

**Walpole Cross Keys Neighbourhood Plan Review
2022-2038**

**Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats
Regulation Assessment Preliminary Screening**

August 2025



Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
SEA SCREENING.....	3
SCOPE OF THE WALPOLE CROSS KEYS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN.....	3
BASELINE INFORMATION	5
CONTEXT	5
BIODIVERSITY, FLORA, AND FAUNA	6
POPULATION	10
HUMAN HEALTH.....	11
SOIL	11
WATER	12
AIR AND CLIMATIC FACTORS	15
MATERIAL ASSETS	15
CULTURAL HERITAGE.....	18
LANDSCAPE.....	19
SEA SCREENING.....	22
HRA SCREENING ASSESSMENT	32
SEA AND HRA SCREENING CONCLUSION.....	36
APPENDIX 1- STATUTORY ENVIRONMENTAL BODIES RESPONSES	37
HISTORIC ENGLAND.....	37
NATURAL ENGLAND	38

List of figures:

Figure 1: Designated Neighbourhood Area	2
Figure 2-Wildlife Designations and Habitats	7
Figure 3- Habitat Networks in Walpole Cross Keys	9
Figure 4- Mid Year Population Estimates (Census, 2021; ONS, 2021).....	10
Figure 5- Age Profile (Census 2021).....	10
Figure 6-Agricultural Land Classification (Source, Natural England (2023)).....	11
Figure 7-Flood Risk from Rivers and Sea (Source Environment Agency, 2025)	12
Figure 8- Surface Water Flood Risk (Source Environment Agency, 2025)	13
Figure 9-Surface Water Flood Risk in the built-up part of Walpole Cross Keys (Source Environment Agency, 2025)	13
Figure 10- Surface Water Flood Risk south of the A17 in Walpole Cross Keys.....	14
Figure 11- Public Rights of Way	17
Figure 12-Dark Skies (CPRE, 2025).....	21
Figure 13-Schedule 1 Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	23
Figure 14-Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes	24
Figure 15-Application of SEA Directive to WCKNPR	25
Figure 16- Likely Significant Effects	28
Figure 17- European Sites within 20km of Walpole Cross Keys	32
Figure 18- European Sites mapped within 20km from Walpole Cross Keys	33
Figure 19- HRA Screening Assessment.....	34

Introduction

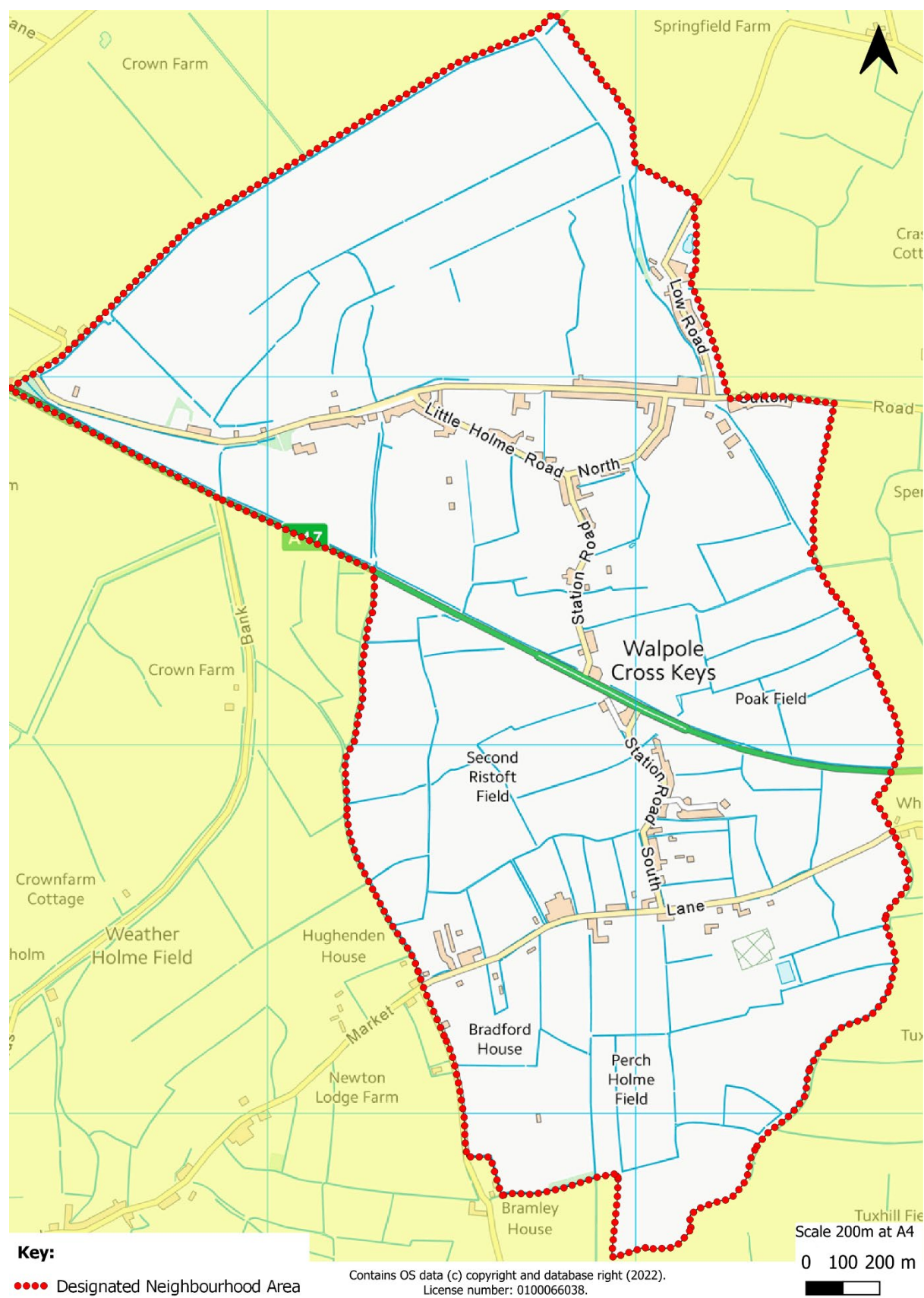
1. Walpole Cross Keys Parish Council is preparing a review of their Neighbourhood Plan for Walpole Cross Keys parish, known as WCKNPR throughout this document. The planning period will be 2022-2038. The designated area (**See Figure 1**) is located within King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council area. [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 WCKNPR. This is required under European Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive), transposed into UK law through the SEA Regulations¹.
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 Directive² and with Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017³. 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).

¹ 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.

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

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

Figure 1: Designated Neighbourhood Area



SEA Screening

Scope of the Walpole Cross Keys Neighbourhood Plan

4. A draft (Regulation 14) version of WCKNPR is currently being prepared. It is intended that this is subject to public consultation in 2024. WCKNPR includes a vision for the long-term future of Walpole Cross Keys, along with aims to support delivery of this vision. The current draft vision is:

The local community wish Walpole Cross Keys to continue to thrive as a small rural community where new development in keeping with the village is supported, comprising mixed residential development, further employment uses, new community facilities and improvements to infrastructure.

5. The draft plan currently includes seven specific aims to deliver this vision:
 - I. Ensure future housing development meets the needs of the local population and comprises a range of house sizes including smaller to medium sized dwellings providing opportunities for all age groups to stay in the village such as the elderly, younger adults looking for their first home and couples wishing to start or expand their families.
 - II. New housing will be sensitively designed in line with the Walpole Cross Keys Design Codes 2022 and will be appropriately located in existing built-up areas both north of the A17 and south of the A17.
 - III. Walpole Cross Keys will continue to be a small parish made up predominantly of a mixed variety of dwellings mainly built in ribbon development.
 - IV. Protect and enhance Walpole Cross Keys natural environment including important local views.
 - V. Reduce the impact of flooding and ensure that surface water flood risk is not exacerbated by new development.
 - VI. Any traffic impacts associated with new development will be acceptable and distributed more evenly throughout the built-up areas.
 - VII. The next generation of this village's inhabitants will inherit a community that has its own integrity, and continues to offer facilities, and a strong sense of community spirit, all of which have been important vestiges found here in both the past and present.
6. WCKNPR will have a range of non-strategic planning policies to realise and deliver the above vision and aims. This includes policies:

- Where new residential development is recommended approval if they score positively against certain criteria such as being adjacent or well related to the existing pattern of development;
- To ensure the housing mix, including affordable housing, on new development sites meets local need;
- Ensure extensions and conversions consider the AECOM Design Codes Document and are sympathetic to the existing design, materials and character of the immediate area;
- To achieve high quality design with the input of Walpole Cross Keys 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;
- To protect locally important views;
- Tackling light pollution through an appropriate dark skies policy;
- Encouraging the development or redevelopment of employment related uses for the agriculture or horticulture sector on suitable sites;
- Supporting the redevelopment or enhancement of certain brownfield sites in the parish;
- To protect the loss of community facilities for the vitality of the parish;
- Encouraging the improvement of the road network.

