

**Babergh & Mid Suffolk District  
Councils**

**Edwardstone  
Neighbourhood Plan  
SEA Screening Opinion**

**Final report**

Prepared by LUC  
November 2023

**Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils**

**Edwardstone Neighbourhood Plan  
SEA Screening Opinion**

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

**1.1** Edwardstone Parish Council is in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan covering the period 2021 to 2037. Edwardstone is located within Babergh District, approximately 1.8 kilometres north of the A1071 between Hadleigh and Sudbury. LUC has been appointed by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils to consider whether there is a need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan.

**1.2** SEA may be required for a Neighbourhood Plan, if it is likely to have significant environmental effects. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is similar to SEA. However, SA 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<sup>1</sup> (PPG) clarifies that there is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood plan to be subject to SA, but that SA can be used to demonstrate how the plan will contribute to sustainable development.

**1.3** Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have commissioned LUC to carry out SEA Screening of the Pre-Submission Draft version of the Edwardstone Neighbourhood Plan (October 2023) to determine whether an assessment is required under European Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive), transposed into UK law through the SEA Regulations<sup>2</sup>.

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

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

<sup>2</sup> The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/1633), as amended by The Environmental Assessments and Miscellaneous Planning (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018 (SI 2018/1232). It should be noted that the purpose of the amendments to the SEA

Regulations is to ensure that the law functions correctly after the UK has left the European Union. No substantive changes are made to the way the SEA regime operates.

## Chapter 2

# SEA Screening

### Scope of the Neighbourhood Plan

**2.1** Edwardstone Parish Council has prepared the Pre-Submission Draft (Regulation 14) version of the Neighbourhood Plan which is being subject to public consultation between October 2023 and December 2023.

**2.2** The Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan (October 2023) includes a vision for the long-term future of Edwardstone along with four objectives relating to the following topics:

1. Housing
2. Environment
3. Landscape
4. Access and Community

**2.3** The Neighbourhood Plan then sets out 11 planning policies (EDW1 – EDW11) to realise and deliver the vision.

**2.4** The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any sites for new housing or other built development but does set out in Policy EDW1 that there is a general presumption in favour of proposals for housing developments where they are located within the existing defined settlement boundaries of Mill Green or Sherborne Street and comply with specific criteria.

**2.5** In addition, Policy EDW2 – Housing Mix and Affordable Housing states that proposals for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes on sites outside of, but immediately adjacent to the settlement boundaries will be permitted on an exceptional basis where they are accompanied by specific Housing Needs Survey which identifies a proven local need.

**2.6** While both Figure 23 and the Policies Map identify three sites that have the benefit of planning permission, these sites are not allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan.

**2.7** Policies EDW3-11 address a range of topics including climate change, heritage, landscape, community facilities and green spaces.

### Baseline Information

**2.8** This section summarises baseline information for the parish of Edwardstone, drawing from the information set out in the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan as well as

supporting evidence documents including the Edwardstone Design Codes and Guidance Document<sup>3</sup> and Edwardstone Neighbourhood Plan Data Profile<sup>4</sup>.

### Context

**2.9** Edwardstone is a rural parish comprising the hamlets of Mill Green, Priory Green, Round Maple and Sherbourne Street. There are also small clusters of houses at Tye Went, School Green and Temple Bar near the parish church. The parish is located approximately 1.8 kilometres (1.1 miles) north of the A1071 between Hadleigh and Sudbury in the South Suffolk District of Babergh. The surrounding parishes consist of Boxford to the south east, Great Waldingfield to the west, Groton to the east, Little Waldingfield to the north west, Milden to the north-east and Newton to the south west.

### Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

**2.10** There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Edwardstone Parish. The first is Edwardstone Woods SSSI, which consists of Park Wood, High Wood, Cowper's Wood, Stallington Wood and Priory Wood. These woods consist mainly of ash, maple and hazel with some large areas of hornbeam and small leaved lime. The diverse ground flora is typical of Suffolk boulder clay soils and includes species only generally found in ancient woodland. The second SSSI in the Parish is Bulls Cross Wood in the north-east which forms part of Milden Thicks SSSI. It lies on the site of four ancient woods which were combined in the late Middle Ages. It has an elaborate patchwork of different types of woodland in Suffolk including oak, ash, maple, hornbeam, lime, aspen, wild cherry, birch and elm.

**2.11** Edwardstone is in the SSSI Impact Risk Zones for Edwardstone Woods SSSI and Milden Thicks SSSI.

**2.12** There are two County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) in Edwardstone – Langley Wood in Round Maple and Sherbourne House Meadows at the southern tip of the parish. The latter forms the Goodlands/Primrose Wood which falls in both Edwardstone and Boxford parishes.

