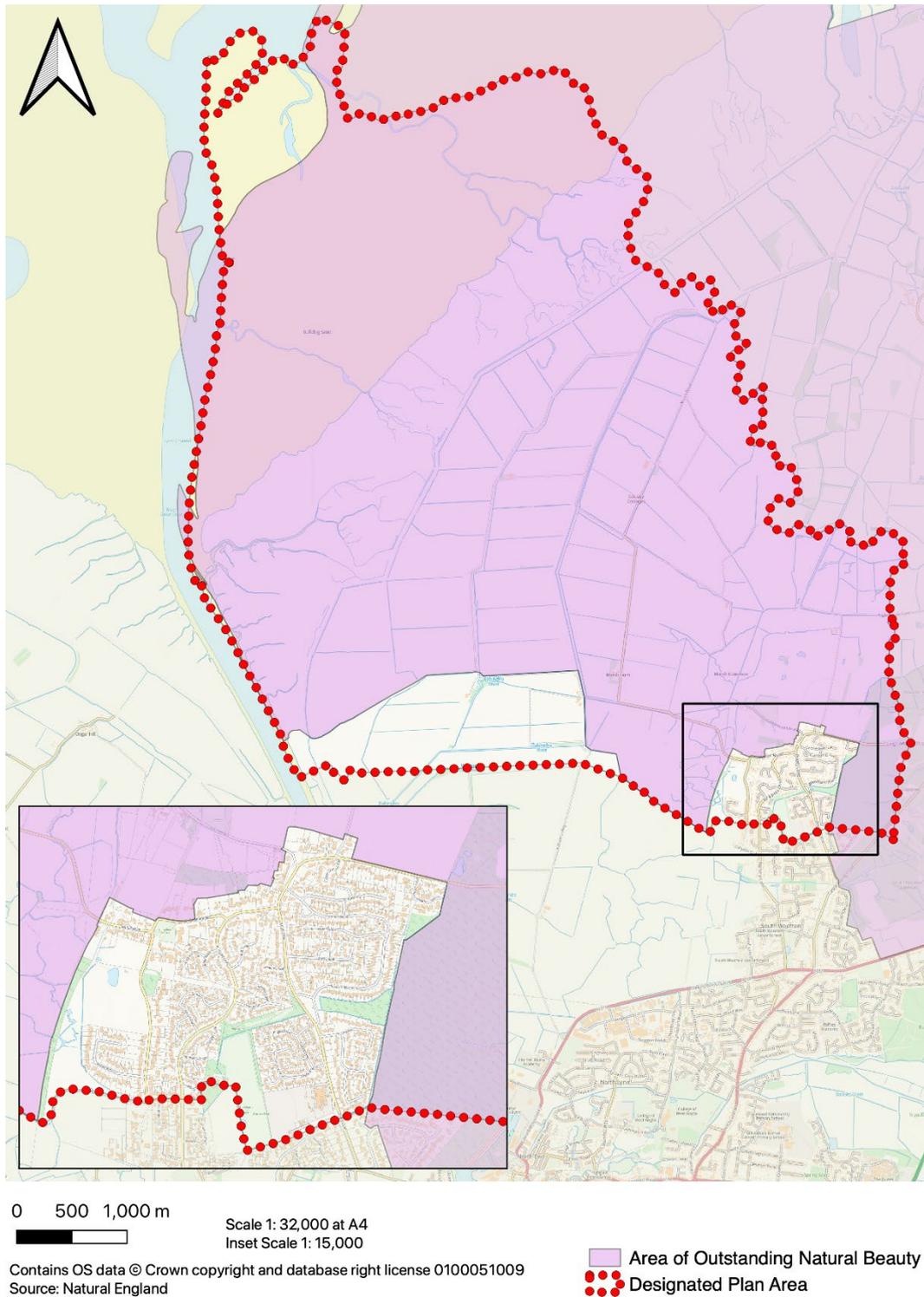
14. Within North Wootton the main AONB character area is **Open Coastal Marshes** meaning the landscape is *“strikingly flat & low lying. There are intertidal mudflats & reedbeds interspersed with sinuous tidal creeks, small brackish pools & lagoons. Valuable ecological habitat for range of vertebrates, wading birds & wildfowl”*. Characteristic features described in Section 3 of the Integrated Landscape Guidance (2021)<sup>5</sup> state there are *“the coastal marshes, sand dunes and shingle ridges, backed by coastal maritime settlements, red brick and flint buildings, prominent churches, and windmills. Just inland, the drained marshes are open farmland, with pollarded willows along the roadsides and long views.”*

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<sup>4</sup> Norfolk Coast AONB Integrated Landscape Character Part 1- Open Coastal Marshes (2021): [Integrated-landscape-character-Part-1-Open-Coastal-Marshes.pdf \(norfolkcoastaonb.org.uk\)](https://norfolkcoastaonb.org.uk/integrated-landscape-character-part-1-open-coastal-marshes.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>Norfolk Coast AONB Integrated Landscape Guidance- Section 2 (2021): [Integrated-landscape-character-intro-section-2.pdf \(norfolkcoastaonb.org.uk\)](https://norfolkcoastaonb.org.uk/integrated-landscape-character-intro-section-2.pdf)

Figure 2- Norfolk Coast AONB Designation within North Wootton parish



15. **The Greater Wash** this is the UK's largest estuary system which contains extensive saltmarshes. The intertidal flats of The Wash form one of the largest intertidal areas in Britain, supporting high concentrations of marine invertebrates which in turn provide

a food source for over 300,000 wintering wildfowl<sup>6</sup>. The Wash has been given multiple statutory designations by Natural England because of its importance for wildlife and geology. These designations are:

- National nature reserve (NNR)
- Ramsar site
- Special area of conservation (SAC)
- Special protection area (SPA)
- Site of special scientific interest (SSSI)

16. The Special Area of Conservation designation recognises the importance of The Wash's coastal saltmarsh, sand and mudflats habitat for wildlife including Common Seals, breeding birds and wintering passage birds. Ramsar sites are wetland areas of international significance for waterfowl. The Wash area has Ramsar status in part due to the number of qualifying species of wildlife found in the area, in particular wintering passage and breeding birdlife. Natural England describes the whole area as being "of exceptional biological interest", hence its multiple designations. They describe the intertidal mudflats and saltmarshes as one of Britain's most important winter-feeding areas for waders and wildfowl outside of the breeding season. The saltmarsh and shingle habitats are of considerable botanical interest and the Wash is also significant as a breeding ground for Common Seals. This designation sits to the northwest of the plan area.

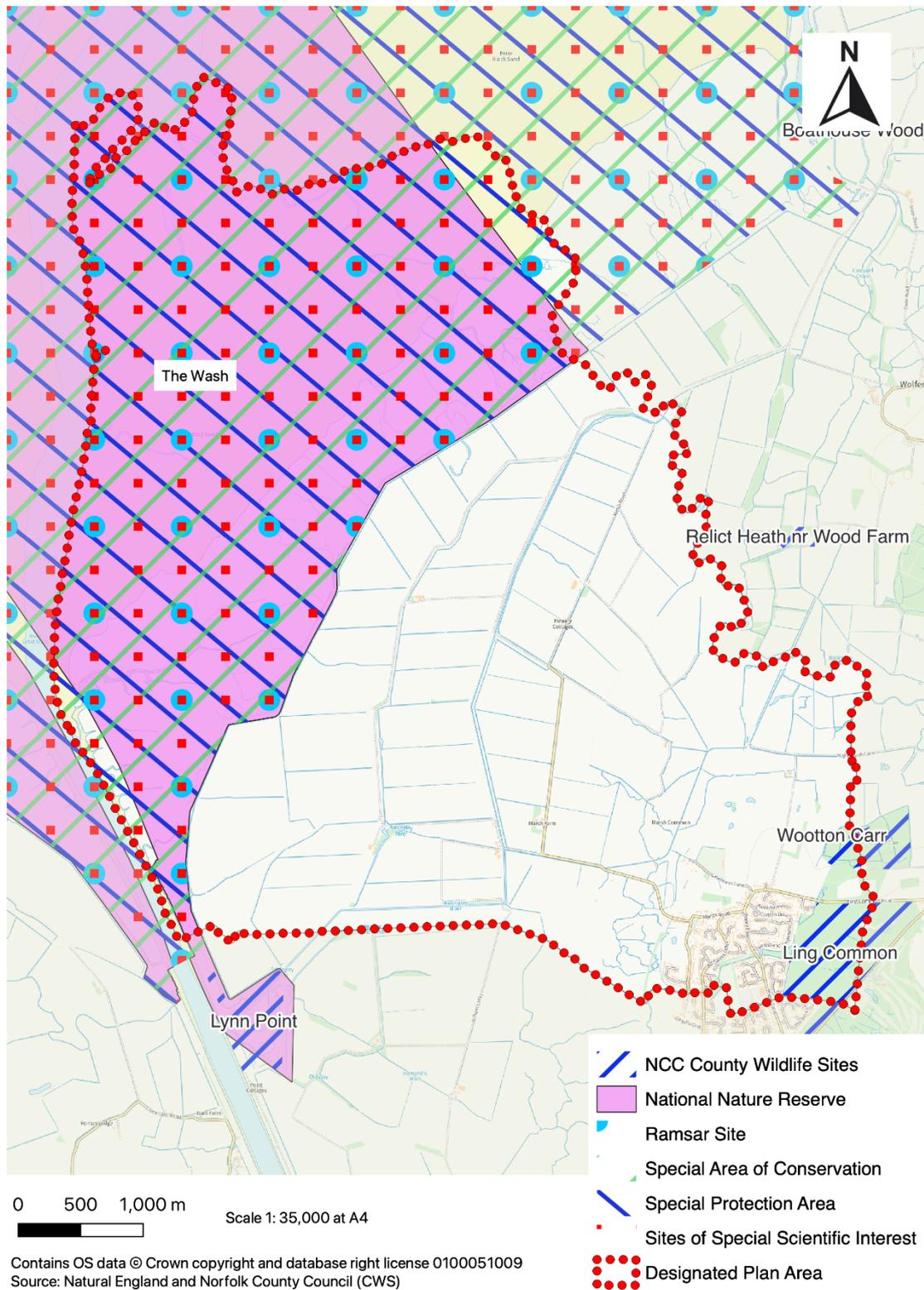
17. In addition to the statutory wildlife designations within the neighbourhood plan area, there are also some non-statutory wildlife designations. There are two County Wildlife Sites (CWS) within the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) area and one adjacent:

- Wootton Carr
- Ling Common
- Lynn Point (adjacent)

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<sup>6</sup> JNCC Ramsar Information Sheet UK11072 [untitled \(jncc.gov.uk\)](#) – accessed 01/12/2021

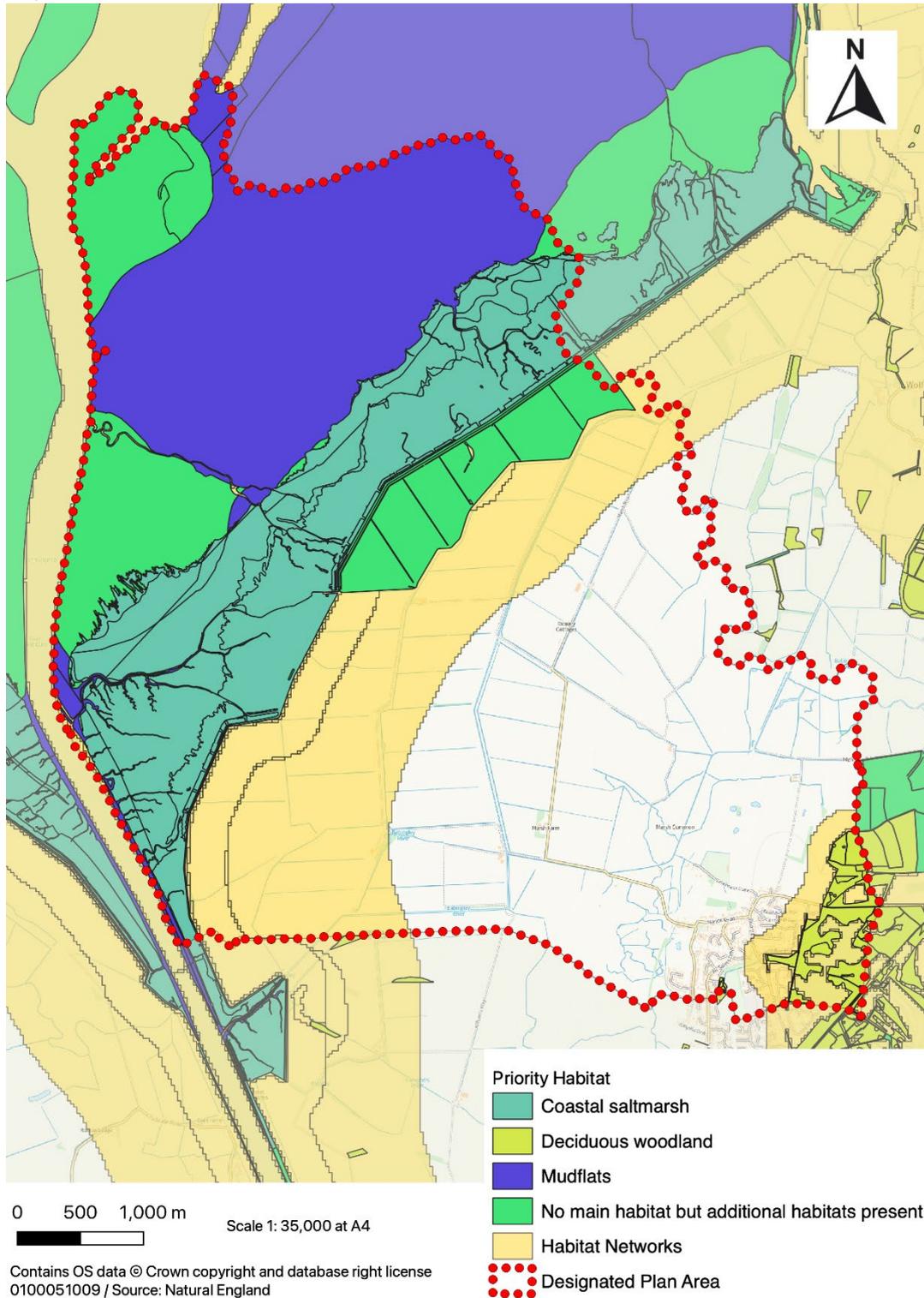
Figure 3- Wildlife Designations and Habitats



18. Natural England identifies that there are important **habitat networks**, these are shown in **Figure 3**. Parts of the parish contain **Habitats of Principle Importance** for biodiversity conservation, those which are most threatened, in greatest decline or where the UK holds a significant proportion of the world's total population. The

predominant type of priority habitat is coastal saltmarsh, mudflats, and deciduous woodland. Local authorities have a duty to consider the conservation of these habitats, and development that would adversely affect these would not normally be acceptable.

**Figure 4- Habitat Networks in North Wootton**

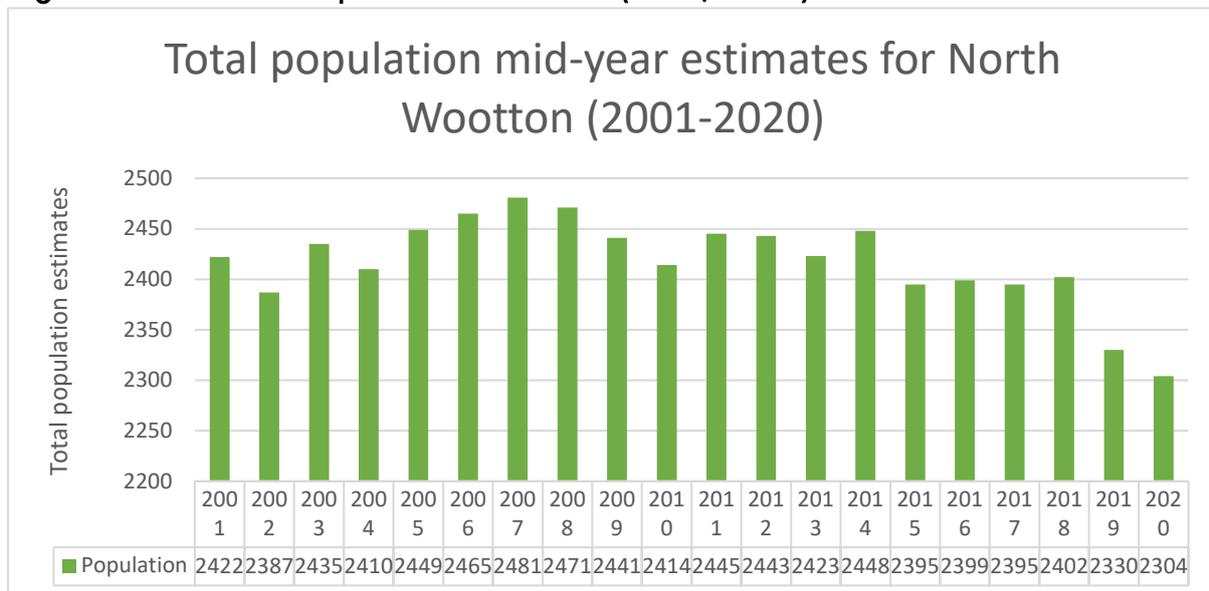


### 3.3 POPULATION

19. According to mid-year population estimates from the Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2021), North Wootton has a current population of 2,304 for 2020. **Figure 1** shows how the population has followed a downward trend since 2001 which started levelling off between 2015-18 and has started declining again recently particularly from 2018 to 2020. The population has aged over this time with the proportion of people in the North Wootton population aged 60 to 74 doubling from 12% to 24% between 2001 and 2019. However, in 2020 the population aged 60-74 was still the highest dropping slightly below 24%.

