

**Babergh & Mid Suffolk District
Councils**

**Wherstead Neighbourhood
Plan
SEA Screening Opinion**

Final report

Prepared by LUC

June 2022

Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils

**Wherstead Neighbourhood Plan
SEA Screening Opinion**

Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1.	Draft Report	L Meldrum K Nicholls	K Nicholls	K Nicholls	09.09.2021
2.	Final Report	L Meldrum K Nicholls	K Nicholls	K Nicholls	10.09.2021
3.	Updated Final Report	B Miller	K Nicholls	K Nicholls	27.06.2022

Contents

Chapter 1	
Introduction	1

Chapter 2	
SEA Screening	2

Scope of the Wherstead Neighbourhood Plan	2
Baseline Information	3
SEA Screening Conclusion	8
Next steps	8

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Wherstead Parish Council is in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Wherstead is located within the south east of Babergh District, just to the south of Ipswich. 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 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 Consultation Draft version of the Wherstead Neighbourhood Plan (taking into account Post Pre-Submission Consultation Modifications) 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.

1.4 LUC conducted SEA Screening in September 2021 and concluded that the Pre-Submission Consultation Draft Wherstead Neighbourhood Plan was unlikely to have significant environmental effects and that full SEA was therefore not required. Since this time an updated Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening of the Neighbourhood Plan has been undertaken separately by LUC on behalf of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and the outcomes have informed this update to the original SEA Screening report. This report has also been updated taking into account the schedule of Post Pre-Submission Consultation Modifications (May 2022).

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) and The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes

(Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/1531). 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 Wherstead Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 Wherstead Parish Council has prepared the Pre-Submission Consultation Draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan which was subject to public consultation in 2021. The Parish Council has also now prepared a Schedule of Post Pre-Submission Consultation Modifications. The Neighbourhood Plan covers the entire Parish.

2.2 The Wherstead Neighbourhood Plan includes 11 objectives:

- 1.** Ensuring we have the tools and processes to meet future challenges and to enhance our unique rural, coastal nature and agricultural setting.
- 2.** To ensure Wherstead is a safe and exciting community to live in for now and for future generations.
- 3.** To preserve Wherstead as a rural village with a separate identity from Ipswich and the surrounding villages.
- 4.** The village landscape, with its many historic and listed structures and links back to Wherstead's past, are maintained.
- 5.** Links between the two population centres of the village are strengthened and ensure that the more remote homes in the village retain their setting and independence.
- 6.** The unique, distinct character of the village is maintained by ensuring additional housing and business development is in proportion to the current size and needs of the Parish and the Parish is not swamped by business or retail development.
- 7.** Preserve the integrity of our village by enhancing and encouraging the sense of community.
- 8.** Maintain employment opportunities that do not result in a detrimental impact on local infrastructure, the environments and resident's amenity.
- 9.** Protect and enhance the local landscape and its significant views.
- 10.** Ensure new development is of a scale and design that reflects local character.

11. Improve road safety, protect and enhance Wherstead's public rights of way and reduce the impact of traffic passing through the Parish.

2.3 The Neighbourhood Plan then sets out 17 planning policies (WTD1-17) to address those objectives, covering topics including heritage assets, design considerations, flooding and parking standards.

2.4 The overall strategy for development in Wherstead is set out in policy WTD1: Spatial Strategy, which supports in principle new development within the settlement boundary as well as within the Wherstead Park strategic employment site which is identified in the emerging Joint Local Plan. Proposals for development located outside the Settlement Boundary will only be permitted where they are in accordance with national and District level policies. The Neighbourhood Plan acknowledges the development of 75 new homes at The Klondyke, which were being built out at the time the Plan is being prepared. There are no site allocations made through the Neighbourhood Plan for new housing or other built development.

Baseline Information

2.5 This section summarises baseline information for the Parish of Wherstead, drawing from the information set out in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Context

2.6 Wherstead Parish is located in the Suffolk District of Babergh, eastern England. It is within the fringes of Ipswich to the north. The total area of the Parish is approximately 995 hectares.

Biodiversity, flora and fauna

2.7 The Orwell Estuary in the north-east of the Parish is designated at the international level as a Ramsar site and a Special Protection Area (SPA). Nationally, it is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Bobbitshole, Belstead and Freston and Cutler's Woods with Holbrook Park are also SSSIs present in the north-west and south of the Parish respectively. In addition, an area of Ancient Woodland is also present in the west of the Parish.

2.8 There are four County Wildlife Sites located within Wherstead: Spiney/Wherstead Wood with southern linear woodland, Wherstead Heath, Piper's Vale and Bourne Bridge grassland. There are also several County Wildlife Sites along the boundaries of the Parish to the north as well as the south-west.

