

**Babergh & Mid Suffolk District
Councils**

**Little Waldingfield Parish
Council Neighbourhood
Plan
SEA Screening Opinion**

Final report

Prepared by LUC

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Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils

Little Waldingfield Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan
SEA Screening Opinion

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Contents

Chapter 1	
Introduction	1

Chapter 2	
SEA Screening	2

Scope of the NDP	2
Baseline Information	2
SEA Screening Conclusion	8
Next steps	9

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Little Waldingfield Parish Council is in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). Little Waldingfield is located within Babergh District, approximately four miles to the 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 NDP.

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 Guidance¹ (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 Stage Draft version of the Little Waldingfield NDP 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 Regulations².

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

² 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 NDP

2.1 Little Waldingfield Parish Council has prepared the Pre-Submission Stage Draft (Regulation 14) version of the NDP which will be subject to public consultation.

2.2 The Little Waldingfield NDP covers the entire parish, including the main settlement of Little Waldingfield as well as the hamlet of Humble Green.

2.3 The Pre-Submission Stage Draft NDP includes a vision for the long-term future of Little Waldingfield along with nine objectives relating to the following topics:

1. Housing
2. Natural Environment
3. Historic Environment
4. Development Design
5. Services and Facilities

2.4 The NDP then sets out 19 planning policies (LWD1-19) to realise and deliver the vision. Policy LWD2, concerning housing development, provides for around 10 additional dwellings to be developed in the parish between 2018 and 2036. This figure was calculated by adding the number of outstanding planning permissions at 1st April 2018 that have not been completed (5) and planning permissions for new dwellings granted between 1st April 2018 and 1st January 2020 (5). Policy LWD3, allocates two sites for development totalling three homes, both of which have already been granted planning consent.

Baseline Information

2.5 This section summarises baseline information for the parish of Little Waldingfield, drawing from the information set out in the Pre-Submission Stage Draft NDP as well as supporting evidence documents including the Little Waldingfield Design Guide³ and Village Character Assessment⁴.

³ AECOM (2019) Little Waldingfield Design Guide
<http://littlewalingfield.onesuffolk.net/assets/Parish-Council/Little-Waldingfield-Design-Guide.pdf>

⁴ Neighbourhood Planning Steering Committee (2018) Village Character Assessment <http://littlewalingfield.onesuffolk.net/assets/Parish-Council/Village-Character-Assessment-Oct-2018.pdf>

Context

2.6 Little Waldingfield is a village and civil parish in the Suffolk District of Babergh, eastern England. It is located around four miles north east of Sudbury and a similar distance south of the historic village of Lavenham. The built-up area of the village runs north-eastwards for about half a mile along the B1115 from Sudbury. The total area of the parish is approximately 660ha.

Biodiversity, flora and fauna

2.7 There are no internationally designated nature conservation sites within Little Waldingfield Parish. However, a small portion of the parish lies within the Brent Eleigh Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to the north east and Mildens Thicks SSSI to the south east. Both SSSIs consist of ancient woodland. There are also pockets of deciduous woodland and traditional orchard, both priority habitats, throughout the parish.

2.8 A priority species (lapwing, a farmland bird) is also present within the area.

Population

2.9 Mid-2018 population estimates recorded Little Waldingfield's population at 359 persons. According to the 2011 Census the gender balance is 46% male and 54% female. The average age of residents was 50.5 years.

2.10 The 2011 Census showed that there were 180 (69%) 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

2.11 In terms of the health of Little Waldingfield residents, just over 42% of people are classified as in very good health, 34.4% as good, 15.8% as fair, 7.1% as bad and 0.5% as very bad. These health ratings mirror the Babergh and England averages; however the 'bad' figure is higher than both and the 'very bad' figure for Little Waldingfield is below both.

Soil

2.12 The village lies in an area of glacial sand and gravel, surrounded by chalky boulder clay.

2.13 Little Waldingfield Parish comprises of Grades 2 and 3 agricultural land (it is not known whether the Grade 3 land is Grade 3a, which is classed as 'high quality' or Grade 3b which is not).

