

**Babergh & Mid Suffolk District  
Councils**

**Great Waldingfield  
Neighbourhood Plan  
SEA Screening Opinion**

**Final report**  
Prepared by LUC  
August 2022

## Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils

### Great Waldingfield Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Opinion

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

**1.1** Great Waldingfield Parish Council is in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan covering the period 2018 to 2037. Great Waldingfield is located within the Babergh District, approximately three kilometres north east of 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 Great Waldingfield Neighbourhood Plan 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** On 11th May 2022 the Government published the Levelling up and Regeneration Bill, which sets out in detail the Government's proposals for reforming the planning system. Amongst other things, the Bill proposes 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** Great Waldingfield Parish Council has prepared the Pre-Submission Draft (Regulation 14) version of the Neighbourhood Plan which is being subject to public consultation during summer 2022.

**2.2** The Great Waldingfield Neighbourhood Plan covers the entirety of the parish, including the hamlets of Upsher Green and Washmere Green.

**2.3** The Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan includes a vision for the long-term future of Great Waldingfield along with 12 objectives relating to the following seven topics:

1. Housing
2. Natural Environment
3. Historic Environment
4. Development Design
5. Village Services and Facilities
6. Highways and Movement
7. Employment and Business

**2.4** The Neighbourhood Plan then sets out 19 planning policies (GWD1 – GWD19) to realise and deliver the vision. The overall strategy for development in Great Waldingfield is set out in Policy GWD1 – Spatial Strategy, which states that the focus for new development will be within the Settlement Boundaries, where the principle of development is accepted.

**2.5** Policy GWD2 – Housing Development does not allocate sites for any additional dwellings to be developed in the parish, but does state that there is a general presumption in favour of housing development in the form of small brownfield sites of one or two dwellings.

**2.6** Policy GWD3 – Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites states that proposals for development of small-scale affordable housing schemes on rural exception sites outside the Settlement Boundary will be supported provided the housing is for people in need and with existing connections to the village or neighbouring villages.

## Baseline Information

**2.7** This section summarises baseline information for the parish of Great Waldingfield, drawing from the information set out in the Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan as well as supporting evidence documents including the Great Waldingfield Design Guide<sup>3</sup> and Village Character Assessment<sup>4</sup>.

### Context

**2.8** Great Waldingfield is a village and civil parish in the Suffolk District of Babergh, eastern England. It is located approximately 3 kilometres north east of Sudbury and 10 kilometres west of Hadleigh. The civil parish encompasses an area of approximately 930 hectares.

### Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

**2.9** There are no internationally or nationally designated nature conservation sites within Great Waldingfield Parish. However, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Edwardstone Woods, lies adjacent to the parish boundary. As such, the parish falls within the Impact Risk Zone for the SSSI. A small section of the Waldingfield Airfield and part of the roadside verge at Brook Street are designated Country Wildlife Sites.

**2.10** There is also an area of ancient woodland within close proximity to the edge of the parish boundary. There are pockets of priority habitats, deciduous woodland and traditional orchard, scattered around the village of Great Waldingfield and across the parish.

**2.11** There are several priority species that have been recorded in the parish. Corn Bunting encompasses the village and the west of the parish, with Lapwings also found in the village and the east of the parish. There are instances of Grey Partridge across the village, and turtle doves across the entirety of the parish. Finally, Yellow Wagtails have been commonly sighted within the village as well as to the north east and south west of the parish.

**2.12** There have been a few instances of positive Great Crested Newt survey results to the south east of the village, toward Sudbury.

### Population

**2.13** Mid-2020 population estimates recorded Great Waldingfield's population at 1,700 persons with almost an equal split between men (49.3%) and women (50.7%). According to the 2011 Census data, Great Waldingfield's age

demographic varies from the average in Babergh and England as a whole, leaning towards a noticeably higher proportion of children and teens, but fewer people aged between 20 and 59. The proportion of people 60 years and over is above the district average.

**2.14** As a result, only 70% of Great Waldingfield's population is in employment or self-employed, and 20.5% is in retirement.

### Human Health

**2.15** In terms of the health of Great Waldingfield residents, 44.7% of people are classified as in very good health, 35.6% as good, 14.3% as fair, 3.7% as bad and 1.8% as very bad. These health statistics are broadly similar to those for Babergh District and for England as a whole; however, the 'very bad' figures for Great Waldingfield Parish are higher than the averages for Babergh District at 0.9% and England at 1.2%.

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

### Soil

**2.17** The village of Great Waldingfield lies in an area of 'freely draining slightly acid loamy soils' encompassing arable grasslands. The underlying bedrock is of chalk formations buried beneath 'superficial deposits'.

**2.18** The parish comprises a split between Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land to the south, and Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural land to the north. It is not known if the Grade 3 land is Grade 3a or 3b.