20. Across the population of North Wootton there is an even split between males and females with a split of 49% male / 51% female in 2019 and 2020. There are variations to this within different age groups with the younger age groups having a higher proportion of males than females (0-15 group is 55%/45% male to female in 2019 and 52%/48% male to female in 2020. The 16-24 age group is 57%/43% male to female in 2019 and 58%/42% in 2020. This switches in the older age groups where there are a higher proportion of females than males, 60-74 age group is 43%/57% male to female in 2019 and 2020 and the 75+ age group is 42%/58% male to female in 2019 and 2020.

**Figure 5- Mid Year Population Estimates (ONS, 2021)**



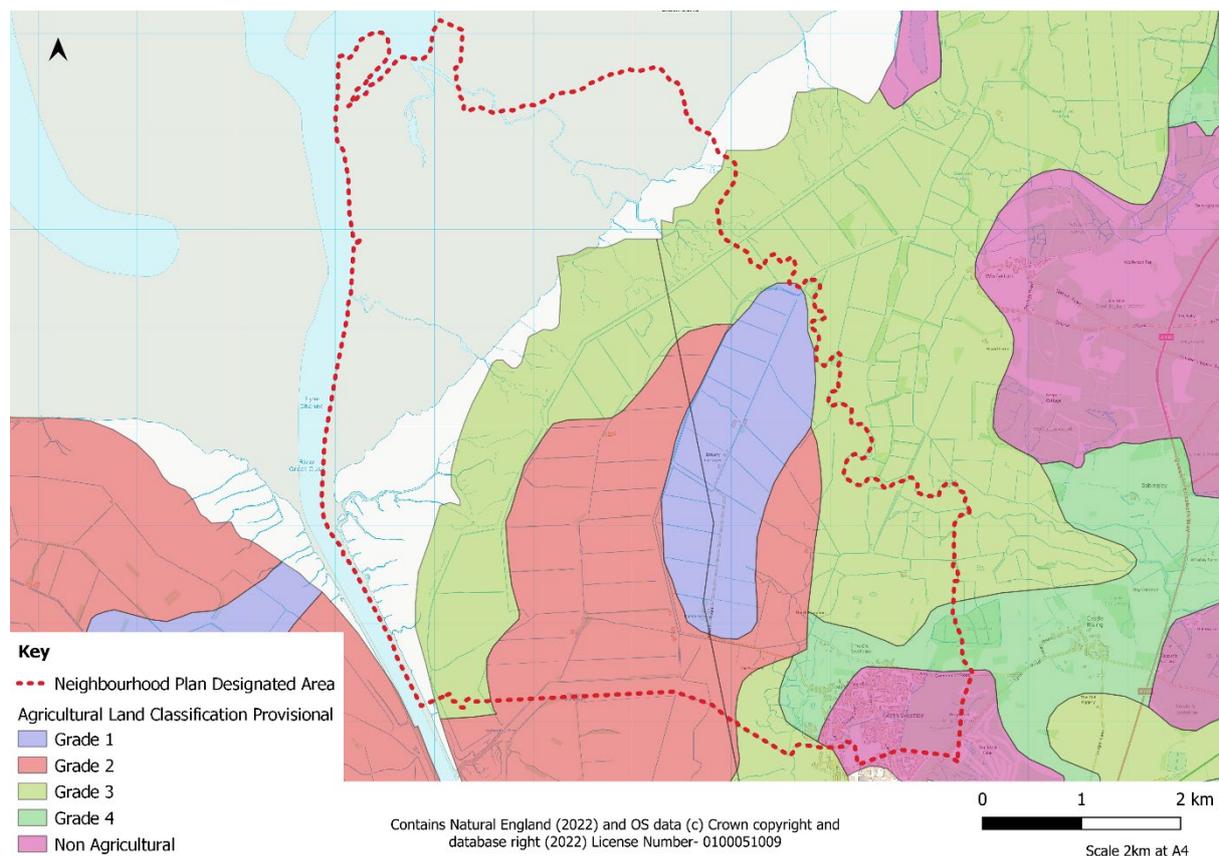
### 3.4 HUMAN HEALTH

21. 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

22. 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 1 and Grade 2 towards the centre and east of the boundary, soil closer to the coastline is Grade 3 and within the built-up settlement Grade 4 and non-agricultural are present as shown on **Figure 5**. 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.

**Figure 5- Agricultural Land Classification (Source, Natural England (2020))**



### 3.6 WATER

23. The settlement is situated within Flood Zone 1, 2 and 3 and the watercourse for flood warning in this area is from the North Sea<sup>7</sup>. Most of the built-up settlement is within Flood Zone 1. As stated in the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) Level 2 Appendix B2 (2019)<sup>8</sup>, North Wootton is approximately 5km from the coastline and there are multiple drainage features with the majority located on the western side. Along the western boundary there is a small encroachment from tidal flood risk from Flood Zone 3a and surface water flood risk is an issue, particularly from an impact of 3.3% AEP event or above.

24. Surface water flood risk is an issue in parts of the neighbourhood area, including within the built-up area. **Figure 6**, taken from the Environment Agency, demonstrates that there are patches of high, medium, and low flood risk across the parish, including within the built-up area, with the potential for flooding to the highway and private property. High risk areas include the northwest end of Wootton Park and parts of: All Saints Drive, Hayfield road, Woodland Gardens, Hugh Close and Julian Road.

**Figure 6-Surface Water Flood Risk**



<sup>7</sup> King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council (2019) Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1 [Flood risk assessment - Level 1 | Flood risk assessment - Level 1 | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk \(west-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council (2019) Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2 Community Level Guidance Tables North Wootton and South Wootton Appendix B2- [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment level 2 | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk \(west-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#)

25. Historically in North Wootton there have been reports of internal flooding due to surface water. The Lead Local Flood Authority report<sup>9</sup> shows that internal flooding was reported at one property on The Green in North Wootton in July 2017 and July 2018. Norfolk County Council visited affected residents to offer advice and gather information and to assess the capacity of the drainage system. Anglian Water also visited affected residents to offer advice and gather information. Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service attended the incidents to pump out water. Since the incidents in 2017 and 2018 a new surface water system has been installed to direct surface water to an alternative discharge point.<sup>10</sup>

26. Environment Agency future flood risk modelling shows that most of the built-up part of the neighbourhood area is at no or low risk from fluvial flooding, see **Figure 7**. However, the wider neighbourhood area beyond the built-up settlement which extends northwest to The Wash is at risk from sea and river flooding in the future according to risk models, see **Figure 8**.