Water

2.14 The majority of the parish lies within Flood Zone 1; however a small portion lies within Flood Zone 3 – this is associated with a small watercourse that flows into the River Box which runs to the south east of the parish. 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

2.15 There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) that have been declared within Little Waldingfield Parish, the nearest being at Sudbury.

2.16 Climate data is 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

2.17 The parish has a number of important open areas that make important contributions to the character and setting of the built environment. A Local Green Space Appraisal was undertaken as part of the preparation of the NDP. The NDP designates five local green spaces.

2.18 Little Waldingfield benefits from a bus service from Bildeston to Sudbury; however there are gaps in the service throughout the day. The nearest railway station is located in Sudbury and provides services to Marks Tey via Bures, Chapel and Wakes Colne.

2.19 There are a number of Public Rights of Ways within the parish; many are circular routes and connect to the surrounding countryside.

2.20 There are no general admission schools within the parish.

2.21 The County Council notes that mineral extraction is a main threat to the landscape and a portion of Little Waldingfield has been included within a Minerals Consultation Area in the Suffolk Minerals Core Strategy.

Cultural heritage

2.22 The settlement, with its distinctive landmark formed by the tower of St. Lawrence's Church, is visible from many directions. The Little Waldingfield Conservation Area was designated in 1973 to manage and protect the special

architectural and historic interest of the centre of the village. There are 20 Grade II listed buildings and one Grade I listed building, St. Lawrence's Church, within it. There are a further two Grade II listed buildings outside of the main village located to the south east. There are also locally listed buildings dotted around the village.

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

Landscape

2.24 Little Waldingfield is situated on a spur of higher land between 60 and 70 metres above sea level and generally slopes down from east to west towards Waldingfield Bridge. The village is surrounded by arable fields which create an open setting to the village.

2.25 The village sits within an area classified in the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment as Ancient Rolling Farmlands, which are rolling clayland landscapes dissected by river valleys. The area retains much of the organic pattern of ancient and species-rich hedgerows and associated ditches.

A very small part of the Brett Valley Special Landscape Area crosses the northern boundary of the parish.

2.26 There are no nationally designated landscapes within or adjacent to Little Waldingfield with the closest being Dedham Vale AONB around six miles to the south east.

SEA Screening

2.27 An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Stage Draft Little Waldingfield NDP requires SEA in accordance with the SEA Regulations.

2.28 **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 Directive⁵, 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).