2.9 Nine of the 24 Suffolk Priority habitats are also known to be present in the Parish.

Population

2.10 Data from the 2011 Census shows that Wherstead Parish had a population of 342 people living in 127 households. The gender balance was 49.7% male and 50.3% female.

2.11 The proportion of people aged 65+ in 2011 was 23.1%, which is slightly higher than the average for Babergh District as a whole (21.4%) and significantly higher than the average for England (16.3%). There were 57 children under 16 within the Parish at that time. Approximately three quarters (74.8%) of houses were owner-occupied.

2.12 The Parish is home to a number of businesses and the 2011 Census identified that 978 people worked in Wherstead at the time. The 2011 Census showed that there were 233 (76.4%) economically active residents aged 16 to 74 which was higher than both the Babergh average of 70.3% and the England average of 69.9%.

Human Health

2.13 In terms of the health of Wherstead residents, 43.6% of people are classified as in very good health, 35.1% as good, 12.9% as fair, 6.7% 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' and 'bad' figures for Wherstead Parish are higher than the averages for Babergh District at 0.9% and 3.4% respectively and for England at 1.2% and 4.2% respectively.

Soil

2.14 Wherstead Parish is comprised of two soil types. The majority of the Parish is classed as freely draining slightly acid loamy soils, whilst the central part extending to the south is classed slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage.

2.15 The centre and south, in addition to a small area in the north-east of Wherstead Parish, comprises Grade 1 agricultural land, with the majority of the northern, eastern and western extents of the Parish being Grade 3. It is not known if this land is Grade 3a (classed as high quality) or the lower quality Grade 3b.

Water

2.16 Almost all of the Parish is outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3, aside from a small area of land in the north and north-eastern side of the Parish (associated with the River Orwell) 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. An area of land

within Flood Zone 3 can also be found on the boundary of the Parish in the south-west associated with Alton Water.

Air and Climatic Factors

2.17 There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) that have been declared within Wherstead, the nearest being approximately 2km away in Ipswich.

2.18 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

2.19 The proximity of the village to Ipswich likely accounts for the lack of day to day facilities and services in the Parish. The only meeting space is a small village hall, known as 'The Room', in the Wherstead Park Stable Block. Commercial facilities serving a wider catchment include Jimmy's Farm, Suffolk Food Hall, Suffolk Leisure Park, the Premier Inn Hotel, Puddleducks Kindercare Children's Nursery The Outlook Café, Bar and Bistro, the Beefeater Public House, the radiocontrolled car track and Wherstead Park.

2.20 Wherstead Parish is well served with Public Rights of Way (PROWs) which cross the Parish and provide good access to the wider countryside. Generally, the paths are in good condition; however the Parish Council's Household Survey identified that there are some paths within the Parish that cannot be used 12 months of the year.

2.21 An issue raised by many residents during the consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan was traffic and road safety, with many of the roads failing to have safe pedestrian routes alongside them or safe crossing points. This limits the ability to travel around the village by means other than a car.

2.22 There are a number of bus stops along the B1456 and the A137 with routes passing through the eastern side and the centre of Wherstead respectively. The nearest railway station is located in Ipswich.

2.23 There are no schools within the Parish, the nearest being in Ipswich.

2.24 All of Wherstead Parish is included within a Minerals Consultation Area in the Suffolk Minerals Core Strategy. In

addition, there are three existing or proposed minerals sites located in the west of the Parish.

Cultural heritage

2.25 There has been settlement and activity on the land of Wherstead since prehistoric times. The first evidence of human activity in the Parish is represented by Palaeolithic implements found in a quarry in the Thorington Hall area. Finds of the Neolithic period include stone axe-heads, indicating forest clearance by the first farmers, and rubbish pits with pottery, indicating settlement, from a quarry at the top of Bourne Hill.

2.1 There are no designated Conservation Areas in the Parish; however there are a number of designated heritage assets including one Grade II* listed building, the Church of St Mary, and a further 21 Grade II listed buildings. None of these are included on the Historic England 'Heritage at Risk' register.

2.2 Along with these nationally listed buildings, there are 21 buildings and features across the Parish that have a local heritage significance.

Landscape

2.3 The Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB covers the north and east as well as the southern boundaries of the Parish.

2.4 The nature of the landscape in and around Wherstead means that there are a number of distinct views into, out of and within the village that are of high importance to its character and sense of rurality, especially given the presence of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.

2.5 Wherstead Parish spans areas classified in the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment as Rolling Estate Farmlands and Ancient Estate Farmlands.