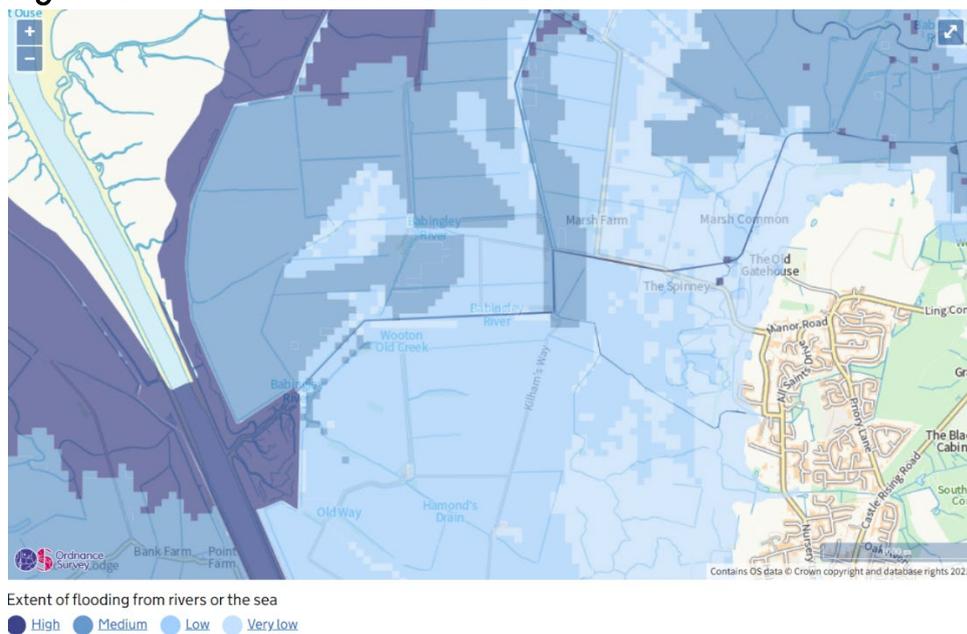
**Figure 7- Flood Risk from Rivers and the Sea**



<sup>9</sup> <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/rubbish-recycling-planning/flood-and-water-management/flood-investigation-reports/kings-lynn-and-west-norfolk-2014-2018-fir033.pdf> - accessed 03/12/2021

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/rubbish-recycling-planning/flood-and-water-management/flood-investigation-reports/kings-lynn-and-west-norfolk-2014-2018-fir033-addendum.pdf>

**Figure 8-Flood risk from rivers and sea**



27. Flood risk was a key consideration for the Borough Council when determining not to allocate sites in North Wootton in the emerging Local Plan. The community is partially covered by the King's Lynn Internal Drainage Board (IDB) with the North Wootton Drain which splits into two drains and bisects the community.

### 3.7 AIR AND CLIMATIC FACTORS

28. 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. Gaywood Clock AQMAs is approximately 3 miles south of the NWNP area and the Town Centre is approximately 4 miles southwest<sup>11</sup>. This would suggest that air quality is generally not of a concern in the NWNP 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

29. 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

<sup>11</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

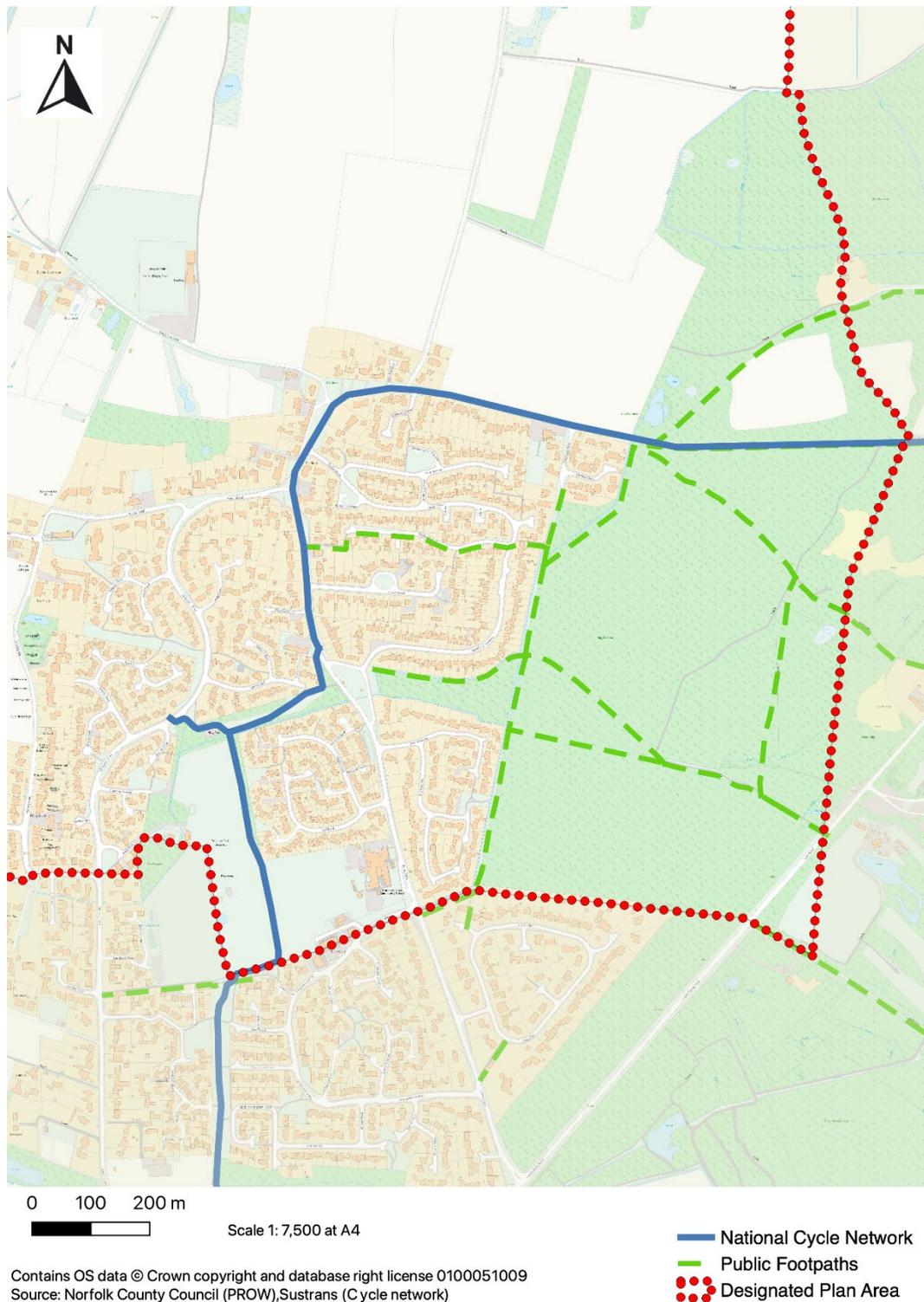
accessibility for people and provides the opportunity for many residents, and visitors, to walk or cycle. North Wootton is a popular village with a reasonable range of facilities including a shop, primary school, GP surgery, church, village hall and a large park shared with South Wootton. Information provided by the District Council also shows that North Wootton is on a mobile library route. These are all within reasonable walking distance of residents.

30. North Wootton has a small range of clubs and services for the community including the West Norfolk Rugby Club and other workshop/activities which are held in the village hall including regular police surgeries, community activities, parent and child activities, health and wellbeing classes and drop in coffee mornings.
31. North Wootton is on a regular bus route to King's Lynn with frequent daily services. There is a mixture of bus stops in the village and only a couple provide shelter and seating for residents waiting for the bus. The bus services are Lynx 35 and 36 between King's Lynn and Hunstanton<sup>12</sup>. These run most days hourly between 9am and 4pm. However, there are no bus services which run in the evenings anymore. There are a number of bus stops within the village including Manor Road, Priory Ln and Alban Road. These services are not considered very sustainable for one to not rely on a private car, since most buses would not suit peoples work schedules depending on the hours they work, especially if local people are working in hospitality or seasonal trade hours for example and need to catch public transport after their evening shift which would finish later than 4pm. It also limits the options of young people or elderly who may not have access to ownership of a car and may have to rely on parents or taxi services to take them to their destinations. This is a common rural issue for transport accessibility.
32. Within the built-up-area of the village the roads are subject to 30mph speeds limits, there are a small number of 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 and mainly to the east of the built-up area. There are no public rights of way which extend north or north-east of the settlement towards the Wash. The National Cycle Network Route 1 (see **Figure 9**) runs through the parish, entering the village at the southern end from South Wootton, running through Wootton Park and then taking cyclists on towards Castle Rising.

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<sup>12</sup> [35 | Lynx \(lynxbus.co.uk\)](https://lynxbus.co.uk)

Figure 9- PRow and National Cycle Network



33. Strategic traffic will generally be kept to the A149 west of the parish; these roads generally keep much of the through traffic out of the village.

