

**Babergh & Mid Suffolk District  
Councils**

**Little Cornard  
Neighbourhood Plan  
SEA Screening Opinion**

**Final report**

Prepared by LUC  
December 2020

## Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils

### Little Cornard Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Opinion

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# Contents

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**Chapter 1**  
**Introduction** **1**

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**Chapter 2**  
**SEA Screening** **2**

Scope of the Little Cornard Neighbourhood Plan	2
Baseline Information	2
SEA Screening Conclusion	8
Next steps	8

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

1.1 Little Cornard Parish Council is in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Little Cornard is located within Babergh District, in the Stour Valley to the south of Sudbury and Great Cornard, and to the north of the village of Bures. 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 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<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 Complete Draft version of the Little Cornard Neighbourhood Plan (November 2020) in order 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>.

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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 Little Cornard Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 Little Cornard Parish Council has prepared a working draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan (the 'Complete Draft') which is expected to be subject to public consultation in early 2021. The Neighbourhood Plan covers the entire Parish.

2.2 The Complete Draft Neighbourhood Plan includes five objectives:

1. To preserve and enhance the environmental assets in the Parish, both for the wildlife which is part of it and for the local community to enjoy.
2. To improve the health and wellbeing of the community by expanding footpath linkages into the countryside.
3. To protect the high quality landscape of the Stour Valley that surrounds Little Cornard.
4. To protect the rural character of Little Cornard as reflected in its agricultural buildings.
5. To protect the local heritage of Little Cornard.

2.3 The Neighbourhood Plan then sets out six planning policies (LCO1-6) to address those objectives, covering topics including access to the countryside, views and dark skies.

2.4 There are no allocations made through the Neighbourhood Plan for new housing or other built development, although Policy LCO5: Conversion of Agricultural Barns and Out-Buildings sets out criteria that would apply to proposals for the conversion of such buildings.

### Baseline Information

2.5 This section summarises baseline information for the Parish of Little Cornard, drawing from the information set out in the Complete Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

#### Context

2.6 Little Cornard is a village and civil parish in the Suffolk District of Babergh, eastern England. It is located in the Stour Valley to the south of Sudbury and Great Cornard, and to the north of the village of Bures. The total area of the Parish is approximately 700ha.

### Biodiversity, flora and fauna

2.7 There are no internationally designated nature conservation sites within or very close to Little Cornard Parish. At the national level, Cornard Mere Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located within the north western part of the Parish. The Parish Council owns the majority of the reserve which has been leased to Suffolk Wildlife Trust. The remainder of the reserve is in Great Cornard Parish and the two Parish Councils are working closely together to preserve this important environmental asset. It is a seasonally flooded area of fen, species-rich vegetation, woodland, scrub and grassland. As well as its vegetation and grasses, it attracts over-wintering birds such as snipe and provides a habitat for a variety of insects, including an uncommon sawfly.

2.8 To the north-east and east of Cornard Mere lies Great Cornard Country Park. It provides an important and popular resource allowing countryside access to the local population and visitors. It also provides one of the best wildlife habitats in the locality. The mix of small meadows with ancient hedgerows along with the plantation areas, which are slowly increasing in interest, all contribute to a mosaic of habitats that support a wide range of wildlife. The old wooded banks are home to ancient woodland indicator species including moschatel, pignut and native bluebell. It has in recent years been home to a pair of non-breeding barn owls as well as linnets, reed buntings and yellow hammers.

2.9 There are two County Wildlife Sites within the eastern part of the Parish – Fitch's Wood and Mumford's Wood. Another County Wildlife Site, Appletree Wood/Meadow extends within the south eastern corner of the Parish.

### Population

2.10 Data from the 2011 Census shows that Little Cornard Parish had a population of 286 people living in 133 households. The gender balance was 50.3% male and 49.6% female.

2.11 The proportion of people aged 65+ in 2011 was 32.5%, which is significantly higher than the average for Babergh District as a whole (21.4%) and the average for England (16.3%). There were only 30 children under 16 within the Parish at that time. A very high proportion (82%) of houses were owner-occupied.