7. The plan does not allocate land for development.

Baseline Information

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

Context

9. Walpole Cross Keys is a village in Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough, with a resident population of around 560 according to Census 2021. It is a small village that lies to the north of the A17 approximately six miles west of King's Lynn and six miles northeast of Wisbech. There are no core services besides the primary school⁴ and two bus routes where the 505 interConnect runs along Sutton Road between King's Lynn and Spalding⁵ and the 54 route runs from Walpole St Peter to King's Lynn. There's a number of businesses in the parish such as ones based at home and within employment units including:

- Agriculture-** Lite-Trac Systems Ltd Agricultural Machinery
- **Beauty/Fashion & Wellness-** K-nail-D Online store and Ever long Floatation Therapy, Blossom tree boutique
- **Construction & Homeware/Gardening – ANP Eastern Pallets Bought Sold, FNL** Pallet Services, Stocksy Mowers, Reinforced bed company, Fenland Windows & Conservatories
- **Food services-** Samuels Family Farm Shop & Butchers
- Walpole Cross Keys Car Garage

⁴ [Walpole Cross Keys Primary School - Home](#)

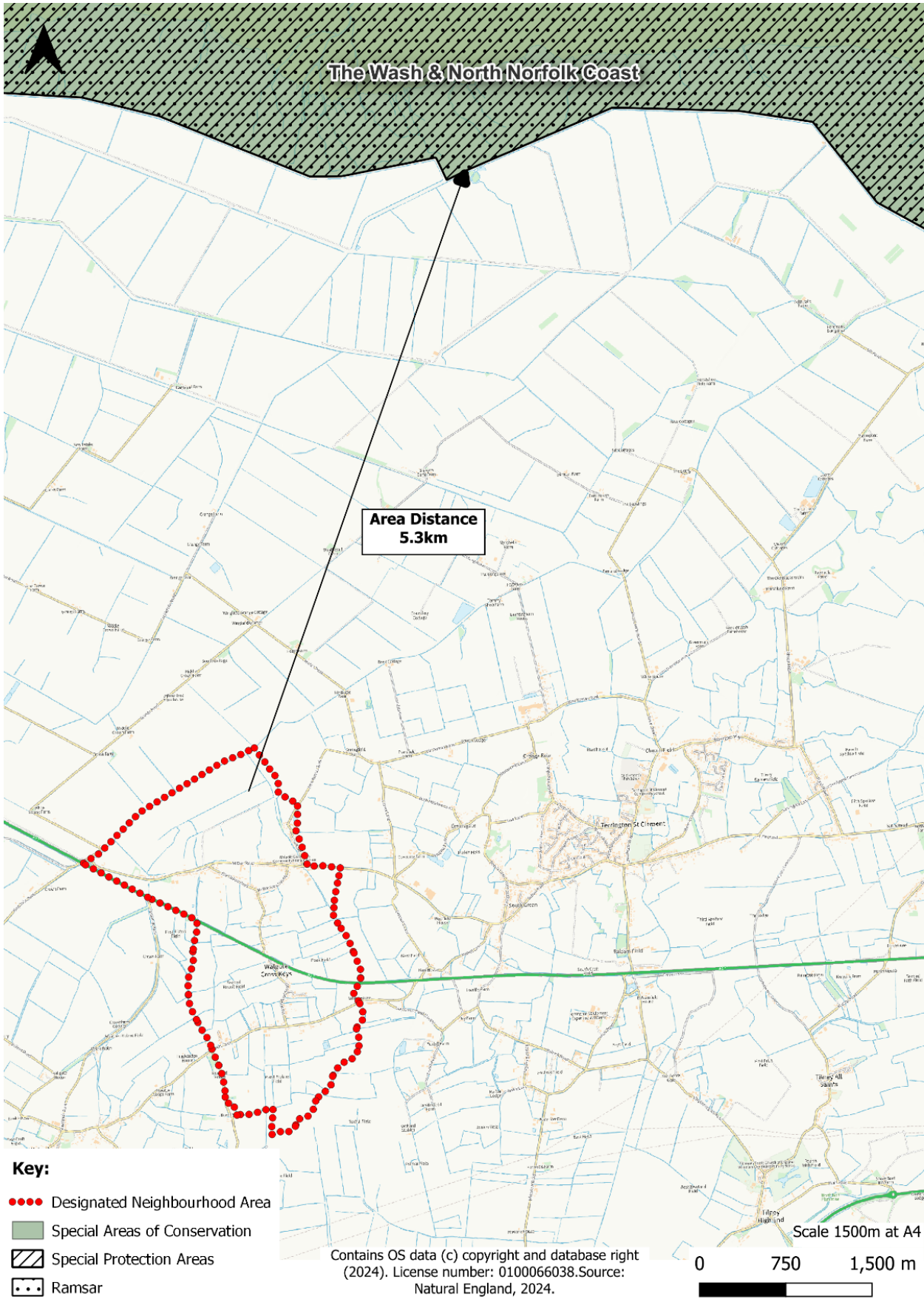
⁵ [505 Bus Route & Timetable: Spalding - Kings Lynn | Stagecoach \(stagecoachbus.com\)](#)

Biodiversity, flora, and fauna

10. There are no European or Natural England statutory designated sites in the neighbourhood area, though there are a number of important European designations within approximately 5km to the north, this includes the southern boundary of the Greater Wash Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) shown in **Figure 2**.
11. **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 wildfowl⁶. 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)
12. 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.
13. There are no non-statutory designations, County Wildlife Sites, within the neighbourhood area. However, there are a few within 6 to 7km of the neighbourhood area to the south, southwest and southeast. These fall within the parishes of Walton Highway, Walpole Highway and Wiggshall St Germans.

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

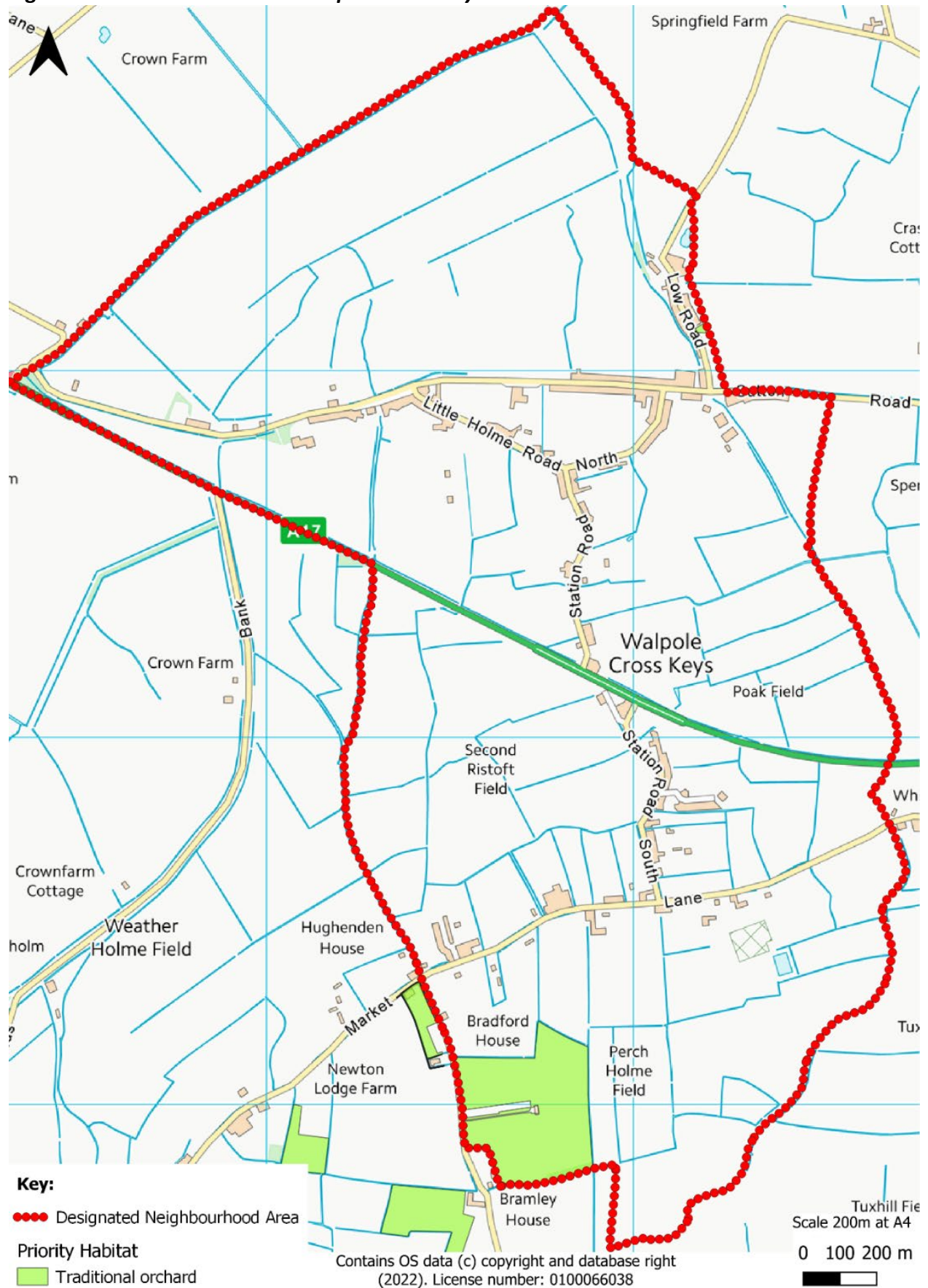
Figure 2-Wildlife Designations and Habitats



14. To the south of the parish along Bustard's Lane, there are Traditional Orchards which are **Priority Habitats** and **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 population⁷⁷. Natural England identifies Priority habitats as being important habitat networks which could have the potential to help improve the ecological resilience for each of the habitats/habitat networks in the given area. The priority habitat (Traditional Orchards) in Walpole Cross Keys is to the south of the parish within the countryside/farmland. Local authorities have a duty to consider the conservation of these habitats, and development that would adversely affect these would not normally be acceptable.