⁵https://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

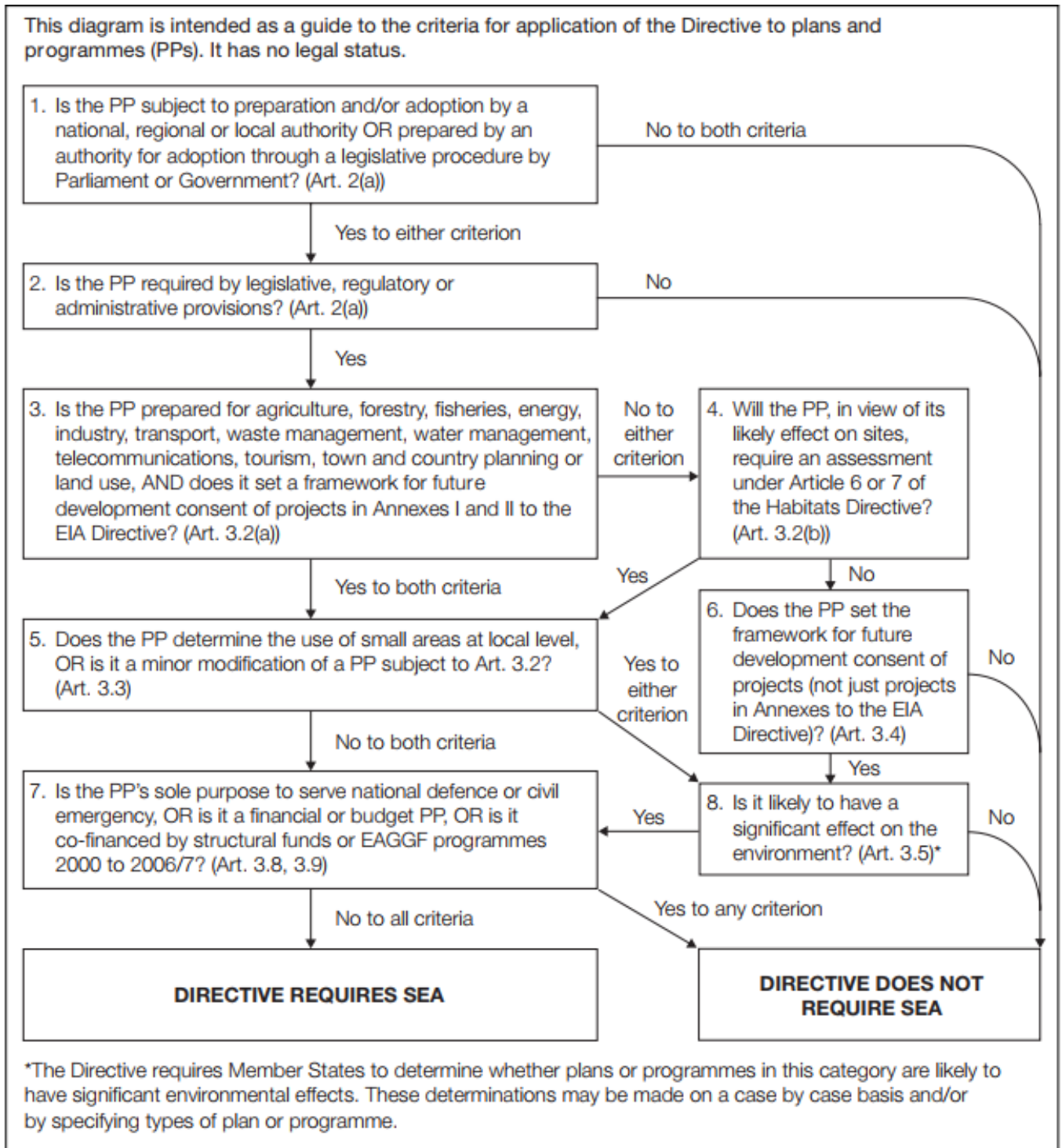


Table 2.1: Application of SEA Directive to the Little Waldingfield NDP

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 NDP 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. Move to Q2.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	No	The NDP 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. Move to Q3.
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 NDP 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. The development allocated in the NDP is small-scale housing development which is not included in Annexes I or II of the EIA Directive. Move to Q4.
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))	Uncertain	HRA screening of the NDP is being undertaken separately on behalf of Babergh District Council and the outcome of that work is unknown at the time of writing. Therefore, it is necessary at this stage to consider both scenarios under Q4. Yes: Move to Q5. NO: Move to Q6.
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art.3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Yes and No	The NDP allocates small-scale sites for housing development. It is not a minor modification of a PP. Move to Q8.
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	The NDP allocates two small-scale sites for housing development, setting the framework for future development consent (although both sites already have planning permission). The NDP also provides a framework for the development of affordable housing on rural exception sites although it does not allocate sites for this purpose. Move to Q8.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	No	See Table 2.2. SEA IS NOT REQUIRED.