**2.13** There is a Roadside Nature Reserve (RNR 137) in the parish which is identified for its flora specifically the Sulphur Clover, Grass Vetchling, Bee Orchid and Zig Zag Clover. The RNR is on the border between Edwardstone and Great Waldingfield.

**2.14** The parish is also home to a number of ancient woodlands which are a typical feature of the landscape character types referred to above. There are also species-rich

hedgerows forming valuable wildlife corridors between them, such as the one between Langley Wood and Bulls Cross Wood. In addition to the above, Messine Wood, which lies between Edwardstone Hall and Cowper's Wood, is not listed as ancient woodland by Natural England, but it has significant amenity value as it is crossed by a public footpath connecting the parish Church and Sherbourne Street.

**2.15** A further patch of privately owned woodland (not named on the OS map and not listed by Natural England) also has significant amenity value because it is traversed by a public footpath connecting Temple Bar and the White Horse Inn in Mill Green.

**2.16** A number of protected species have been recorded in Edwardstone, in particular the Great Crested Newt, Otters and a range of Bat species. In addition, the birds identified as in danger of extinction in the UK have been recorded in Edwardstone: Skylark, Swift, Cuckoo, House Martin, Yellowhammer, Linnet, Spotted Flycatcher, House Sparrow, Marsh Tit, Turtle Dove, Starling, Mistle Thrush, Fieldfare. Some endangered wildflower species have also been recorded, for example, Shepherds Needle, which is becoming increasingly rare in Suffolk.

### Population

**2.17** According to the 2011 Census, the population of Edwardstone was 352. This had risen to 375 in 2021, although the mean age of residents which was 44.8 years in 2011, was unchanged. This mean age remains slightly higher than the figures for Babergh as a whole (43.1 years) and Suffolk (41.7 years). The population in 2021 was 52.5% male and 47.5% female compared with 51.7% male and 48.3% female in 2011.

**2.18** In terms of economic activity, 46.4% of Edwardstone's resident population work mainly from home and 71% of working residents do so within 10km of Edwardstone and use their cars to get to work. Just over 60% of the overall population is economically active and almost all of those who are economically inactive (excluding children and students) are retired. 56% of those economically active residents work in senior managerial or technical or professional positions with less than 2% engaged in manual labour.

**2.19** The census data from 2021 provide an overall picture of the resident population of Edwardstone which appears to be slightly older, wealthier, more mobile and with larger properties than the Babergh and Suffolk averages.

<sup>3</sup> AECOM (2022) Edwardstone Design Codes and Guidance [online] Available at: <http://edwardstonepc.onesuffolk.net/assets/Neighbourhood-Plan-2./Edwardstone-Design-Code-September-2022.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Edwardstone Neighbourhood Plan (2022) Data Profile [online] Available at: <http://edwardstonepc.onesuffolk.net/assets/Neighbourhood-Plan-2./Edwardstone-NP-Data-Profile-March-202222420.pdf>

### Human Health

**2.20** In terms of the health of Edwardstone residents, 52.8% of people are classified as in very good health, 31.5% as good, 11.6% as fair, 2.8% as bad and 1.1% as very bad. These health statistics are broadly similar to those for Babergh District and for England as a whole; however, the 'very bad' figure for Edwardstone Parish is slightly higher than the averages for Babergh District at 0.9% and England at 1.0%.

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

### Soil

**2.22** The parish of Edwardstone lies in an area of 'slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage' encompassing arable grasslands. The underlying bedrock is of chalk formations buried beneath 'superficial deposits'.

**2.23** The parish comprises a split between Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land, particularly to the south, and Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural land. The majority of land in Edwardstone is Grade 3. It is not known if the Grade 3 land is Grade 3a or 3b.

**2.24** The entirety of the parish is a 'Nitrate Vulnerable Zone' under the 2017 designations in England. However, this is the case for practically the entire county of Suffolk and the east of England.

### Water

**2.25** Areas of Edwardstone are at risk of flooding from rivers. Whilst the majority of the parish lies within Flood Zone 1, there are areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 following along the River Box towards the north of the parish.

**2.26** There are some areas of the parish at risk from surface water flooding. Some areas are at low, medium and high risk of flooding. High risk means that each year this area has a chance of flooding of greater than 3.3%. Flooding from surface water is difficult to predict as rainfall location and volume are difficult to forecast. In addition, local features can greatly affect the chance and severity of flooding. Medium risk means that each year this area has a chance of flooding of between 1% and 3.3%. Low risk means that each year this area has a chance of flooding of between 0.1% and 1%.