⁷⁷ [UK BAP Priority Habitats | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation](#)

Figure 3- Habitat Networks in Walpole Cross Keys



Population

15. According to the Census 2021 Walpole Cross Keys has a current population of 560. **Figure 4** shows how the population has shown a fluctuating trend since 2011 although more recently rising by just over 12.5% since 2019. The Census 2021 data for Walpole Cross Keys age profile shows that around half of the population is made up of working age groups followed by younger age groups (25yrs and below) and then elderly groups (**Figure 5**).

Figure 4- Mid Year Population Estimates (Census, 2021; ONS, 2021)

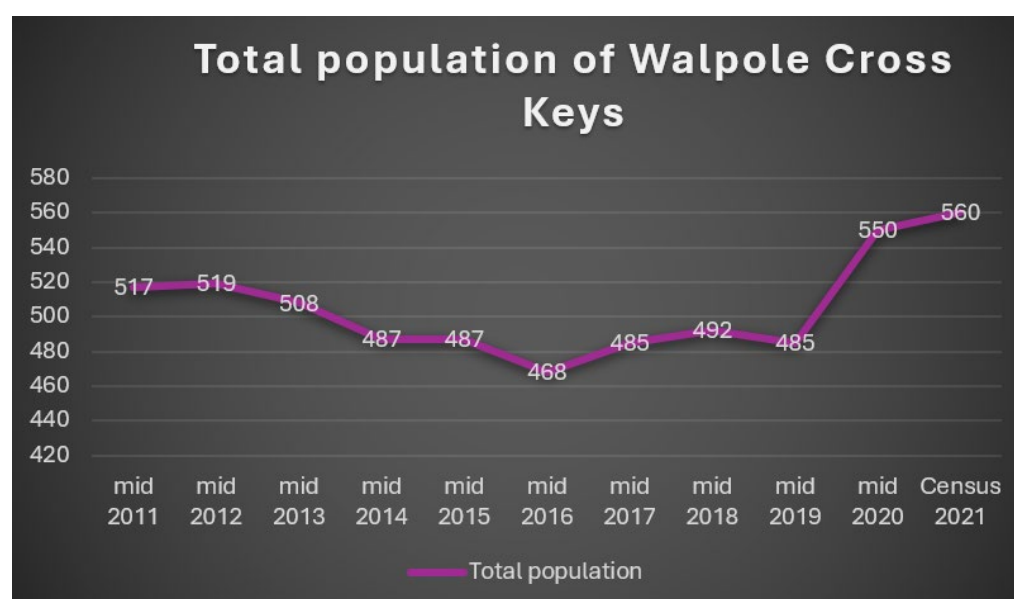
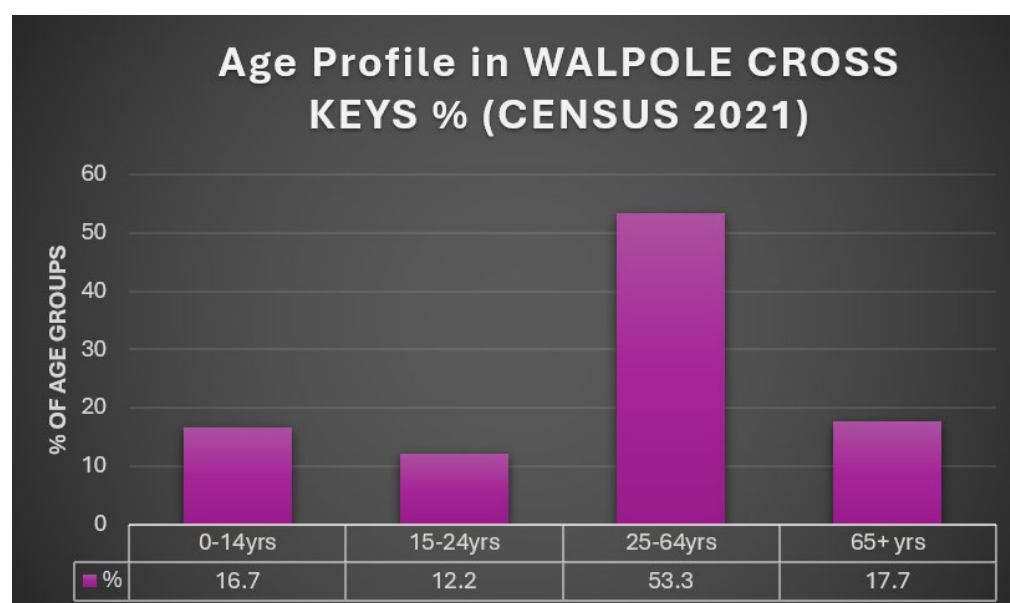


Figure 5- Age Profile (Census 2021)



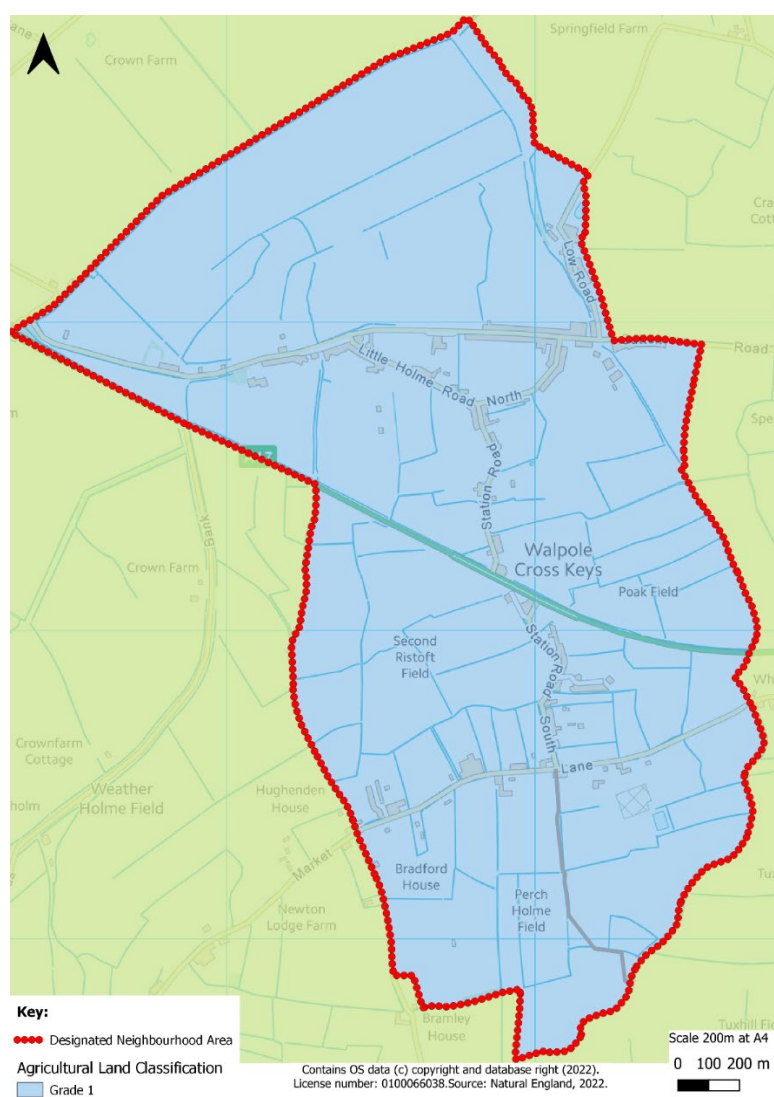
Human Health

16. Provision of age-related services could become an increasing consideration for the neighbourhood plan area over time as the proportion of over 65s makes up 17.7% of the parish profile.

Soil

17. The parish contains the best and most versatile agricultural land in England, as identified by the Agricultural Land Classification Scale. The whole parish is identified as Grade 1 as shown on **Figure 6**. 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.