### 3.9 CULTURAL HERITAGE

34. North Wootton's name comes from the Old English meaning 'settlement in the woods'. The parish has a long history, with the population, land ownership and productive resources being detailed in the Domesday Book of 1086.<sup>13</sup> The earliest evidence of human activity in North Wootton comes in the form of Palaeolithic flint hand axes (NHER 11344 and 13024) and a Neolithic flint knife (NHER 13024). Roman finds in the area include coins, jewellery, and pottery fragments and although there is currently no evidence of Roman structures in the parish, building works near to All Saints Church uncovered evidence of a metal working site and possible furnace. Aerial photography has identified a possible Roman or Saxon field system, and fragments of Saxon pottery.
35. All Saints' Church (NHER 3294) was built in 1852 by Anthony Salvin for Mrs Mary Howard at a cost of £2,200, about half a million pounds in current money. It replaced a medieval church which had stood on the same site and fallen into disrepair. The church has an Early English style; the tower has a southwest turret capped in Scottish baronial style popular at the time. Inside is a 19th century font with stylised foliage decoration, and decorative choir stalls. The windows have later 19th century stained glass, including a rare figure of St Francis. The building is lit internally by Art Nouveau lamp standards.<sup>14</sup>
36. The earliest post-medieval building to have survived in the village is The Priory. This is a two storey carstone and brick house with a date plaque of 1718, though the front of the building is late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Church Cottage on Nursery Lane is a small carstone building from around 1600, extended in the 19th century, and restored in the late 20th century.
37. Although largely gone now, various post medieval sea defences, flood banks and breakwaters are marked on old maps or are visible on 1940s aerial photographs. North Wootton includes the site of a windpump, marked on an early 19th century map. The site is now occupied by a small modern pumphouse. A windmill (NHER 36897) once stood to the north of the windpump, but no trace of it remains today. The Lynn and Hunstanton Railway once ran through the parish. The line was opened in 1862 and closed in 1969 (although King's Lynn station remained open). The railway track has been removed, although many buildings survive, including stations at King's Lynn, Dersingham, Snettisham, North Wootton and Wolferton along with several signal boxes.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> North Wootton Parish Profile on Norfolk Heritage Explorer – accessed 28/11/2021

<sup>14</sup> North Wootton Parish Profile on Norfolk Heritage Explorer – accessed 28/11/2021

<sup>15</sup> North Wootton Parish Profile on Norfolk Heritage Explorer – accessed 28/11/2021

38. During World Two the parish was home to various military installations. East of Wootton Marsh is the possible site of a World War Two Starfish decoy (NHER 23220) placed here to protect King's Lynn. These were designed to fool enemy bombers into thinking they were bombed towns, with a variety of effects to represent both small and large fires. Other features of the time, now gone but visible on contemporary aerial photographs, include an artillery or bombing range (NHER 36921), a searchlight battery (NHER 36875) and anti-tank ditches (NHER 36873 and 36874).<sup>16</sup>

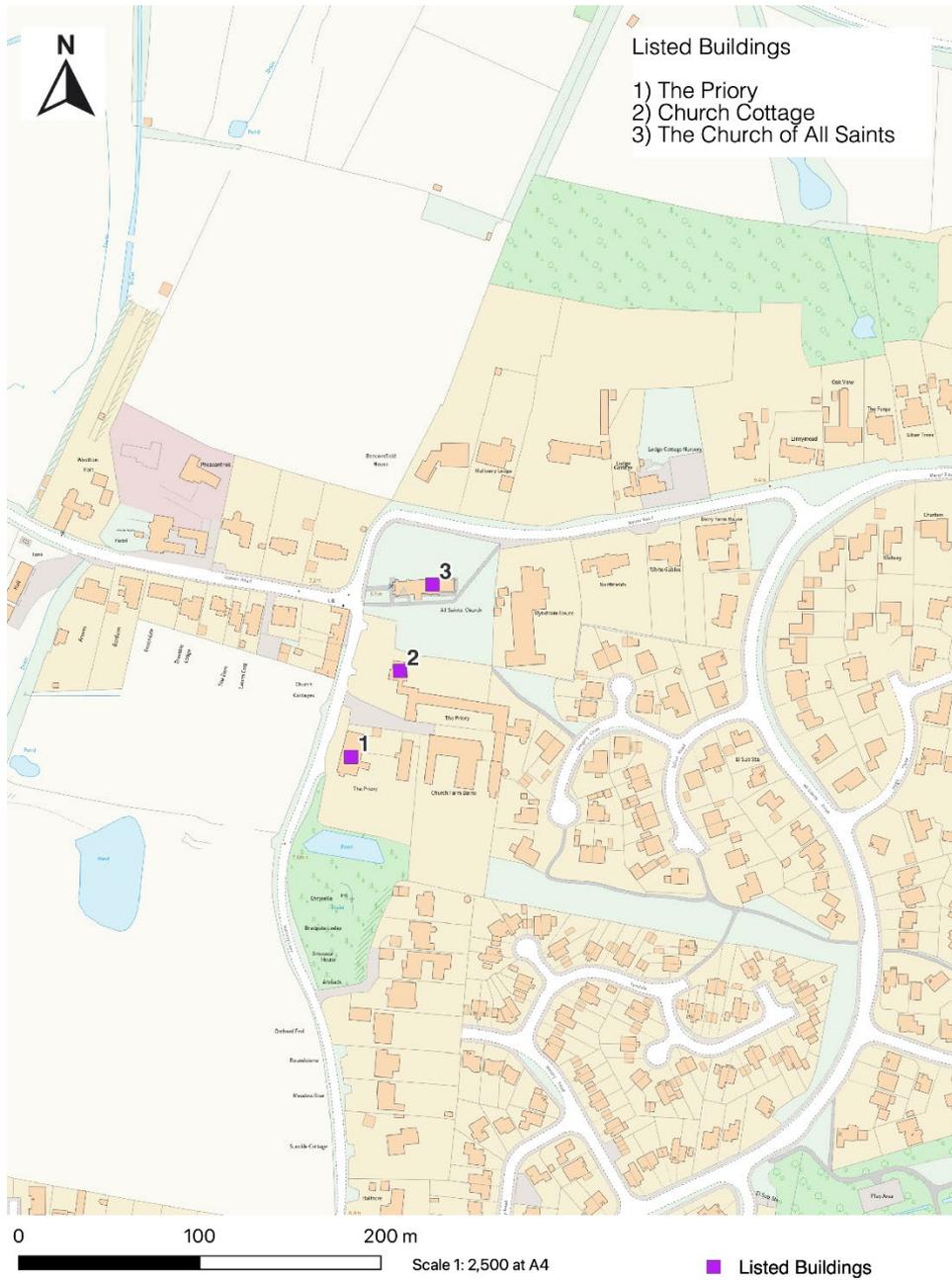
39. The neighbourhood plan does not contain any conservation areas. However, there are 3 listed buildings in North Wootton (all Grade II listed) which are shown on the map in **Figure 10**:

- All Saints Church
- Church cottage
- The Priory

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<sup>16</sup> North Wootton Parish Profile on Norfolk Heritage Explorer – accessed 28/11/2021

Figure 10- Historic Environment



Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right license 0100051009  
Source: Historic England

## 4. LANDSCAPE

40. The West Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment<sup>17</sup> identifies that the neighbourhood area contains 3 types of landscape character. These are: 'open coastal marshes', 'drained coastal marshes' and 'wooded slopes with estate land'. The marsh areas are characterised as having:

- A strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Open views across the ever-changing nature of the seascape (The Wash).
- An intricate network of inter-tidal habitats.
- A relatively strong sense of tranquillity.
- A strong sense of openness, with open, panoramic views towards the undeveloped open inland marshes.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.

41. **The marsh areas** are described as having, towards the south of the area, a character more strongly influenced by the urban fringe of North Wootton and North Lynn. About North Wootton it states: 'here, the developed residential skyline is visible within views southwards and overall sense of tranquillity is disturbed by activity within the urban area. Several urban fringe characteristics (such as pony paddocks and domestic garden boundary fences) are also apparent.'

42. **The wooded slopes with estate land** are characterised by:

- Mixed woodland on common land with patchworks of arable and pastoral fields
- Extensive woodland with recreational access (including King's Lynn golf course and Stony Hangings clearing)
- Flat and low-lying landscape to the West of North Wootton
- A strong sense of tranquillity
- Views generally enclosed by trees to the east, whilst to the west, they are generally more open and extensive.

43. As mentioned previously, part of the neighbourhood area, falls within the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The designation helps to protect the natural features, but also settlements and working environments that are distinctive characteristics of the countryside. The designation allows for sustainable development, in ways that further enhance the character of the area.

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<sup>17</sup> KLWN Landscape Character Assessment, Final Report March 2007, Chris Blandford Associates

44. The CPRE Dark Skies Mapping<sup>18</sup> shows that much of the Parish, apart from the built-up village centre falls into the darkest categories. These night lights ranged between <0.25 (Darkest) to 4 (Brighter). This suggests that as a whole the Parish itself has relatively dark skies and in the surrounding countryside there is very little light pollution. However, where most built up development is the light sources are brighter between 1- 2 predominantly and also 2-4 at times at the south of the parish.

## 4 SEA SCREENING

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### Legislative Background

#### Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

45. The European Directive 2001/42/EC<sup>19</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 North Wootton Neighbourhood Plan are likely to cause significant environmental effects.