2.12 Historically, Little Cornard was a farming Parish but there are now few residents left who work on the land. The main Causton's Hall estate, which has been owned by the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution since 1955, is now contract farmed, with no resident farm workers living in the village. The employment pattern is very mixed. A significant number of people commute for work - to London, to the larger employment centres of Colchester and Ipswich, or more

locally to Sudbury. A number of self-employed people either work from home or run their business from home.

2.13 The 2011 Census showed that there were 239 (68.1%) economically active residents aged 16 to 74 which was slightly lower than both the Babergh average of 70.3% and the England average of 69.9%.

### Human Health

2.14 In terms of the health of Little Cornard residents, 41.3% of people are classified as in very good health, 44.4% as good, 10.5% as fair, 3.5% as bad and 0.3% as very bad. These health ratings roughly mirror the Babergh and England averages.

### Soil

2.15 Little Cornard Parish is comprised of three soil types. The eastern part of the Parish is classed as slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage. The central part is classed as freely draining slightly acid loamy soils, and a narrow strip along the western edge is classed as loamy and clayey floodplain soils with naturally high groundwater.

2.16 The centre and east of Little Cornard Parish comprises Grade 2 agricultural land, with the remainder being Grade 3.

### Water

2.17 Almost all of the Parish is outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3, aside from a small area of land in the western side of the Parish (associated with the River Stour) which is within Flood Zone 3. 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.

### Air and Climatic Factors

2.18 There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) that have been declared within Little Cornard, the nearest being approximately 2.5km away in Sudbury.

2.19 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

2.20 There are over 20 small businesses in Little Cornard, with a cluster centred on Yorley Farm including a nursery as

well as automotive and equestrian businesses. Communications are therefore important. Some residents are affected by poor mobile phone coverage and broadband speeds.

2.21 All Saints Church is situated at the northern end of the village has a church hall where a number of regular events are organised.

2.22 Little Cornard Parish is well served with Public Rights of Way (PROWs) which cross the Parish and provide good access to Great Cornard, the Country Park and the Mere. In addition, there are good access routes to and from Henny, Middleton and Assington Parishes, Little Cornard's closest neighbours. The Parish has several equestrian centres and horse riding is commonplace, despite the absence of bridleways in the Parish.

2.23 An issue raised by many in the community during the consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan was the increase in traffic on the small, rural lanes of Little Cornard.

2.24 There are a number of bus stops along the B1508 which passes through the western side of Little Cornard Parish. The nearest railway station is located in Sudbury and provides services to Marks Tey via Bures, Chapel and Wakes Colne.

2.25 There are no schools within the Parish, the nearest being in Great Cornard.

2.26 All of Little Cornard Parish is included within a Minerals Consultation Area in the Suffolk Minerals Core Strategy.

### Cultural heritage

2.27 There has been settlement and activity on the land of Little Cornard since prehistoric times. There are widespread deposits of worked flints from the Neolithic and Mesolithic periods, confirming human presence back to the last ice age, while isolated hand axe finds in the area suggest occupation much further back.

2.28 Due to its agricultural heritage, Little Cornard has a significant number of barns and agricultural out-buildings. With the changing nature and scale of agriculture, need for these barns has fallen and many have been converted into alternative uses, most commonly residential. It is important that agricultural barns, which are an important part of Little Cornard's history and a notable feature on its landscape, preserve their character and any important features which are part of that.

2.29 As a community with a strong rural heritage, Little Cornard has a number of listed buildings and structures. In

total it has 16 nationally listed buildings, with 15 of these being Grade II listed and All Saints Church being Grade I listed.

2.30 Along with these nationally listed buildings, the pillbox in Spout Lane is considered to have historic merit of local significance. During World War II, this Type 23 pillbox stood alongside a searchlight battery site which was destroyed. It is in good condition and is an important reference to the local activity which supported the war effort.

2.31 None of the heritage assets within Little Cornard are on the Historic England 'Heritage at Risk' register.

### Landscape

2.32 The countryside location of the Parish of Little Cornard, nestled into but rising up the side of the Stour Valley, is arguably one of its greatest assets. The combination of ancient countryside, semi-natural habitats, winding lanes and agricultural landscape creates many attractive vistas across the Parish.