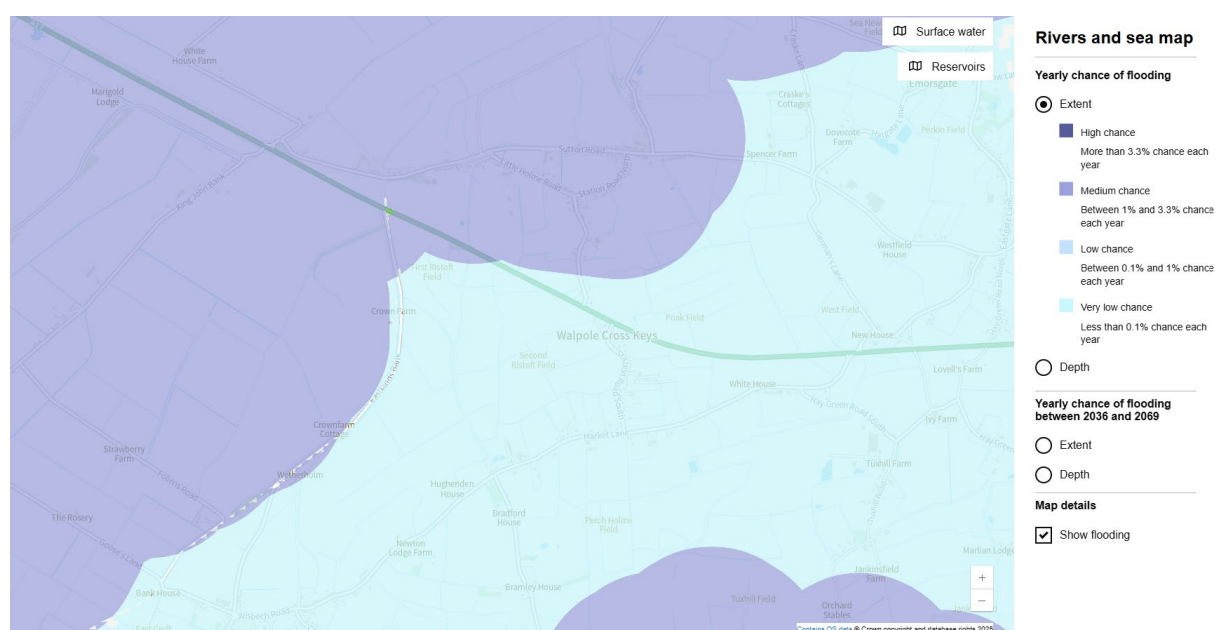
Figure 6-Agricultural Land Classification (Source, Natural England (2023))



Water

18. The settlement is situated within Flood Zone 3a and the watercourse for flood warning in this area is from the Wash Frontage and the right bank of the Tidal Nene from Walton Dam to Admiralty Point from the Tidal Nene and The Wash and the Wash frontage at Admiralty Point including Tidal River Great Ouse west bank breach to Eau Brink, from the North Sea⁸. As shown in **Figure 7**, Environment Agency future flood risk modelling shows that the area has a low to medium chance of flooding from fluvial flooding (sea and rivers), with a chance of between 0.1% and 3.3% each year considering any flood defences protecting or within the area⁹.

Figure 7-Flood Risk from Rivers and Sea (Source Environment Agency, 2025)



19. Surface water flood risk is an issue in most parts of the neighbourhood area, including within the built-up area. **Figures 8 to 9**, 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 around Sutton Road, Little Holme Road, Low Road, Station Road South, and Market Lane. The risk shows potential for flooding to the highway, agricultural fields, private property, and gardens.

⁸ [Flood risk assessment - Level 1 | Flood risk assessment - Level 1 | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk \(west-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#)

⁹ [Learn more about this area's flood risk - GOV.UK \(check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Figure 8- Surface Water Flood Risk (Source Environment Agency, 2025)

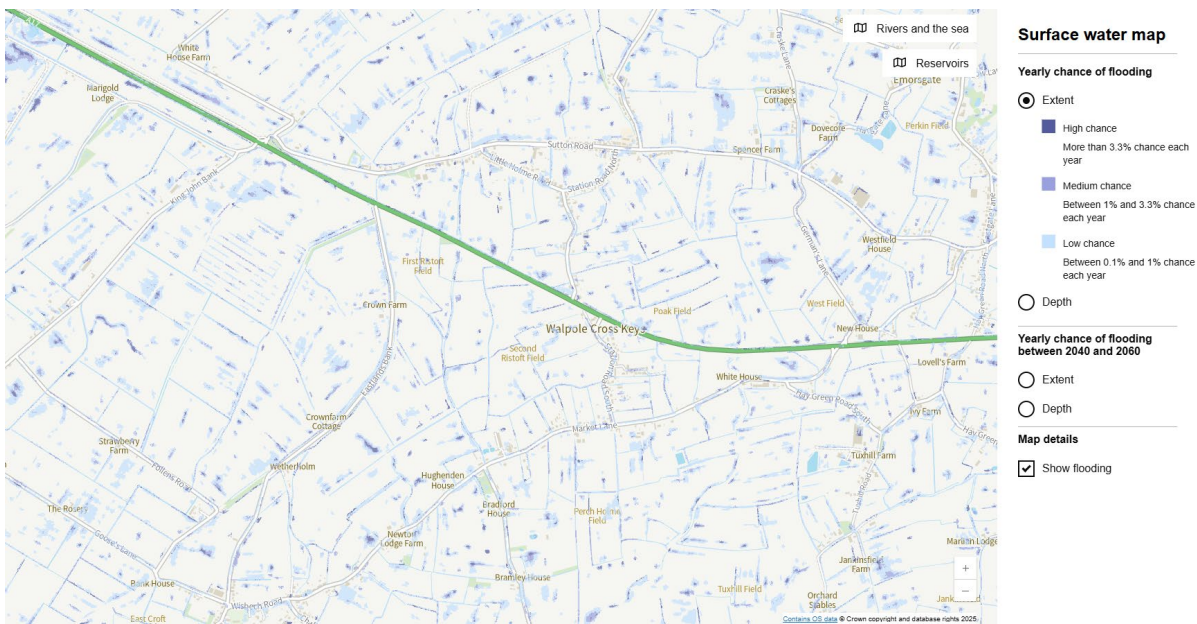


Figure 9-Surface Water Flood Risk in the built-up part of Walpole Cross Keys (Source Environment Agency, 2025)

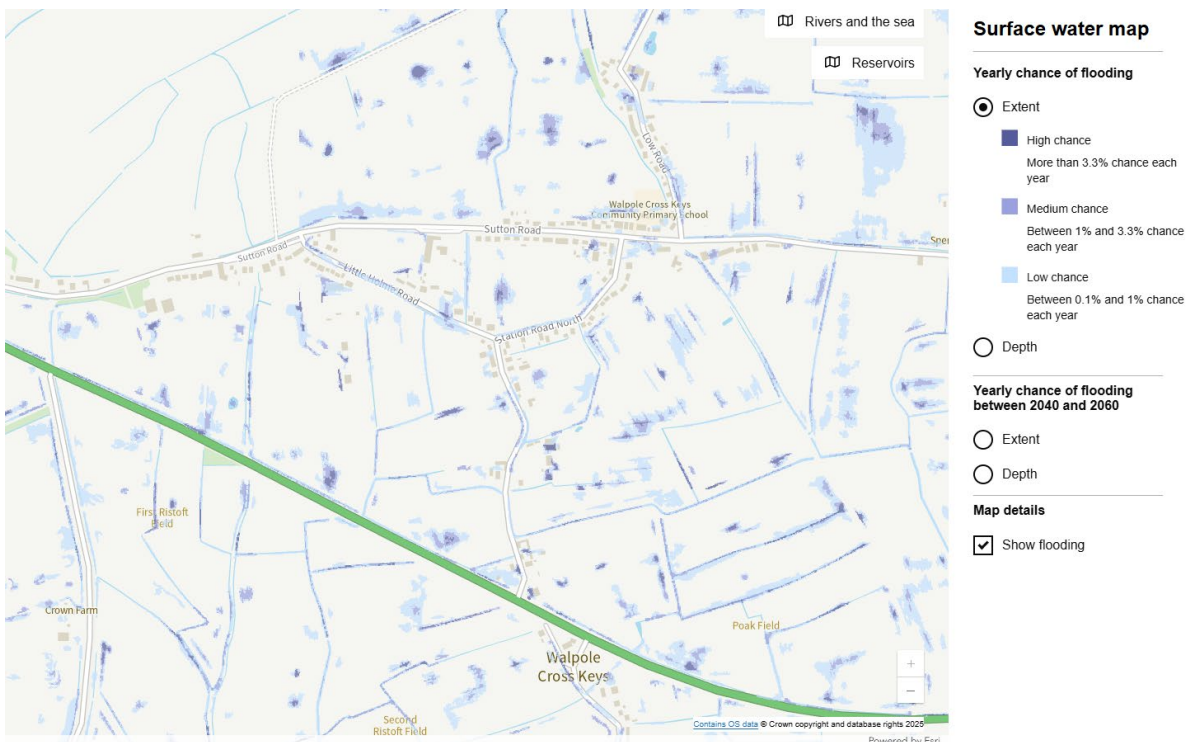
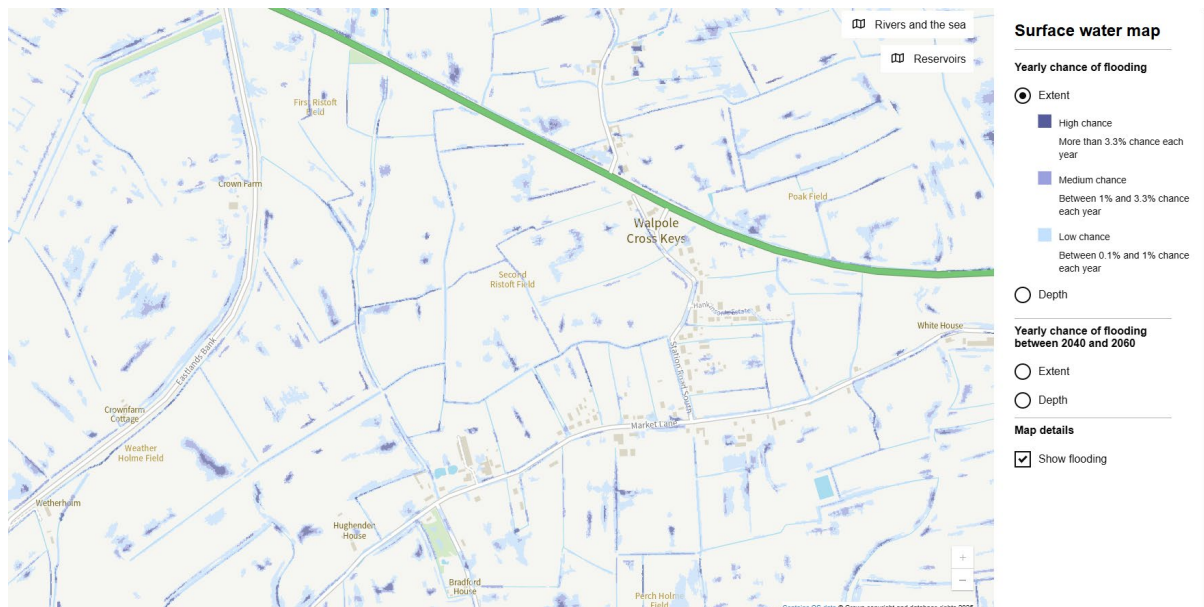