### Air and Climatic Factors

**2.27** There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAS) that have been declared within Edwardstone Parish, the nearest being in Sudbury which is approximately 8km to the west.

**2.28** Climate data are not available at parish level, but within Babergh District as a whole, reductions in overall carbon emissions of 37% were achieved between 2005 and 2017. This reduction was mostly due to progress in reducing emissions from domestic sources, closely followed by industrial and commercial sectors, with minimal progress on transport emissions. Transport makes the largest contribution to carbon emissions in Babergh District.

### Material Assets

**2.29** There are several important open areas within the parish that make significant contributions to the character and setting of the built environment.

**2.30** Edwardstone Parish Hall is located at School Green and is a charitable organisation run by Trustees on behalf of the parish/village.

**2.31** Edwardstone Millennium Green is located in Mill Green. This is one of the 250 Millennium Greens established in the year 2000 by an initiative of the Countryside Agency and supported by the Millennium Commission. The green includes both open space and a children's playground. The play area is in the hamlet of Mill Green, opposite the White Horse Inn public house. There is also an area of public open space behind the small estate off Mill Green, which Babergh Council owns and has agreed can be planted as a Community Orchard in 2023.

**2.32** The parish has a public house which is the White Horse Inn located in Mill Green. The pub has a campsite adjacent which is owned and operated in conjunction with the pub and there is an onsite brewery known as 'Little Earth Project' which specialises in producing beers using organically farmed and foraged ingredients.

**2.33** There is no public bus service provision in Edwardstone although Hadleigh Community Transport provides some bookable services from Sherbourne Street to Hadleigh via Boxford. This may account for the high proportion of car ownership in the parish, as recorded in the 2021 Census. There is also a school bus service. The nearest mainline train stations to Edwardstone are located at Colchester (20km), Manningtree (27km) and Ipswich (27km). Sudbury train station is 11km from Edwardstone where services to Marks Tey can be accessed. The majority of Edwardstone residents use their car to travel to work and for day to day needs such as shopping.

**2.34** Edwardstone has several Public Rights of Way and there is also a relatively extensive network of footpaths both public and permissive throughout the parish, however there are no bridleways. South Suffolk Cycle Route A also passes through the parish.

**2.35** There is no primary or secondary school in the parish. Pre-school provision for the parish can be found at Sunflowers Childcare Pre-School in the grounds of Boxford CEVC Primary School. Pre-School, breakfast and after school clubs and holiday clubs are also provided. Primary school pupils are served by Boxford CEVC Primary School. High School pupils are served by Ormiston Sudbury Academy or Thomas Gainsborough School in Great Cornard.

### Cultural Heritage

**2.36** There are 32 nationally listed buildings in Edwardstone Parish – this includes the Church of St. Mary The Virgin, which is a Grade I listed building, whilst the others are Grade II listed buildings. None of the listed buildings are on Historic England’s Heritage at Risk register and there is no Conservation Area designated in the parish.

### Landscape

**2.37** According to the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance August 2015, Edwardstone falls within the Ancient Rolling Farmlands and Rolling Valley Farmlands landscape character types. The key characteristics of Ancient Rolling Farmlands is a rolling landscape of medium clay soils studded with blocks of ancient woodland. The Rolling Valley Farmlands are characterised by valley sides with some complex and steep slopes in some places with deep well drained loamy soils and often sunken lanes. The main areas of this character type are found along the River Stour from the Cattawade and upstream (to Haverhill, across the district boundary) including tributary valleys of the Newmill Creek (to Little Wenham), the Brett (to Hitcham and Thorpe Morieux), the Brad (to Lavenham), the Box (to Edwardstone), the Chad Brook and the Glem. An area of the parish following the river valley, was formerly identified in the Babergh Local Plan as a ‘Special Landscape Area’.

**2.38** **Figure 1** overleaf presents the flow diagram entitled ‘Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes’ which is taken from the Practical Guide to the Strategic Environment Assessment Directive<sup>5</sup>, published in September 2005. This is a useful guide when considering whether a plan should be subject to SEA (The Practical Guide has been superseded by the National Planning Practice Guidance; however, it still provides a useful and relevant guide to the process to use in making SEA screening decisions).