2.33 CPRE tranquillity mapping shows parts of Suffolk as having some of the most tranquil areas in the East of England. In the area covering Little Cornard this is particularly in relation to a lack of light pollution and the ability to see dark night skies.

2.34 Little Cornard Parish spans areas classified in the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment as Rolling Valley Farmlands and Ancient Rolling Farmlands.

2.35 There are no nationally designated landscapes within or immediately adjacent to Little Cornard although Dedham Vale AONB is approximately 1.5km to the south east of the Parish at the nearest point.

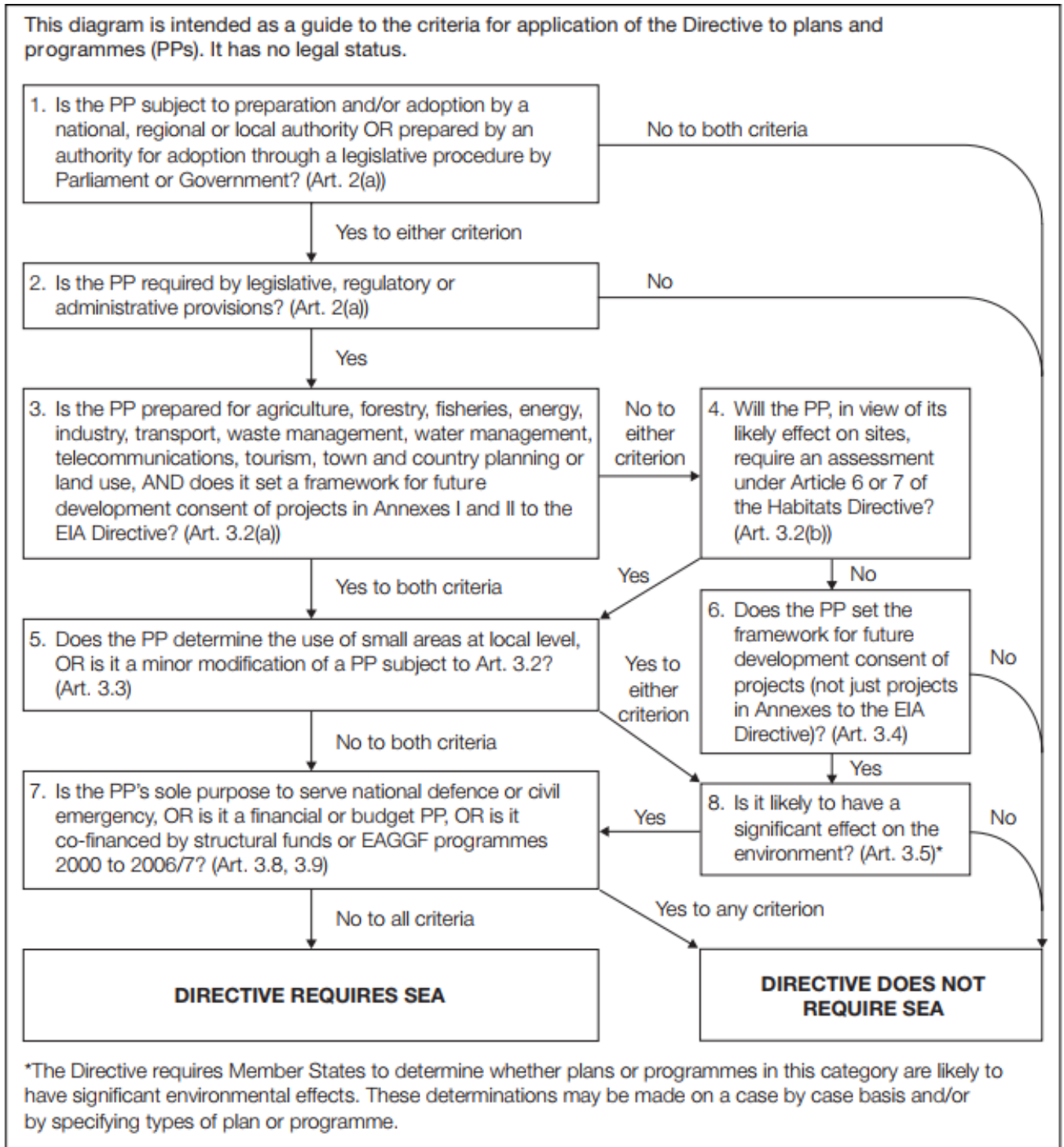
### SEA Screening

2.36 An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the Regulation 14 Complete Draft Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA in accordance with the SEA Regulations.