46. 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 11**<sup>20</sup>.

47. **Figure 12** 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>21</sup>. **Figure 13** below assesses whether NWNP will require a full SEA. The questions in the first column are drawn from **Figure 11** which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

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<sup>18</sup> [England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies \(cpre.org.uk\)](http://cpre.org.uk)

<sup>19</sup> [EUR-Lex - 32001L0042 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu)

<sup>20</sup> [The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>21</sup>

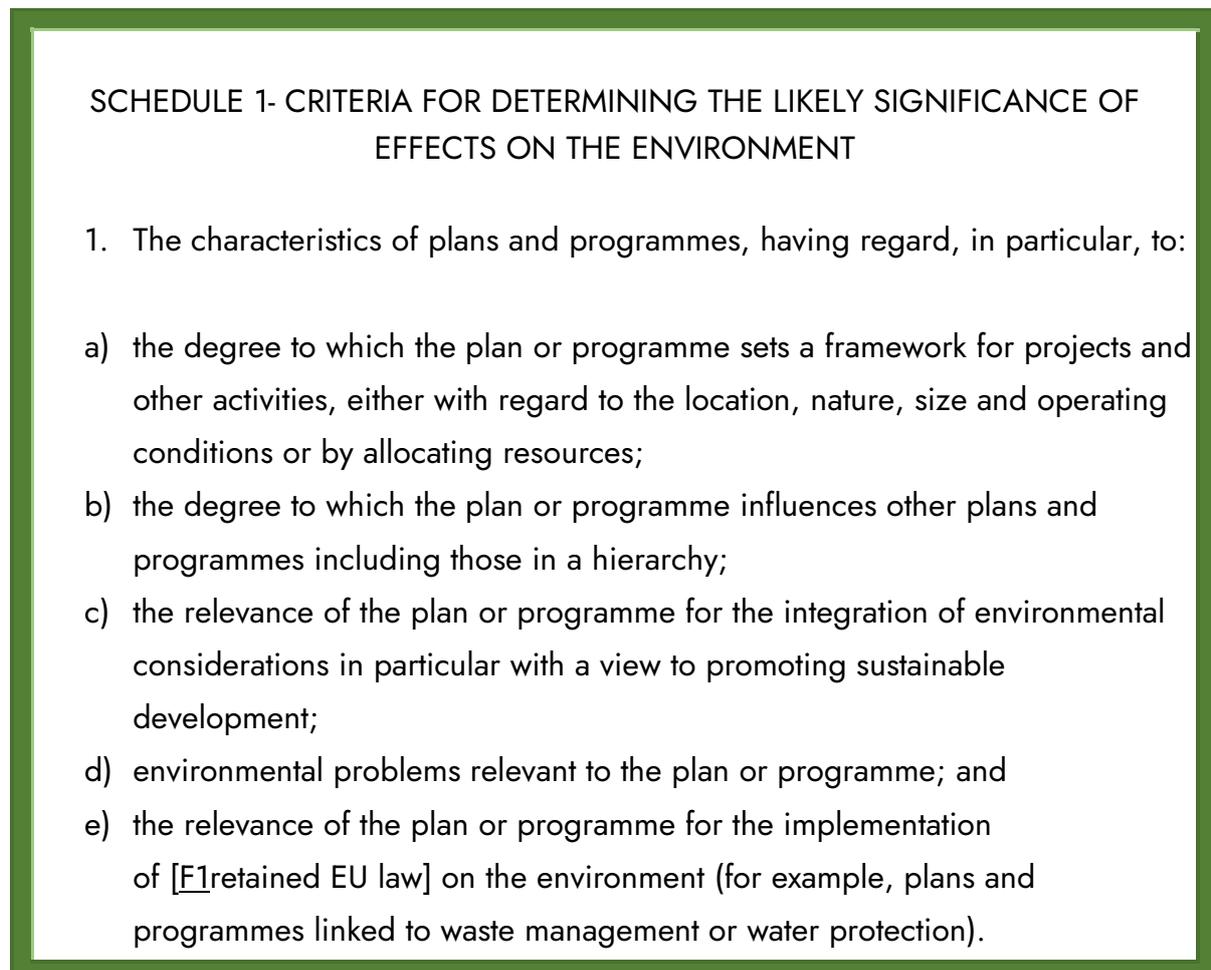
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/7657/practicalguides\\_ea.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguides_ea.pdf)

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## Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)

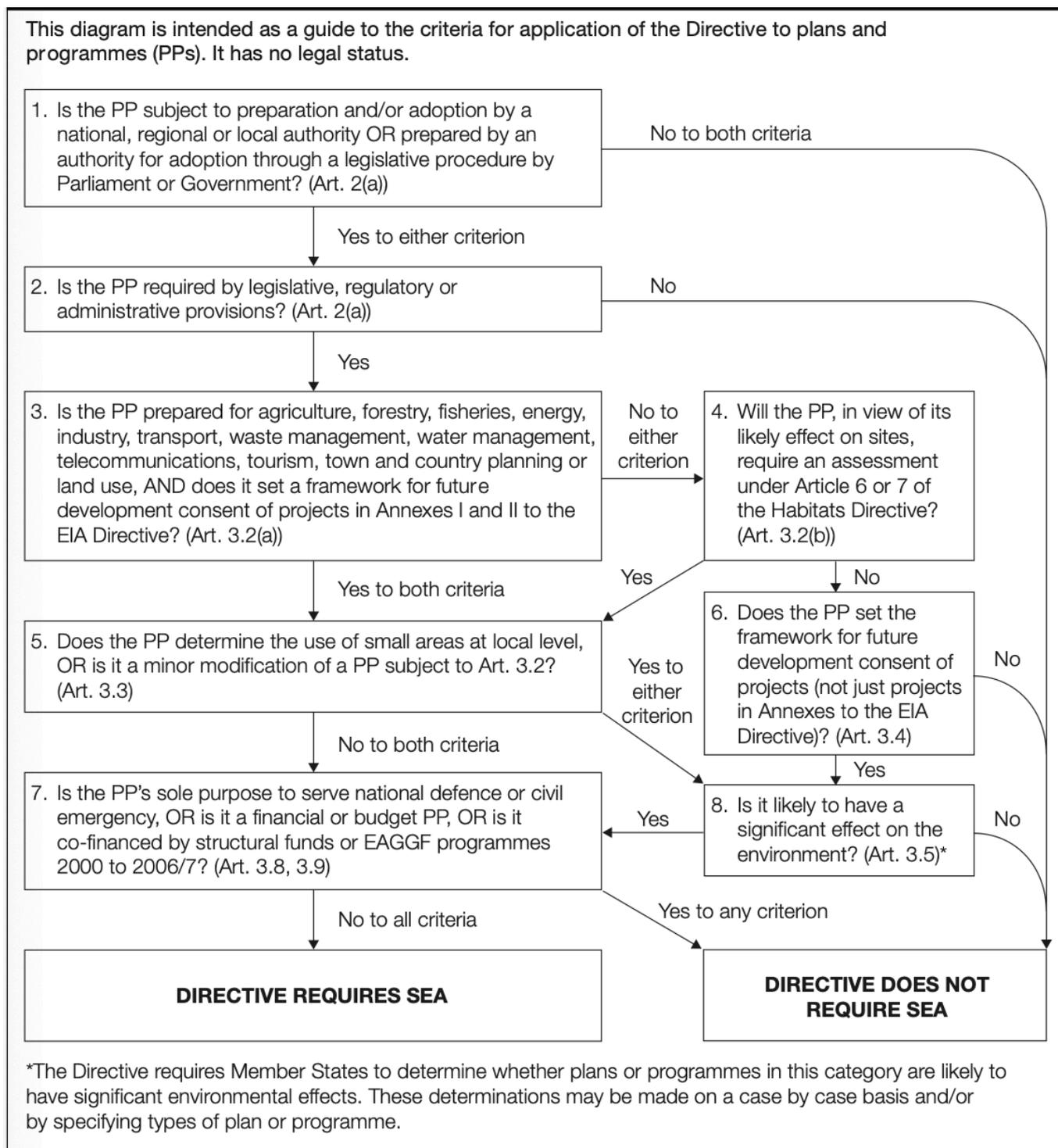
48. It is required by Article 6 (3) of the EU Habitats Directive and by regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended 2017) that an appropriate assessment is carried out with regard to the Conservation Objectives of the European Sites and with reference to other plans and projects to identify if any significant effect is likely for any European Site.
49. 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.
50. An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the draft NWNP requires an SEA or HRA in accordance with the above regulations. The results can be viewed below.