Figure 10- Surface Water Flood Risk south of the A17 in Walpole Cross Keys



20. The BCKLWN Strategic Flood risk Assessment Stage 1 (2017) mentions concern of one flood event which happened at Sutton Road, Walpole Cross Keys on 6th November and 23rd December 2012. One residential property was flooded internally which was caused by a combination of:

- snow and extreme rainfall events in the previous months
- exceptionally high groundwater levels
- poorly maintained watercourse to the south of the settlement
- a blocked/damaged culvert downstream of the watercourse
- damaged highways drain chamber cover in the driveway
- exacerbated surface water discharges

Air and Climatic Factors

21. 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 (2024) confirms that there are two Air Quality Management Areas in the borough these are within King's Lynn at Gaywood Clock and Railway Road. Gaywood Clock and Railway Road AQMAs are approximately 8 to 9 miles east of the WCKNPR area¹⁰. This would suggest that air quality is generally not of a concern in the WCKNPR 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.

Material Assets

22. Walpole Cross Keys contains a few services in the settlement as listed below:

- **Core services-** Walpole Cross Keys Primary School
Agriculture- Lite-Trac Systems Ltd Agricultural Machinery
- **Beauty/Fashion & Wellness-** K-nail-D Online store and Ever long Floatation Therapy, Blossom tree boutique
- **Construction & Homeware/Gardening – ANP Eastern Pallets Bought Sold, FNL** Pallet Services, Stocksy Mowers, Reinforced bed company, Fenland Windows & Conservatories
- **Food services-** Samuels Family Farm Shop & Butchers
- Walpole Cross Keys Car Garage

23. The primary school is the only core service in the parish for residents. There is also a village hall which is available for hire for events, social groups, commercial ventures and more. This includes coffee mornings, exercise classes and social events such as bingo.

24. Walpole Cross Keys has two bus services run through the village the 505 which runs from Spalding to King's Lynn through the area along Sutton Road just off the A17. There is also the bus service Lynx 54¹¹ which runs along Market Ln at the south of the boundary, however, this does not have a permanent listing on the website timetable so may not be well used. The bus stops on Sutton Road outside the school are old brick bus shelters without seating. The bus stop on market lane has a shelter and a bar to rest on. Market Ln is a wide road with no footways for pedestrians to walk on but has a number of green verges outside of residential properties. The road is a rural B Road with a road speed of 60mph (assumed) so pedestrians would have to be careful walking to the bus stop safely here.

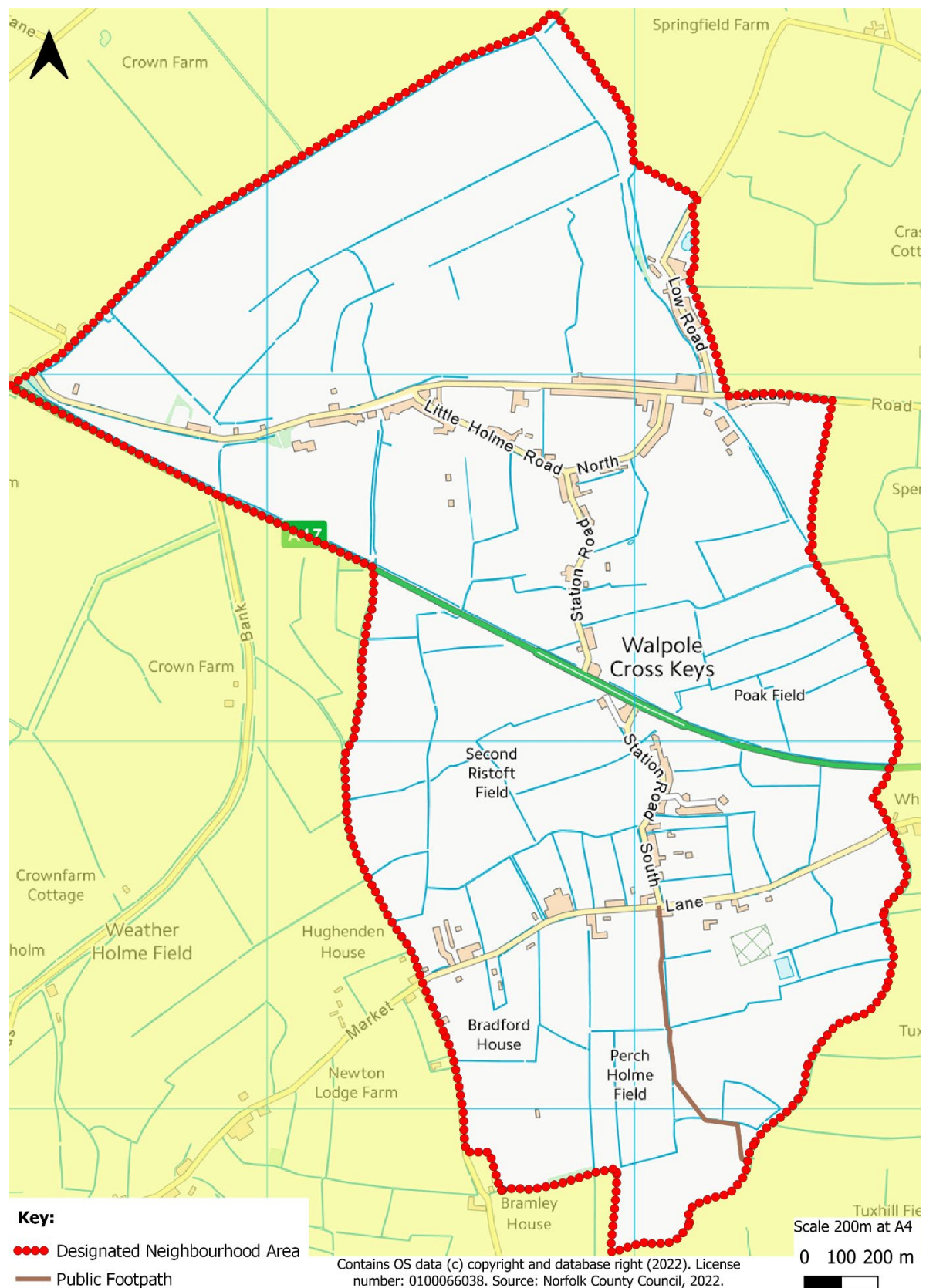
¹⁰Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Air Quality Annual Status Report (2024) Available at: https://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/downloads/file/8811/air_quality_annual_status_report_2024

¹¹ 54 | Lynx (lynxbus.co.uk)

25. Due to the rural nature of the village, there are not many footpaths present, many of the roads are narrow B roads such as Little Holme Rd and Station Rd, where one car would safely pass, there is one major road the A17 that cuts through the centre of the parish. This road connects residents and passers-by from King's Lynn to Newark on Trent in Nottinghamshire stretching for a distance of 62 miles travelling across flat fenland landscapes between East Anglia and East Midlands¹².
26. There is only one Public Rights of Way (PROW) within the village, and this is a footpath leading south from Market Lane to the east side of Perch Holme Field through countryside (**Figure 11**). This would enable people to access the open countryside which is considered important for physical and mental well-being. However, the routes appear fragmented and short, with no circular walks available throughout the village and a lack of routes in other built-up parts of Walpole Cross Keys.