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<sup>5</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf)



Figure 1 Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

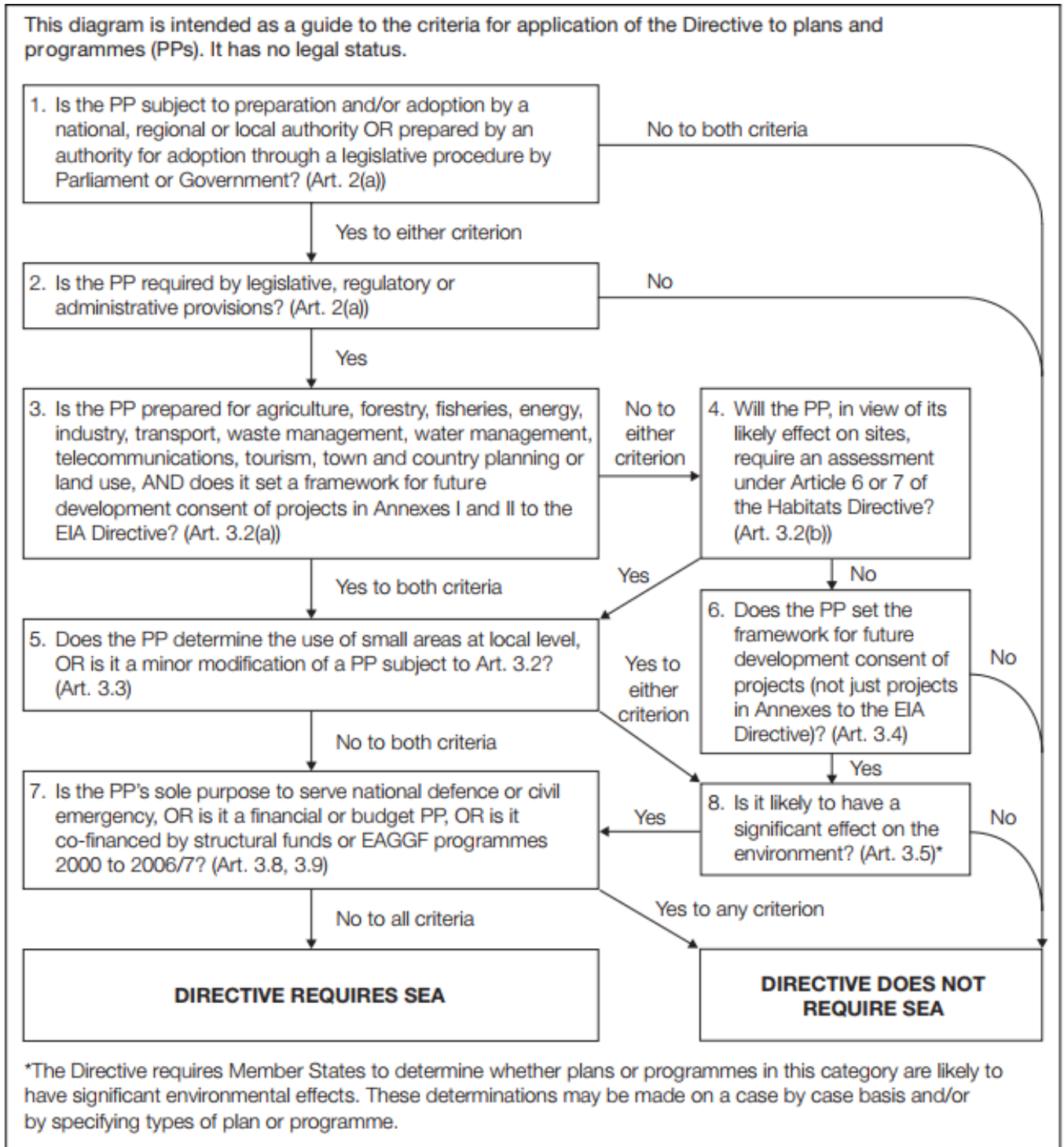


Table 2.1: Application of SEA Directive to the Edwardstone Neighbourhood Plan

Stage	Yes / No	Reason
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and will be adopted ('made') by the Local Authority (Babergh District Council) as part of the statutory development plan.  <b>Move to Q2</b>
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	No	The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. However, there is no requirement to produce a Neighbourhood Plan; it is an optional plan. Once made it will become part of the statutory development plan. Therefore, it should continue to be screened.  <b>Move to Q3</b>
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	Yes and No	The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared for town and country planning and land use, but it does not set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive.  <b>Move to Q4</b>
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	No	HRA screening of the Neighbourhood Plan has been undertaken separately on behalf of Babergh District Council and has concluded that the Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have significant effects on European sites, either alone or in combination.  <b>No: Move to Q6</b>
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)	Yes	Although the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for development it includes policies which proposals for development within the Parish will be assessed against. <b>Move to Q8</b>
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	No	See <b>Table 2.2.</b>  <b>SEA IS NOT REQUIRED</b>