**Figure 11-Schedule 1 Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects**



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 12-Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes**



**Figure 13-Application of SEA Directive to NWNP**

\*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 North Wootton passing an independent examination and local community referendum.</p> <p>The preparation of the North Wootton 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><b>GO TO STAGE 2</b></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 Act (2011), the

	Stage	Y/N	Justification
	administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))		<p>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><b>GO TO STAGE 3</b></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>22</sup> and the Localism Act 2011 Schedule 9 Part 2 Para 7 Section 38 B (1)(b),(6)<sup>23</sup>.</p> <p>A Neighbourhood Plan is prepared for Town and Country Planning and Land use. The North Wootton 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 North Wootton. 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 Neighbourhood Plan seeks to align and be in general conformity with the strategic framework.</p>

<sup>22</sup> [Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>23</sup> [Localism Act 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)

	Stage	Y/N	Justification	
			<p>The Neighbourhood Plan is not allocating any development itself but anticipates being one of the key tools to manage future development of North Wootton.</p> <p><b>GO TO STAGE 4</b></p>	
4	<p>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)</p>	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. <b>Please see chapter 5 of this report for further detail.</b></p> <p><b>GO TO STAGE 6</b></p>	
5	<p>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)</p>	Y	<p>A Neighbourhood Plan can determine the use of small areas at a local level. The North Wootton 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 important views.</p>	
6	<p>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)</p>	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	<p>Is the Neighbourhood Plan (PP)'s sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or</p>	<p><b>Does not apply to a Neighbourhood Plan.</b></p> <p><b>SKIPPED AS PER FIGURE 12.</b></p>		

Stage		Y/N	Justification
	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	<b>SEE FIGURE 12 – PLAN DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA</b>

51. Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations sets out the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects. These are listed in **Figure 14** below along with comments on the extent to which the NWNP meets these criteria.

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Figure 14- Likely Significant Effects

SEA Directive Criteria (Annex II)	Comments	Likely Significant Effect? Y/N
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, NWNP 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 North Wootton falls within the district of King’s Lynn &amp; West Norfolk area, the Borough Council of King’s Lynn &amp; West Norfolk. The King’s Lynn and West Norfolk 2011 Core Strategy designated North Wootton as one of the ‘Settlements adjacent to King’s Lynn and the main towns’, rather than a rural service centre. These settlements function as separate communities with a range of facilities, but they also support the adjacent larger settlements, often through significant residential developments. These settlements benefit from public transport linkages to King’s Lynn and the main towns meaning strong potential for urban expansion. In 2011 the strategy for growth was to provide at least 7,510 new dwellings within and around King’s Lynn including: West Lynn, South Wootton, North Wootton, and West Winch.</p>	<p>N</p>

SEA Directive Criteria (Annex II)	Comments	Likely Significant Effect? Y/N
	<p>However, no allocations were made in North Wootton because there were no suitable sites identified for such growth in North Wootton. The emerging Local Plan which combines core strategy and site allocations has no new housing allocations proposed in North Wootton. The Local Plan review was agreed by King's Lynn and West Norfolk Council on 8 July 2021 and following Regulation 19 has been formally submitted.</p> <p><b>The local authority has indicated that North Wootton can allocate in addition to this, but they have chosen not to. In terms of the degree to which NWNP sets a framework, it does not allocate land for development.</b></p>	
<p>b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy</p>	<p>The North Wootton 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><b>N</b></p>

SEA Directive Criteria (Annex II)	Comments	Likely Significant Effect? Y/N
	It does not have influence over other plans. However, once made NWNP will form part of the statutory development plans for North Wootton and will be used in conjunction with the current development plans to determine planning applications.	
c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	One of the Basic Conditions which NWNP must meet is to contribute towards sustainable development. Several policies within the plan will focus on environmental protection and mitigation, including identification of Local Green Spaces. 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 NWNP this does not have the potential to restrict the delivery of other plans or programmes.	<b>N</b>
d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	Baseline information relating to NWNP was described earlier in this Screening Document. There are multiple Natural England statutory designated sites including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Norfolk Coast- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Ramsar site;</li> </ul>	<b>N</b>

SEA Directive Criteria (Annex II)	Comments	Likely Significant Effect? Y/N
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater Wash Special Protection Area (SPA); National nature reserve (NNR), Ramsar site, Special area of conservation (SAC), Special protection area (SPA), Site of special scientific interest (SSSI)</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 biodiversity improvements to existing green spaces when feasible and designating Local Green Spaces. The Biodiversity improvements policy (Policy 7) will be the focus of conservation and biodiversity improvement.</p> <p>There is also Policy 5 which is the AONB Policy which is in place for North Wootton and the area within or immediately adjacent to the Norfolk Coast AONB. This is to ensure the enhancement and protection of the local character and distinctive features of the landscape.</p> <p><b>The plan itself will not specifically allocate land for development and will not exacerbate any significant known environmental problems.</b></p>	

SEA Directive Criteria (Annex II)	Comments	Likely Significant Effect? Y/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
<b>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b>		
a) The probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects	NWNP 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 NWNP will not lead to any cumulative effects in combination with existing or emerging plans.	N
c) Transboundary nature of effects	The emerging NWNP 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)	NWNP 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 NWNP area has a total population of around 2,304 according to the mid-year population estimates (ONS,	N

SEA Directive Criteria (Annex II)	Comments	Likely Significant Effect? Y/N
the population likely to be affected)	2021). This sits within the context of a total population in King's Lynn & West Norfolk of 143,500 (Core Strategy, 2011). NWNP 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.	
<p>f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;</li> <li>ii. Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or</li> <li>iii. Intensive land-use</li> </ul>	<p>i) There are statutory natural designations which fall within North Wootton. As the plan does not allocate land for development it is not anticipated to have likely significant effects on the natural characteristics of the area. In addition, NWNP has put forward environmental policies including biodiversity improvements and the AONB policy to recognize and protect wildlife areas and the distinctive landscape characteristics.</p> <p>The area has a few historic features, including 3 Grade II Listed Buildings. The plan intends to identify and protect further non-designated heritage assets through Policy 15, including buildings and structures of local significance. It is not anticipated to have</p>	<b>N</b>

SEA Directive Criteria (Annex II)	Comments	Likely Significant Effect? Y/N
	<p>likely significant effects on heritage.</p> <p>ii) NWNP is unlikely to result in exceedance of environmental quality standards, such as those relating to air, water, and soil quality.</p> <p>iii) NWNP is unlikely to bring forward development of an extent that would result in a significant intensification of Local land Use</p> <p><b>The emerging NWNP does not include site allocations and therefore are not anticipated to have likely significant effects on the parish.</b></p>	
g) The effects on areas of landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan Area includes three listings which reflect the cultural and heritage value of the area such as listed buildings. The environmental effects on areas of biodiversity designations have been considered through the Local Plan and the emerging Local Plan Review with the new Norfolk Coast AONB Policy (LP16).</p> <p>The Greater Wash and North Norfolk Coast in North Wootton has a recognised international status. A large majority of the NWNP</p>	<b>N</b>

SEA Directive Criteria (Annex II)	Comments	Likely Significant Effect? Y/N
	<p>designated area falls within the Norfolk Coast AONB designation outside of the built-up settlement. The policies in this plan do not have an adverse effect on this landscape.</p> <p>NWNP 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 biodiversity improvements.</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 clauses including biodiversity net gain plan, planning obligations, contribute towards enhancing or maintaining existing GI such as CWS, priority habitats or existing greenspaces and through high quality design.</i></p> <p>The environmental effects on areas of biodiversity designations have also been considered through the Local Plan but are not relevant to NWNP.</p>	

## 5 HRA SCREENING ASSESSMENT

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52. 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.

53. 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.

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

55. **There are two designated European wildlife sites in the NWNP area, The Greater Wash and North Norfolk Coast.**

56. This screening assessment has also considered the impact on European Sites within 20km of the plan area, as an in-combination assessment area.

**Figure 15- European Sites within 20km of North Wootton**

Special Areas of Conservation	Special Protection Areas	Ramsar Sites
Roydon Common & Dersingham Bog Norfolk Valley Fens Breckland (Swaffham Heath) River Wensum	Breckland (Swaffham Heath)	Roydon Common Dersingham Bog

57. 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.

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58. 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’.