**2.19** 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

**2.20** The majority of the parish lies within Flood Zone 1; however, there is an area of Flood Zones 2 and 3 following along the River Box to the east of Upsher Green. Flood Zone 3 comprises land assessed as having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding (>1%), or a 1 in 200 or greater annual probability of flooding from the sea (>0.5%) in any year.

<sup>3</sup> AECOM (2021) Great Waldingfield Neighbourhood Plan Design Code <https://www.greatwalingfield.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Great-Waldingfield-Design-Guide.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ubiety. <https://www.greatwalingfield.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/LCA-Report-21-08-copy.pdf>

### Air and Climatic Factors

**2.21** There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) that have been declared within Great Waldingfield parish, the nearest being in Sudbury which is 3km to the south west.

**2.22** 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

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

**2.24** A Local Green Space Appraisal has been conducted as part of the preparation for the Neighbourhood Plan, to demonstrate how the local green spaces meet the criteria set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

**2.25** Owing to the village's location on the B1115, high levels of through traffic from a range of sources are experienced regularly. Further to this, there are several bus routes that travel through the parish with the centre of the village being a key destination for five services. The parish does not contain its own rail station but residents are able to utilise the rail connection in Sudbury to the south west.

**2.26** There are several Public Rights of Way (PROW) across the parish, however it is a limited network. During the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, the parish identified several 'key missing links' which represent routes that should be used to expand and connect with the existing PROW network.

**2.27** The village benefits from the presence of the Waldingfield Primary School providing primary education; however, the nearest Secondary School is located to the south of the village in Sudbury.

**2.28** The parish is located atop superficial deposits of Glacial sand and gravel, with small pockets of sub-alluvial inferred resources. All of the parish is included within a Minerals Consultation Area in the Suffolk Minerals Core Strategy.

### Cultural Heritage

**2.29** There are 42 listed buildings within the parish with the majority listed as Grade II. The Church of St. Lawrence is

Grade I and Babergh Hall is Grade II\*. Furthermore, there are 20 listed buildings within the village of Great Waldingfield alone, all of which are Grade II listed buildings.

**2.30** There is a Grade II listed Park and Garden (Chilton Hall) to the west of the village. There are also 19 buildings designated for their local significance. None of these assets are on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' register.

### Landscape

**2.31** The parish is categorised topographically as 'Ancient Rolling Farmlands' within the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment. This contributes to the open and rural setting of the parish.

**2.32** The Chilton and Great Waldingfield Neighbourhood Plans Landscape Character Appraisal identified six locally distinct character areas across the parish:

- Northern Farmlands
- The Heath
- Built-up area
- Heritage Fields
- Southern Farmlands
- Box Valley
- Eastern Farmlands

**2.33** There are no nationally designated landscapes within or adjacent to Great Waldingfield with the closest being Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) around six miles to the south east.

### SEA Screening

**2.34** An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Draft Great Waldingfield Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA in accordance with the SEA Regulations.