2.29 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 Waldingfield NDP 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 NDP will become part of the statutory development plan and will guide the delivery of development in Little Waldingfield Parish, including in terms of design. The NDP allocates two sites for residential development, which are expected to accommodate a total of three dwellings. However, both sites already have planning permission. The NDP also provides a framework for the development of affordable housing on rural exception sites although it does not allocate sites for this purpose.</p> <p>The adopted Babergh Core Strategy (2014) identifies Little Waldingfield as a Hinterland Village in Policy CS2 – Settlement Pattern. This policy 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 identifies Little Waldingfield as a Hamlet Village. While the new Local Plan is unlikely to be adopted until 2021, it has been taken into consideration in the preparation of the NDP. It is noted that the Preferred Options Joint Local Plan document makes provision for building 9,343 new homes across Babergh between 2018 and 2036 and that it is proposed that 3% of these will be in the Hamlet Villages. For Little Waldingfield specifically, the Preferred Options document identifies a minimum figure of 16 new homes for Little Waldingfield. Little Waldingfield disagrees with this figure and has included a lower figure in the NDP.</p>
2.the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The NDP 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 NDP must also have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework. The NDP does not have influence over other plans. Once made, the NDP will form part of the statutory development plan for Little 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 NDP must meet is to contribute to sustainable development.
4. environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,	Baseline information relating to Little Waldingfield Parish was described earlier in this chapter. Key issues of relevance to the NDP are the presence of high-quality agricultural land in the parish, the presence of land within flood zone 3, several areas of priority habitat and ancient woodland, two SSSIs and a number of designated heritage assets in the parish centre.
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 NDP allocates two sites for housing development, amounting to three dwellings, although both of these sites already have planning permission. The Little Waldingfield NDP covers the period 2018-2036 and the effects of housing development that occurs during the plan period are expected to be long-term and permanent. Any effects associated specifically with construction are likely to be short-term and temporary.

SEA Requirement	Comments
7. the cumulative nature of the effects,	<p>Cumulative effects could result from the NDP in combination with development that takes place in the surrounding towns and villages – albeit the parish of Little Waldingfield is rural and Little Waldingfield village itself is some distance from the nearest settlement (Great Waldingfield is around two miles to the 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 Little Waldingfield Parish. It is noted that the Little Waldingfield NDP allocates two housing sites, amounting to three dwellings, but that both sites already have planning permission. The most recent version of the Local Plan includes a higher housing figure for the village (16).</p> <p>The Adopted Babergh Core Strategy (2014) identifies Little 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 NDP focuses on Little Waldingfield Parish only. Transboundary effects under the SEA Regulations refers transboundary effects on other EU Member States; therefore they are not relevant to this NDP.
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 NDP.
10. the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),	The NDP covers all of Little Waldingfield Parish. The population of the parish, according to mid-2018 estimates, was 359 people.
11. the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, ■ exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, ■ intensive land-use, 	Little Waldingfield Parish is home to a few Priority Species and Priority Habitats and pockets of ancient woodland. In addition, the north east part of the parish lies within the Brent Eleigh Woods SSSI and a section within the south east lies within the Mildens Thicks SSSI. There is a Conservation Area within the village and there are 23 listed buildings within the parish that are included on Historic England's National List, including Grade I listed St Lawrence's Church. Also, the parish lies within areas of Grades 2 and 3 agricultural land.
12. the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	A very small part of the Brett Valley Special Landscape Area crosses the northern boundary of the NDP area.

SEA Screening Conclusion

2.30 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 Waldingfield NDP is likely to have significant environmental effects when assessed against the topics listed in the SEA Regulations.

2.31 The NDP sets out a vision and detailed planning policies to shape development in the parish up to 2036. It allocates two small sites for residential development, delivering a total of three homes. However, both of these sites already have planning permission. It is assumed that the environmental effects of the development on the sites with planning permission would have been assessed during the planning

application process, with conditions attached to the consent as appropriate to ensure that adverse effects on the environment do not result. Although these sites are allocated in the NDP they are, in effect, part of the baseline conditions for the preparation of the NDP. They are included as allocations in the NDP because they already have planning consent.

2.32 The residential development allocated through the NDP could have a range of environmental effects during the construction period and afterwards, in particular in relation to additional traffic generation and demand for water treatment (albeit at a small scale). There are policies in the NDP and in the adopted Babergh Core Strategy that may provide mitigation, and mitigation may also be provided by the policies in the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan;

however given its current stage of development, emerging policies may change.

2.33 Given that both of the allocated sites in the NDP already having planning consent it is considered that the Little Waldingfield NDP does not have the potential to have significant environmental effects in relation to the baseline and that SEA is not therefore required.

Next steps

2.34 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.