59. Potential impact pathways considered for this assessment include:

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

60. NWNP 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 NWNP is provided in Figure 16.

**Figure 16- HRA Screening Assessment**

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Likely Significant Effects</b>	<b>Potential Risks</b>	<b>Recommendation at Screening Stage</b>
<b>Policy 1: Housing Mix</b>	Requirements that ensure future housing development meets the needs of local people.	No LSE – does not promote development but relates to qualitative criteria for development	N/A	None
<b>Policy 2: Affordable Housing</b>	Sets a tenure split for affordable housing and the discount required for First Homes	No LSE – policy does not promote land for development	N/A	None
<b>Policy 3: Design</b>	Requiring high quality design that accords with the North Wootton Design Codes/Guide	No LSE – policy is qualitative and does not promote development	N/A	None
<b>Policy 4: Residential Parking Standards</b>	Policy setting requirements for parking for new residential development	No LSE – policy does not promote development	N/A	None

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Likely Significant Effects</b>	<b>Potential Risks</b>	<b>Recommendation at Screening Stage</b>
<b>Policy 5: North Wootton Norfolk Coast AONB</b>	Policy sets to protect and enhance the AONB landscape and distinctive features of the built and natural environment.	No LSE – policy does not promote development	N/A	None
<b>Policy 6: Dark Skies</b>	Policy to protect unnecessary light pollution from new developments	No LSE – does not promote development	N/A	None
<b>Policy 7: Biodiversity improvements</b>	Requirement to deliver at least a 10% net gain in ecological value and conservation of existing natural features and existing green spaces.	No LSE – mitigation policy for growth	N/A	None
<b>Policy 8: Local Green Space</b>	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
<b>Policy 9: Protection of important local views</b>	To conserve the current landscape setting through the protection of important local views	No LSE – mitigation policy for growth.	N/A	None
<b>Policy 10: Surface Water Flood Risk &amp; Management</b>	Protective policy requiring appropriate flood risk and ecological assessment	No LSE – protective policy	N/A	None
<b>Policy 11: Protection of Community Facilities</b>	Policy protects the use of the listed community facilities	No LSE – does not promote development	N/A	None

Policy	Description	Likely Significant Effects	Potential Risks	Recommendation at Screening Stage
<b>Policy 12: Provision of community facilities/services</b>	Policy supports in principle development proposals coming forward for new or expanding community facilities.	No LSE – does not allocate any community development.	N/A	None
<b>Policy 13: Implementing walking and cycling routes</b>	Policy looks to support sustainable movement schemes coming forward which will enhance walking and cycling opportunities along the disused railway track and other mapped routes.	No LSE- the mapped routes in Figure X of the NDP shows that this does not cross into any of the designated European Sites. No development has been allocated. However, the policy seeks to improvement routes in the development period if an opportunity arises.	N/A	None
<b>Policy 14: Parking Provision</b>	Policy looks to support in principle improved parking provision at the Primary School and businesses proposing additional off-road parking.	No LSE – does not allocate any parking sites.	N/A	None
<b>Policy 15: Non-Designated Heritage Assets</b>	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 SEA AND HRA SCREENING CONCLUSION

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61. 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 NWNP area. Statutory bodies were consulted by the Local Planning Authority between the dates 30th of January 2023 and 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023. Natural England and Historic 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 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**.

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## 7 STATUTORY CONSULTEE RESPONSES

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### 7.1 HISTORIC ENGLAND

**From:** James, Edward <[Edward.James@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:Edward.James@HistoricEngland.org.uk)>

**Sent:** 21 February 2023 17:45

**To:** Michael Burton <[Michael.Burton@West-Norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.Burton@West-Norfolk.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: PL00792354 - North Wootton Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2036 - Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/ Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening

[External Email]

[Think before you click on links]

Dear Michael,

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on this consultation. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process. Therefore we welcome this opportunity to review the Screening Report for this plan. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the North Wootton Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied with the Screening Opinion.

The Screening Report indicates that the Council considers that the plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We note that the plan does not propose to allocate any sites for development.

On the basis of the information supplied, and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with the Council that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment **is not required**.

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The views of the other two statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for an SEA is made.

I should be pleased if you can send a copy of the determination as required by REG 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

We should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by you with your correspondence. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the SEA process and, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan) where we consider that, despite the SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the relevant local 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), how the 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.

Please do contact me, either via email or the number below, if you have any queries.

Kind regards,

Edward

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Edward James  
Historic Places Adviser - East of England  
Historic England

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## 7.2 NATURAL ENGLAND

Date: 24 February 2023  
Our ref: 419747  
Your ref: N/A



Mr Burton  
Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk  
[Michael.Burton@West-Norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.Burton@West-Norfolk.gov.uk)

Hornbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
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CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Dear Mr Burton

### **North Wootton Neighbourhood Plan - SEA & HRA Screening Consultation**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 30 January 2023 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

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.

Where Neighbourhood Plans could have significant environmental effects, they may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended). Further guidance on deciding whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects and the requirements for consulting Natural England on SEA are set out in the [Planning Practice Guidance](#).

Planning practice guidance also outlines that if an appropriate assessment is required for your Neighbourhood Plan this will also engage the need for a SEA. One of the basic conditions that will be tested by the independent examiner is whether the neighbourhood plan is compatible with European obligations, including those under the SEA Directive. Where a SEA is required it should be prepared in accordance with [Regulation 12](#) of the SEA Regulations.

Where a neighbourhood plan could potentially affect a '[Habitats Site](#)', it will be necessary to screen the plan in relation to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017), as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations'). Where likely significant effects are identified, it will be necessary to undertake an appropriate assessment of the neighbourhood plan and, if needed, identify and secure appropriate mitigation measures to ensure the plan does not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the habitats site.

Natural England welcomes the SEA and HRA Screening Assessment (dated November 2022) which assess the North Wootton requirement for SEA and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the Neighbourhood Plan.

**Natural England agrees with the conclusions of the report** that it is not likely there will be significant environmental effects arising from the policies in the plan, which have not already been accounted for within the adopted local plan. Therefore, the North Wootton Neighbourhood Plan does not require an SEA to be undertaken. Natural England also agrees that the Plan would be unlikely to result in significant effects to European Sites, either alone or in combination, and therefore an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Regulations is not required. Additionally, Natural England welcomes the inclusion of Policy 5: North Wootton Norfolk Coast AONB, Policy 7:

Biodiversity improvements, Policy 8: Local Green Space, and Policy 13: Implementing walking cycling routes within the Neighbourhood Plan, with the aims to help improve the provision of high-quality green infrastructure and to provide biodiversity gains.

Aside from this, Natural England have no specific comments at this stage, but further guidance is provided within annex 1 which covers the issues and opportunities that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise. 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 sincerely

Joe Thompsett  
Norfolk & Suffolk Team

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### Landscape

Your plans or orders may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes. You may want to consider identifying distinctive local landscape features or characteristics such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls and think about how any new development proposals can respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness.

If you are proposing development within or close to a protected landscape (National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or other sensitive location, we recommend that you carry out a landscape assessment of the proposal. Landscape assessments can help you to choose the most appropriate sites for development and help to avoid or minimise impacts of development on the landscape through careful siting, design and landscaping.

### Wildlife habitats

Some proposals can have adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites or other priority habitats (listed [here](#)<sup>9</sup>), such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or [Ancient woodland](#)<sup>10</sup>. If there are likely to be any adverse impacts you'll need to think about how such impacts can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

### Priority and protected species

You'll also want to consider whether any proposals might affect priority species (listed [here](#)<sup>11</sup>) or protected species. To help you do this, Natural England has produced advice [here](#)<sup>12</sup> to help understand the impact of particular developments on protected species.

### Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services for society. It is a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution. If you are proposing development, you should seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of a higher quality in line with National Planning Policy Framework para 171. For more information, see our publication [Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land](#)<sup>13</sup>.

## **Improving your natural environment**

Your plan or order can offer exciting opportunities to enhance your local environment. If you are setting out policies on new development or proposing sites for development, you may wish to consider identifying what environmental features you want to be retained or enhanced or new features you would like to see created as part of any new development. Examples might include:

- Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.
- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Think about how lighting can be best managed to encourage wildlife.

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<sup>9</sup><http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>

<sup>11</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

<sup>13</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35012>

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- Adding a green roof to new buildings.

You may also want to consider enhancing your local area in other ways, for example by:

- Setting out in your plan how you would like to implement elements of a wider Green Infrastructure Strategy (if one exists) in your community.
- Assessing needs for accessible greenspace and setting out proposals to address any deficiencies or enhance provision.
- Identifying green areas of particular importance for special protection through Local Green Space designation (see [Planning Practice Guidance on this](#) <sup>14</sup>).
- Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).
- Planting additional street trees.
- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition, or clearing away an eyesore).

### 7.3 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

No response to the consultation.

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