¹² [Traffic news for a17 | Live reports from AA Roadwatch | AA \(theaa.com\)](#)

Figure 11- Public Rights of Way



Cultural Heritage

27. There are no statutory listed buildings or monuments within the neighbourhood plan area according to the latest data on the Historic England website¹³.
28. On the Norfolk Heritage Explorer, there are 43 entries regarding historic objects, structures, buildings, and mounds. These include assets, in no particular order, from the prehistoric age, Bronze Age, Middle Saxon, Roman, late medieval and 19th century. Many of the entries were discoveries from fieldwalking in 1984 by the Fenland Survey of Medieval pottery sherds and materials between the ages 1066AD- 1539 AD¹⁴. As set out in the Walpole Cross Keys Parish Summary:
29. *“The name ‘Walpole’ is thought to derive from the Old English for pool by the wall and may refer to the Roman bank which encircled a number of the Marshland parishes. The area of this parish was previously part of the now dissolved parish of Walpole St Andrew. Large parts of the parish are former salt marshes, mostly drained only during the last two hundred years. As a result, it is thought unlikely that any occupation would have been possible during the prehistoric period. However, a possible group of Bronze Age barrows (NHER [13302](#)) have been recorded, although they are known to have been destroyed and their location is uncertain. In addition to this a prehistoric worked flint (NHER [22014](#)) has been recovered, but no other evidence of prehistoric, Bronze age or Iron Age occupation in this parish has been recorded.*
30. *No Roman monuments have been recorded in the parish, although a Roman cremation (NHER [21506](#)) has been recorded just south of Walpole Cross Keys settlement. A Roman coin and copper alloy double-barrelled hollow (NHER [31705](#)) handle have also been recovered. Objects from the Saxon period have also been recovered, comprising Middle and Late Saxon pottery sherd (NHER [16639](#) and [22575](#)) and an Early Saxon 6th century square-headed brooch.*
31. *It is during the medieval period that occupation increased, and medieval pottery sherds have been recovered from twenty seven separate sites across the parish (NHER [20066](#), [22288](#) and [22299](#)). This includes two concentrations of material which comprise bone and baked clay fragments (NHER [22291](#) and [21337](#)). A buckle has also been recovered (NHER [31705](#)), and the earthworks of at least two medieval salterns have been recorded (NHER [21941](#) and [21942](#)).”*

¹³ [Search the List: Map Search | Historic England](#)

¹⁴ Walpole Cross Keys. Source: Norfolk Historic Environment Service (September 2023). [Your Search Results - Norfolk Heritage Explorer](#) Accessed: 05/09/2023

Landscape

32. The West Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment¹⁵ identifies that the neighbourhood area falls under **'The Fens, Settled Inland Marshes'** character area. The character area is characterised by:

- A large-scale, low-lying landscape offering distant, panoramic views that evoke a sense of openness. This open character is less evident where settlements, shelterbelts and orchards occur.
- Simplistic terrain characterised by a distinctly flat landform providing wide horizons. Earthworks in the form of rivers and creek embankments bring topographic change and strong, straight lines of contrast.
- An intensively farmed arable landscape comprising predominantly geometric fields divided by straight drainage channels and dykes and underlain predominantly by silts. Field size is variable in places with small units defining settlement edges.
- Fruit orchards are a relatively common (yet declining) feature with rectangular plots ordered into rows. These rows often channel views and where orchards occur alongside roads, views across the landscape are more restricted. Conifer planting is also a relatively common feature.
- Buildings and storage associated with horticulture and food production industries, as well as power stations, pumping stations and sluices, provide visible human-built elements.
- Well served by a network of rural roads that follow an irregular path.
- The landscape appears well settled – with villages, town edges, large houses, individual farms and properties generally in view. Settlement is predominantly found aligning secondary roads and has a linear arrangement with villages often merging through ribbon development.
- The skyline appears cluttered in places due to the varied heights, forms and textures of vertical elements including trees, pylons and buildings.
- Lines of pylons are dominant features slicing diagonally across the field system. The pylons and posts carrying overhead wires are frequently in view.
- Views can be gained to the edge of King's Lynn and Wisbech.
- The change to the adjacent Coastal Marshes and Open Inland Marsh landscapes is transitional and not always obvious.
- Large churches (which are often situated in an elevated position) within villages are key landmark features - visible from long distances.
- The main roads – the A17(T) and A47(T) are busy through routes and the operation of farm machinery brings constant movement to the landscape.
- The sense of remoteness and tranquillity varies and is largely dependent on proximity to roads and settlement edges.

The Ecological Character for this character type is dominated by:

- Scattered mixed shelterbelts and clumps of mature trees.
- Poplar and willow rows.

¹⁵ BCKLWN Landscape Character Assessment, Final Report March 2007, Chris Blandford Associates

- River corridors, including the River Great Ouse and The Well Creek.
- Network of drainage ditches (with grassy banks and lined with reeds and rushes).

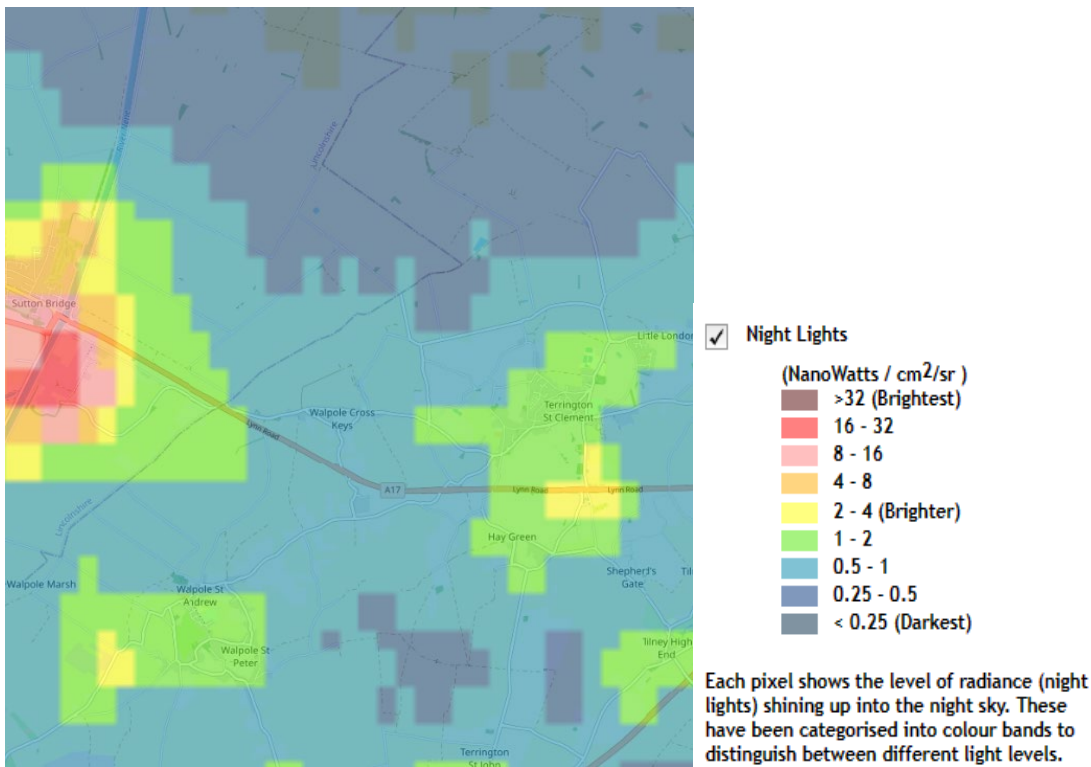
The key forces for change which could affect Walpole Cross Keys are:

- Loss of field margins and farm ponds through agricultural intensification.
- Intensification of arable farming practices, resulting in potential loss of curvilinear drainage patterns/ co-axial field systems.
- Potential decline in maintenance of river and drainage channels and pumps and associated potential flood risk.
- Soil erosion and shrinkage, resulting in changing agricultural landscape.
- Potential major road improvements associated with the A17.
- Risk of saline intrusion of agricultural farmland from rising sea levels.
- Potential farm diversification, with associated recreational pressures, such as parking and noise/ visual intrusion.
- Potential construction of new sluices.
- Loss of orchards.
- Introduction of large new sheds, haulage, or agricultural buildings

33. The CPRE Dark Skies Mapping shows¹⁶ that the majority of the Parish falls into the darkest categories. These night lights ranged between 1 to <0.25 and suggest that as a whole the parish has relatively dark skies with very little light pollution. Additional intrusive external or internal lights associated with new development would be detrimental to the character of the village. It is noted that in many cases external and internal lights fall into permitted development, however, it is possible to influence lighting associated with new development and the evidence and national guidance of the benefits of sensitive lighting may encourage better design choices by others.

¹⁶ [England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies \(cpre.org.uk\)](http://cpre.org.uk)

Figure 12-Dark Skies (CPRE, 2025)



SEA Screening

Legislative Background

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

34. The European Directive 2001/42/EC¹⁷ 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 Walpole Cross Keys Neighbourhood Plan are likely to cause significant environmental effects.
35. 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 13**¹⁸.
36. **Figure 14** 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 2005¹⁹. **Figure 15** below assesses whether WCKNPR will require a full SEA. The questions in the first column are drawn from **Figure 13** which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.

Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)

37. 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.
38. 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.
39. An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the draft WCKNPR requires an SEA or HRA in accordance with the above regulations. The results can be viewed below.