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

Table 2.2: Likely Significant Effects

SEA Requirement	Comments
The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:	
1. The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	<p>Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the statutory development plan and will guide the delivery of development in Edwardstone Parish, including in terms of design. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for residential or other forms of development.</p> <p>The adopted Babergh Core Strategy (2014) identifies Edwardstone as a 'Hinterland Village' under Policy CS2 – Settlement Pattern. Policy CS2 seeks to direct development to towns/urban areas and to the Core Villages and Hinterland Villages. The Core Strategy provided for a total of 1,050 dwellings at the Hinterland Villages over the Plan period to 2031.</p> <p>The submitted Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan split Edwardstone into Edwardstone – Mill Green and Edwardstone – Sherbourne Street, which were identified as Babergh Hamlet Villages. However, following Examination the Joint Local Plan has been subject to Main Modifications and is now presented as a Part 1 Plan, with Part 2 to be prepared at a later date (adoption of Part 1 is expected imminently at the time of writing). An up-to-date settlement hierarchy will now come forward in Part 2 of the Plan, which is unlikely to be adopted until late 2025.</p>
2. The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan has to be in general conformity with the local strategic framework (i.e. the adopted Babergh Core Strategy (2014) and the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan). The Neighbourhood Plan must also have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework. The Neighbourhood Plan does not have influence over other plans. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory development plan for Edwardstone Parish and will be used in conjunction with the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (once adopted) to determine planning applications.</p>
3. The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,	<p>One of the Basic Conditions which the Neighbourhood Plan must meet is to contribute to sustainable development.</p>
4. Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,	<p>Baseline information relating to Edwardstone Parish was described earlier in this chapter. Key issues of relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan are the presence of high-quality agricultural land in the parish, several areas of priority habitat, proximity to ancient woodland and Edwardstone Wood SSSI, Mildon Thicks SSSI and several designated heritage assets.</p>
5. The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).	N/A
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:	
6. The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for housing or other forms of development.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period up to 2037. Effects of the Neighbourhood Plan are expected to be indirect (due to not allocating sites) but long-term and permanent.</p>
7. The cumulative nature of the effects,	<p>Cumulative effects could result from the Neighbourhood Plan in combination with development that takes place in the surrounding towns and villages – albeit the parish of Edwardstone is rural, but</p>

SEA Requirement	Comments
	<p>located relatively close to the nearest settlement (Sudbury) around 8km west.</p> <p>The adopted Babergh Core Strategy (2014) identifies Edwardstone as a 'hinterland village' in the settlement hierarchy, with the expectation that new development should meet local needs. The modified Part 1 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan does not identify a minimum housing requirement for Edwardstone.</p>
8. The transboundary nature of the effects,	The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on Edwardstone Parish only. Transboundary effects under the SEA Regulations refers transboundary effects on other EU Member States; hence, they are not relevant to this Neighbourhood Plan.
9. The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),	There are no anticipated risks to human health or the environment from the Neighbourhood Plan.
10. The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),	The Neighbourhood Plan covers the entirety of Edwardstone Parish. The population of the Parish, according to the 2021 census estimates, was 375 people.
11. The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,</li> <li>■ exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,</li> </ul> intensive land-use,	Edwardstone Parish is home to a few Priority Species and Priority Habitats and there are 32 listed buildings within the parish. There are several sensitive locations within close proximity to the parish, including Edwardstone Wood SSSI, Mildens Thicks SSSI and patches of ancient woodland. The parish also contains Grade 2 and Grade 3 agricultural land.
12. The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	There are no designated landscapes within or close to Edwardstone Parish.

## SEA Screening Conclusion

**2.40** A screening assessment has been undertaken by applying the criteria from the SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations to determine whether the Edwardstone Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects when assessed against the topics listed in the SEA Regulations.

**2.41** The Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision, objectives and 11 planning policies to shape development in the parish up to 2037 and decision makers will need to consider the criteria of these policies when determining future applications in the parish. The Neighbourhood Plan does not directly impact on land use through the allocation of sites for housing or other forms of development.

**2.42 On this basis, it is considered that the Edwardstone Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and that full SEA is therefore not required.**

## Next Steps

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

LUC  
November 2023