2.37 **Figure 2.1** 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 Environmental Assessment Directive<sup>3</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>3</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 2.1 Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes





**Table 2.1: Application of SEA Directive to the Little Cornard 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	Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening has been undertaken separately on the content of the Little Cornard Neighbourhood Plan and it has been screened out of requiring Appropriate Assessment.  <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)	No	The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for development.  <b>Move to Q8 for assessment of significant effects.</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>

2.38 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 Little Cornard 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	Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the statutory development plan and will guide the delivery of development in Little Cornard Parish, including in terms of design. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for residential or other forms of development.  The adopted Babergh Core Strategy (2014) identifies Little Cornard Parish as part of the countryside. Policy CS2 – Settlement Pattern seeks to direct development to towns/urban areas and to the Core Villages and Hinterland Villages, and states that development in the countryside will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances subject to a proven justifiable need.

SEA Requirement	Comments
	<p>The emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan proposes that settlement boundaries are identified for the built up areas of Little Cornard Parish and that these areas are classified as hamlets – these hamlets comprise firstly two areas on Bures Road, and secondly Upper Road/Wyatt Lane. While the new Local Plan is not yet adopted (this is expected to be in 2021), it has been taken into consideration in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is noted that the Final Draft (Regulation 19) version of the Joint Local Plan (November 2020) makes provision for building at least 7,904 new homes across Babergh between 2018 and 2037 and that it is proposed that 4% of these will be in the Hamlets. For Little Cornard specifically, the Final Draft Joint Local Plan identifies a minimum figure of three new homes. As there are three units either completed or have planning permission, Little Cornard has already achieved its minimum requirement.</p>
<p>2.the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy</p>	<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 Little Cornard Parish and will be used in conjunction with the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (once adopted) to determine planning applications.</p>
<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>	<p>One of the Basic Conditions which the Neighbourhood Plan must meet is to contribute to sustainable development.</p>
<p>4. environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,</p>	<p>Baseline information relating to Little Cornard 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, the presence of a SSSI and several County Wildlife Sites, and the presence of a number of designated heritage assets.</p>
<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).</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</p>	
<p>6. the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,</p>	<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 2036. Effects of the Neighbourhood Plan are expected to be indirect (due to not allocating sites) but long-term and permanent.</p>
<p>7. the cumulative nature of the effects,</p>	<p>Cumulative effects could result from the Neighbourhood Plan in combination with development that takes place in the surrounding towns and villages, although the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for housing or other forms of development.</p> <p>The Adopted Babergh Core Strategy (2014) identifies Little Cornard as part of the countryside, where development will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>The emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan allocates a housing delivery figure of three dwellings to Little Cornard, which has already been met through completions/existing commitments.</p>
<p>8. the transboundary nature of the effects,</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on Little Cornard Parish only. Transboundary effects under the SEA Regulations refers transboundary effects on other EU Member States; therefore they are not relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>

SEA Requirement	Comments
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 all of Little Cornard Parish. The population of the Parish in 2011 was 286 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> <li>■ intensive land-use,</li> </ul>	Little Cornard Parish is home to a number of County Wildlife Sites and one SSSI. There are 15 Grade II listed buildings and a Grade I listed church. The Parish contains a significant proportion of Grade 2 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 Little Cornard Parish, the nearest being Dedham Vale AONB approximately 1.5km to the south east.

## SEA Screening Conclusion

2.39 A screening assessment has been undertaken by applying the criteria from the SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations to determine whether or not the Little Cornard Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects when assessed against the topics listed in the SEA Regulations.

2.40 The Neighbourhood Plan sets out objectives and planning policies to shape development in the Parish up to 2036 and decision makers will need to consider the criteria of these policies when determining future applications in the Parish. It does not directly impact on land use through the allocation of sites for housing or other forms of development.

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

## Next steps

2.42 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.