**2.35** **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).

<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

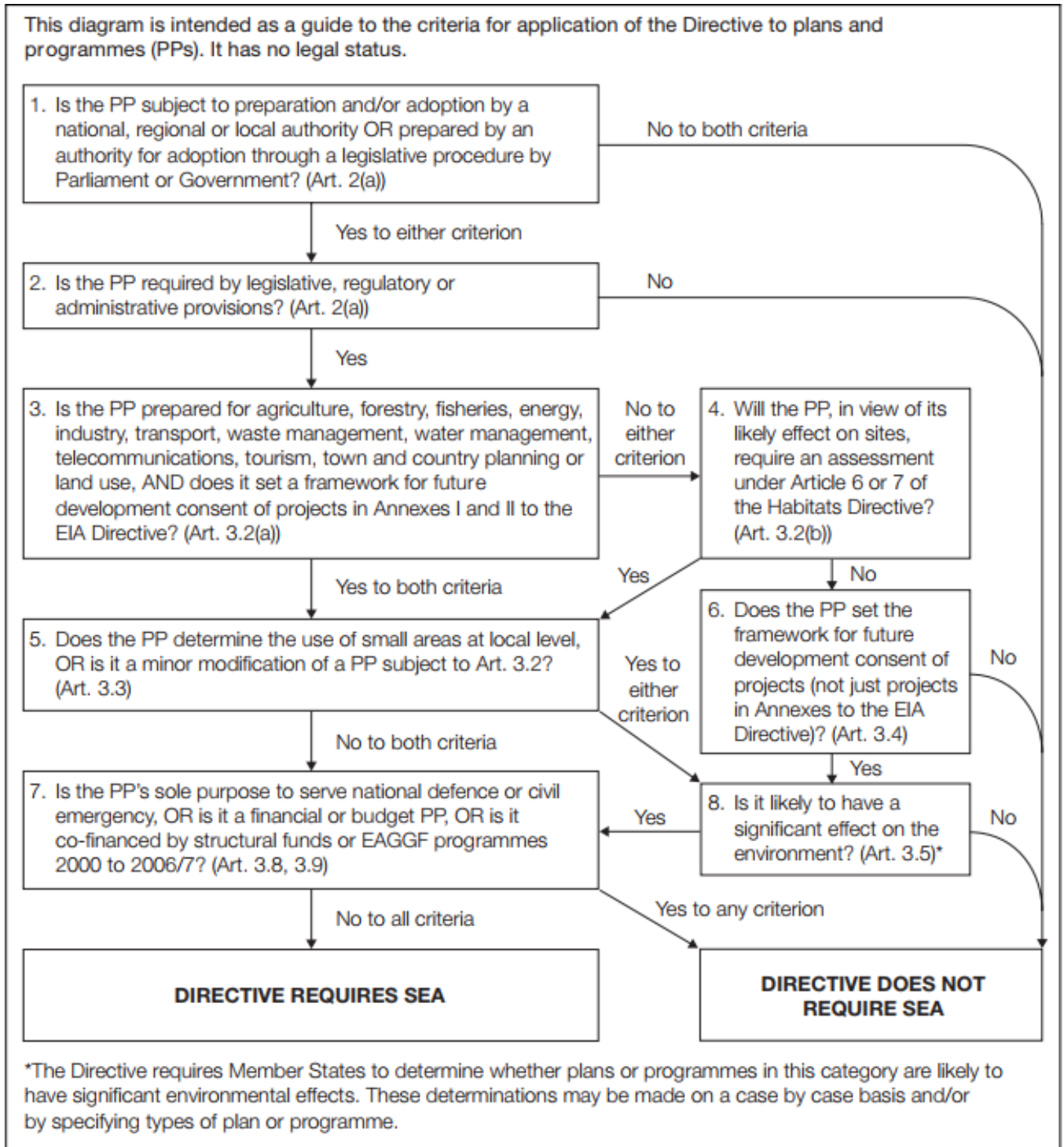




Table 2.1: Application of SEA Directive to the Great Waldingfield Neighbourhood Plan

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>

**2.36** 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 Great Waldingfield 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 Great Waldingfield 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 Great Waldingfield as a 'Hinterland Village' under Policy CS2 – Settlement Pattern.</p> <p>Policy CS2 seeks to direct development to towns/urban areas and to the Core Villages and Hinterland Villages. The Core Strategy provides for a total of 1,050 dwellings at the Hinterland Villages over the Plan period to 2031.</p> <p>The emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan similarly identifies Great Waldingfield as a Babergh Hinterland Village. However, Great Waldingfield – Church and Great Waldingfield – Upsher Green are identified as Hamlet Villages. While the new Local Plan is yet to be adopted (this is expected later in 2022), the emerging plan has been taken into consideration in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is noted that the Regulation 19 (Pre-Submission) version of the Joint Local Plan (November 2020) makes provision for building at least 9,611 new homes across Babergh between 2018 and 2037. It is proposed that 'Hinterland Villages' will make up just 9% of the total provision (866 homes) and Hamlets will make up 4% of the provision (339 homes). There is no requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan to identify additional housing or employment sites.</p>
2. The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	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 Great Waldingfield Parish and will be used in conjunction with the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (once adopted) to determine planning applications.
3. 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 the Neighbourhood Plan must meet is to contribute to sustainable development.
4. Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,	Baseline information relating to Great Waldingfield 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 and several designated heritage assets.
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,	The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for housing or other forms of development.

SEA Requirement	Comments
	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.
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 Great Waldingfield is rural, but located relatively close to the nearest settlement (Sudbury) around 3km south west.</p> <p>As the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan is still in its development, it is not yet possible to assess with certainty the amount and location of development that may result from the Plan within and close to Great Waldingfield Parish. It is noted that the most recent version of the Local Plan includes a housing figure for the village of 39.</p> <p>The Adopted Babergh Core Strategy (2014) identifies Great Waldingfield as a 'hinterland village' in the settlement hierarchy, with the expectation that new development should meet local needs.</p>
8. The transboundary nature of the effects,	The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on Great Waldingfield 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 Great Waldingfield Parish. The population of the parish, according to mid-2020 estimates, was 1,700 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,	Great Waldingfield Parish is home to a few Priority Species and Priority Habitats and there are 42 listed buildings within the parish. There are several sensitive locations within close proximity to the parish, including Edwardstone Wood SSSI and patches of ancient woodland. The parish also lies within 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 Great Waldingfield Parish.

## SEA Screening Conclusion

**2.37** 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 Great Waldingfield Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects when assessed against the topics listed in the SEA Regulations.

**2.38** The Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision, objectives and 19 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.

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

## Next Steps

**2.40** 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  
August 2022