¹⁷ EUR-Lex - 32001L0042 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

¹⁸ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (legislation.gov.uk)

¹⁹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practical_guidesea.pdf

Figure 13-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 14-Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

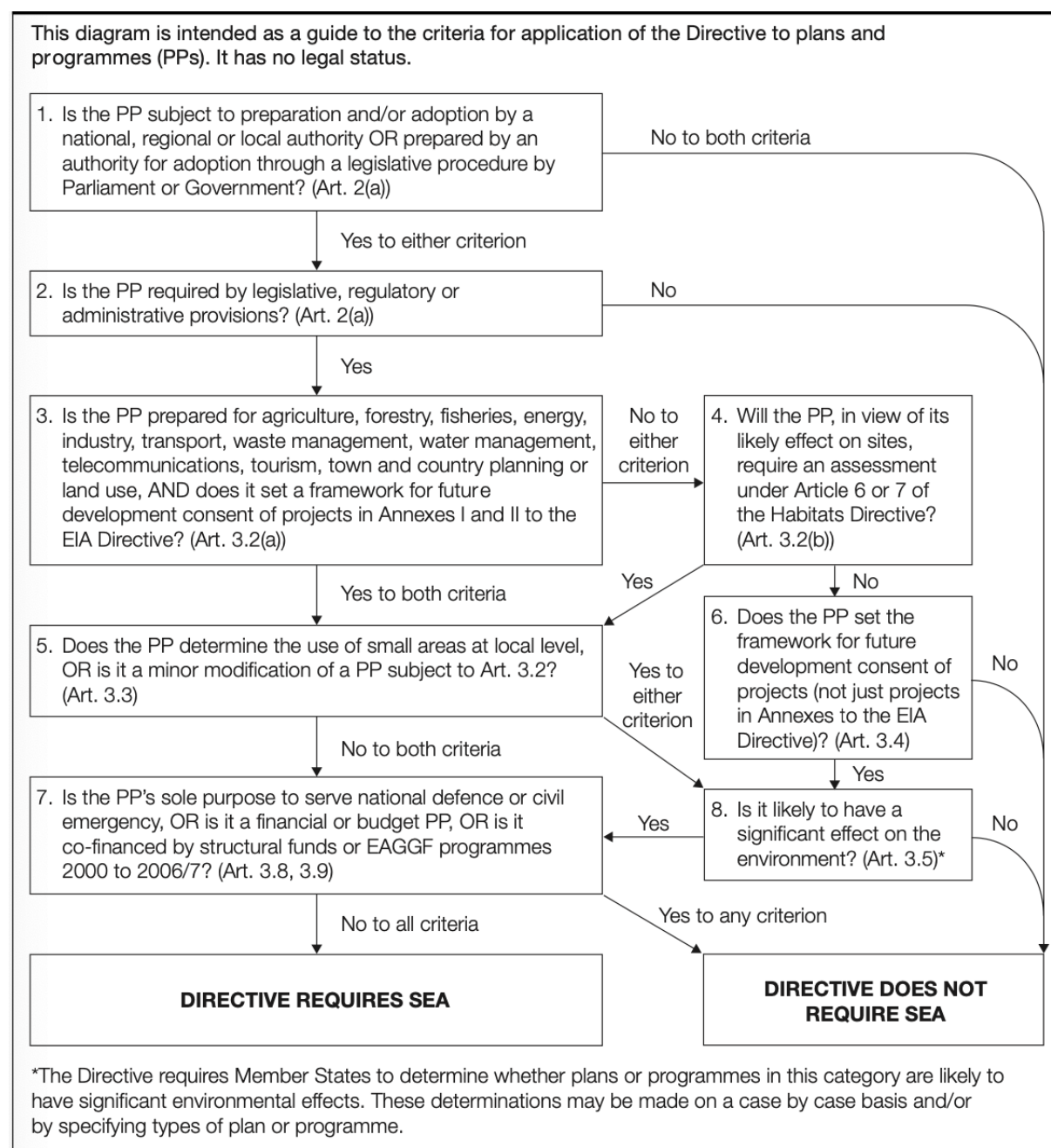


Figure 15-Application of SEA Directive to WCKNPR

*PP in this instance refers to Neighbourhood Plan Review

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	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 & West Norfolk the local authority which falls within the designated area subject to Walpole Cross Keys passing an independent examination and successful local community referendum. The preparation of the Walpole Cross Keys Neighbourhood Plan is allowed under primary legislation: The Town and Country Planning Act (1990) as amended by the Localism Act (2011). The preparation of NP’s are subject to several relevant regulations as shown below (not intend to be a complete list): • The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, • the Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012 • the Neighbourhood Planning (General)(Amendment) Regulations 2015 • the Neighbourhood Planning (General)and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2016 • the Neighbourhood Planning (General)and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2017 GO TO STAGE 2
2	Is the Neighbourhood Plan (PP) required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	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 NP will eventually be “made” and form part of the Development Plan for the Borough Council of King’s Lynn & 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.

Stage		Y/N	Justification
			GO TO STAGE 3
3	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))	Y/N	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)²⁰ and the Localism Act 2011 Schedule 9 Part 2 Para 7 Section 38 B (1)(b),(6)²¹. A Neighbourhood Plan is prepared for Town and Country Planning and Land use. The Walpole Cross Keys 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. The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared to set out a framework for town and country planning and land use within the Parish of Walpole Cross Keys. 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 & West Norfolk. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to align and be in general conformity with the strategic framework. The Neighbourhood Plan Review is not allocating any development itself but anticipates being one of the key tools to manage future development of Walpole Cross Keys. GO TO STAGE 4
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	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 chapter 5 of this report for further detail. GO TO STAGE 6
5	Does the Neighbourhood Plan (PP) determine the	Y	A Neighbourhood Plan can determine the use of small areas at a local level. The Walpole Cross Keys

²⁰ [Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

²¹ [Localism Act 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

Stage		Y/N	Justification
	use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)		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 locally important views.
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	Walpole Cross Keys already has an adopted neighbourhood plan. This is being reviewed to ensure policies add further detail with more up to date evidence. 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.
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 is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art. 3.8, 3.9)	Does not apply to a Neighbourhood Plan. SKIPPED AS PER FIGURE 14.	
8	Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	SEE FIGURE 14 – PLAN DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA

40. Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations sets out the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects. These are listed in **Figure 16** below along with comments on the extent to which the WCKNPR meets these criteria.

Figure 16- 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:		
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	Walpole Cross Keys already has a made neighbourhood plan that is part of the statutory development plan and guides the delivery of development within the designated plan area. However, it is under review to ensure policies are more effective than they have been in applications. The parish of Walpole Cross Keys falls within the district of King's Lynn & West Norfolk area. The King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Plan 2021-2040 designated Walpole Cross Keys as a smaller village and hamlet. The now superseded Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (2016) did not allocate any land within Walpole Cross Keys. Whilst the plan said that the area could accommodate approximately 5 new dwellings of modest growth to support essential rural services; there was no suitable site identified at the time due to constraints in terms of form, character, and highway access. So, there are no allocations being taken forward in the new local plan within the neighbourhood development plan period. In terms of the degree to which WCKNPR sets a framework, it does not allocate land for development.	N
b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes	The Walpole Cross Keys Neighbourhood Plan Review 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.	N

SEA Directive Criteria (Annex II)	Comments	Likely Significant Effect? Y/N
including those in a hierarchy	It does not have influence over other plans. However, once made WCKNPR will form part of the statutory development plans for Walpole Cross Keys 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 WCKNPR must meet is to contribute towards sustainable development. Some of the policies within the plan will focus on environmental protection including locally importer views and Dark Skies policy. 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 WCKNPR this does not have the potential to restrict the delivery of other plans or programmes.	N
d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	Baseline information relating to WCKNPR was described earlier in this Screening Document. There are no European or Natural England Statutory Designated sites in the neighbourhood area, though there are a few important European designations within approximately 5km to the north, this includes the southern boundary of the Greater Wash Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The plan itself will not specifically allocate land for development and will not exacerbate any significant known environmental problems.	N
e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (eg plans and programmes)	The implementation of community legislation is unlikely to be significantly compromised by the Neighbourhood Plan.	N

SEA Directive Criteria (Annex II)	Comments	Likely Significant Effect? Y/N
linked to waste management or water protection)		
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	WCKNPR 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 WCKNPR will not lead to any cumulative effects in combination with existing or emerging plans.	N
c) Transboundary nature of effects	The emerging WCKNPR 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)	WCKNPR 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 WCKNPR area has a total population of around 560 (Census 2021). This sits within the context of a total population of 154,300 in King's Lynn & West Norfolk district. WCKNPR 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	i) There are no statutory natural designations which fall within Walpole Cross Keys. 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.	N

SEA Directive Criteria (Annex II)	Comments	Likely Significant Effect? Y/N
or cultural heritage; ii. Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or iii. Intensive land-use	Regarding cultural heritage, there are no statutory listed buildings or monuments within the neighbourhood plan area according to the latest data on the Historic England website. ii) WCKNPR is unlikely to result in exceedance of environmental quality standards, such as those relating to air, water, and soil quality. iii) WCKNPR is unlikely to bring forward development of an extent that would result in a significant intensification of Local land Use. The emerging WCKNPR does not include site allocations and therefore are not anticipated to have likely significant effects on the parish.	
g) The effects on areas of landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status	The Neighbourhood Plan Area does not have any recognised international, national, or local protection status. The nearest international and national status landscape is The Greater Wash and North Norfolk Coast which is 5km north. The policies in this plan do not have an adverse effect on this landscape. WCKNPR is not anticipated to have likely significant effects on designated landscapes given the plan cannot influence areas outside of the parish, it will not allocate land for development, and it contains some protective policies such as dark skies and locally important views. The environmental effects on areas of biodiversity designations have been considered through the Local Plan but are not relevant to WCKNPR.	N

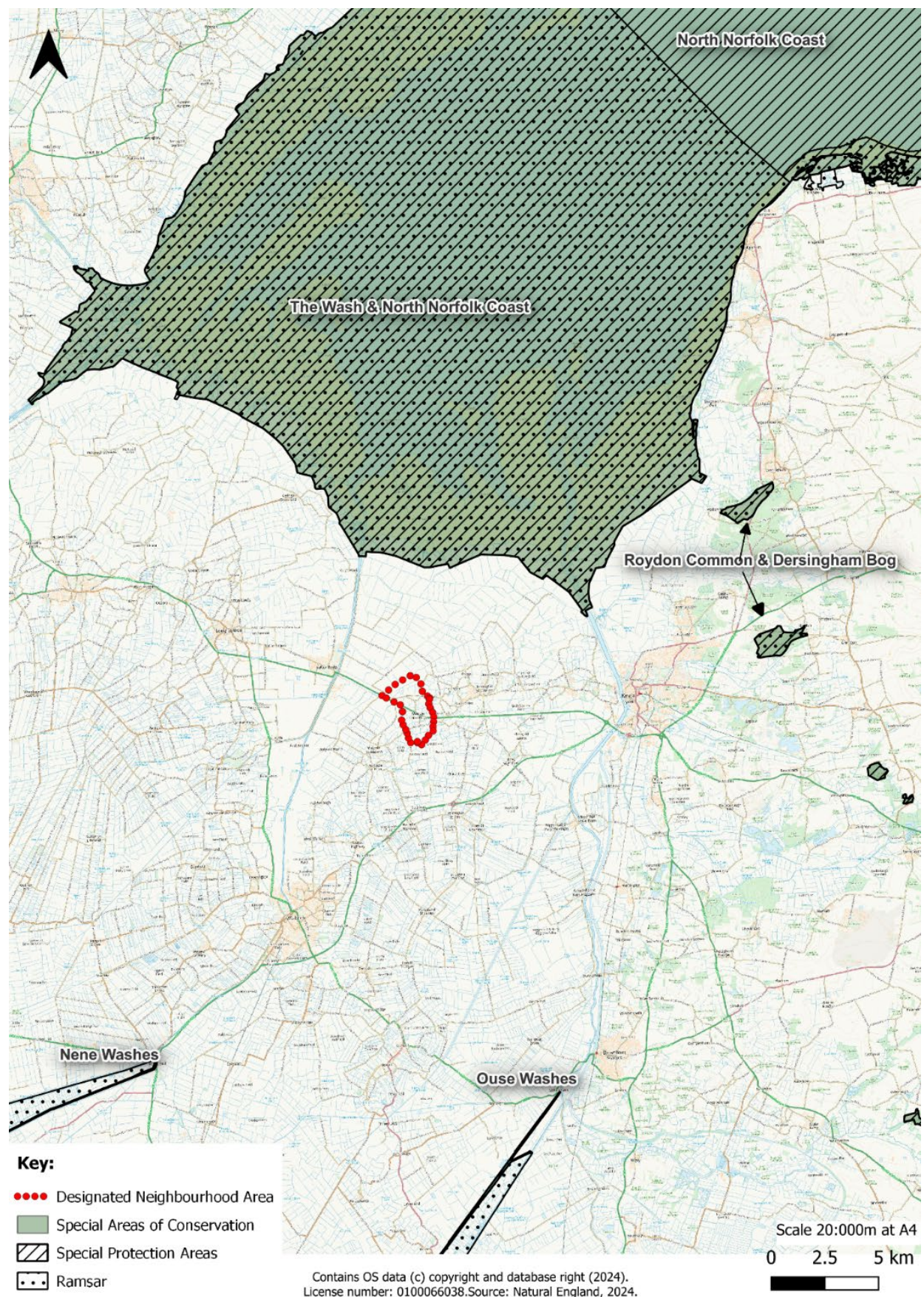
HRA Screening assessment

41. 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.
42. 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.
43. An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the draft WCKNPR requires an SEA or HRA in accordance with the above regulations. **There are no designated European wildlife sites in the WCKNPR area.**
44. This screening assessment has also considered the impact on European Sites within 20km of the plan area, as an in-combination assessment area.

Figure 17- European Sites within 20km of Walpole Cross Keys

Special Areas of Conservation	Special Protection Areas	Ramsar Sites
- Roydon Common & Dersingham Bog - The Greater Wash & North Norfolk Coast - Ouse Washes	- Roydon Common & Dersingham Bog - The Greater Wash & North Norfolk Coast - Ouse Washes	- Roydon Common & Dersingham Bog - The Greater Wash & North Norfolk Coast - Ouse Washes

Figure 18- European Sites mapped within 20km from Walpole Cross Keys



45. 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.
46. 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'.
47. Potential impact pathways considered for this assessment include:
- Increased recreational pressure.
 - Air quality impacts
 - Water issues
 - Urban effects
48. WCKNPR 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 WCKNPR is provided in **Figure 19**.

Figure 19- HRA Screening Assessment

Policy	Description	Likely Significant Effects	Potential Risks	Recommendation at Screening Stage
Policy 1: New Residential Development in the Neighbourhood Development Plan Area	Policy recommends approval where applications score positively against set criteria. The policy encourages smaller bedrooms.	No LSE – does not promote development but relates to qualitative criteria for development	N/A	None
Policy 2: Extensions, Outbuildings and Conversions (including residential and commercial use)	Requires planning applications for extensions, outbuildings or conversions to have regard to the design and existing character of the immediate area including reference to the design codes document.	No LSE – policy is qualitative and does not promote development	N/A	None
Policy 3: Housing Mix	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

Policy	Description	Likely Significant Effects	Potential Risks	Recommendation at Screening Stage
Policy 4: Affordable Housing	Sets a tenure split for affordable housing in line with the Walpole Cross Keys Housing Needs Assessment.	No LSE – policy does not promote land for development	N/A	None
Policy 5: Design	Requiring high quality design that accords with the Walpole Cross Keys Design Codes/Guide	No LSE – policy is qualitative and does not promote development	N/A	None
Policy 6: Residential Parking Standards	Policy setting requirements for parking for new residential development	No LSE – policy does not promote development	N/A	None
Policy 7: Flood Risk and Water Management	Protective policy requiring appropriate flood risk and ecological assessment	No LSE – protective policy	N/A	None
Policy 8: Protection of important local views	To conserve the current landscape setting through the protection of important local views	No LSE – mitigation policy for growth.	N/A	None
Policy 9: Dark Skies	Policy to protect unnecessary light pollution from new developments	No LSE – protective policy	N/A	None
Policy 10: Employment Related or Agricultural and Horticultural Related Development	Policy encourages development or redevelopment of employment uses related to agriculture or horticulture on suitable sites.	No LSE – does not promote development	N/A	None
Policy 11: Brownfield Sites	Policy supports enhancement or redevelopment of the site at Old Station in the village where proposals accord with the other neighbourhood policies.	No LSE – does not allocate any sites in the plan.	N/A	None
Policy 12: Protection of Community Facilities	Policy protects the use of the listed community facilities	No LSE – does not promote development	N/A	None
Policy 13: Transport and Access	Policy encouraging improvement to the road network and future proposals should not harm the existing highway network, verges, or dykes.	No LSE – does not promote development	N/A	None

SEA and HRA Screening Conclusion

49. The SEA and 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 WCKNPR area. A SEA/ HRA Consultation ran for 6 weeks, in parallel with the Neighbourhood Plan Re-run Regulation 14 consultation, between Friday 4th July to Friday 15th August 2025. Responses were received by Natural England and Historic England regarding this consultation. Their responses are detailed in **Appendix A**. Both Historic England and Natural England, as statutory environmental bodies, agreed that an SEA/HRA is not required. No response was received from the Environment Agency.
50. For this reason, a full SEA/HRA and Appropriate Assessment is not required at this point and is **screened out**.

Appendix 1- Statutory Environmental Bodies Responses

Historic England

===== Forwarded message =====
From: McGivern, Ross <Ross.McGivern@historicengland.org.uk>
To: "clerk@walpolecrosskeys-pc.gov.uk"<clerk@walpolecrosskeys-pc.gov.uk>
Date: Wed, 06 Aug 2025 14:14:59 +0100
Subject: Walpole Cross Keys Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Opinion
===== Forwarded message =====

Our ref: PL00798529

Dear Mrs Boyden,

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 Walpole Cross Keys 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.

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,
Ross

Ross McGivern

Date: 14 August 2025
Our ref: 518245
Your ref: Walpole Cross Keys Neighbourhood Plan



Ms Caroline Boyden
Walpole Cross Keys Parish Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

clerk@walpolecrosskeys-pc.gov.uk

Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ
T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Boyden

Walpole Cross Keys Neighbourhood Plan - Review - SEA/HRA Screening Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 3 July 2025.

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 (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:

- significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,
- significant effects on Habitats sites¹, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the [Planning Practice Guidance](#). This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

- 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.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's [standing advice](#) on protected species.

¹ Habitats sites are those referred to in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (Annex 2 - glossary) as "any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites".

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission [standing advice](#).

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle
Consultations Team