SEA Screening

2.6 An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the Pre-Submission Consultation Draft Wherstead Neighbourhood Plan (taking into account Post Pre-Submission Consultation Modifications) requires SEA in accordance with the SEA Regulations.

2.7 **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 Directive³, published in September 2005. This is a useful guide when considering whether a plan should be subject to SEA (The Practical Guide

³https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf

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).

Figure 2.1 Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

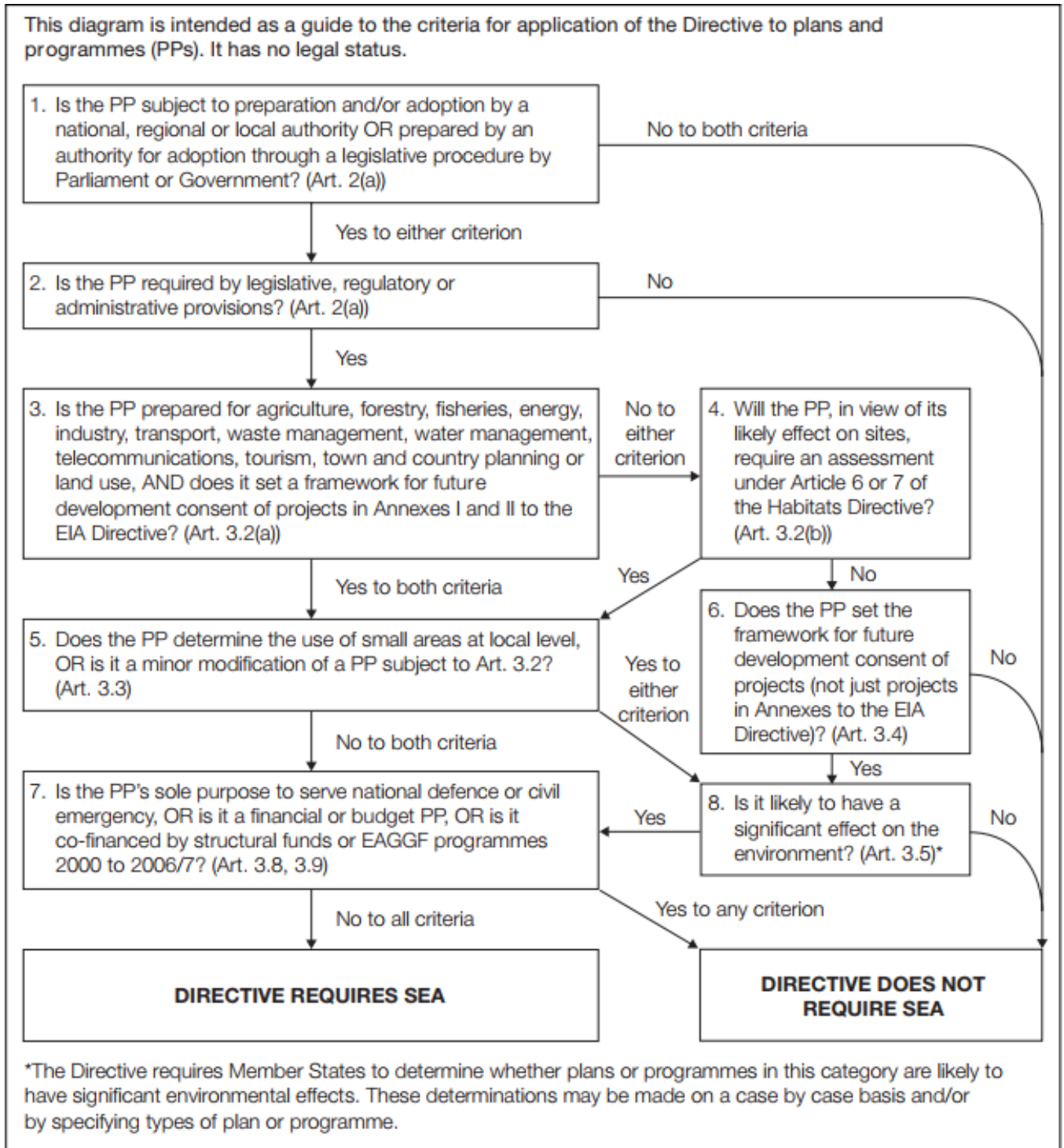


Table 2.1: Application of SEA Directive to the Wherstead Neighbourhood Plan

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. Move to Q2.
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. 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 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. 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))	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. No: Move to Q6.
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. Move to Q8 for assessment of significant effects.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	No	See Table 2.2. SEA IS NOT REQUIRED.

2.8 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 Wherstead 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 Wherstead Parish, including in terms of design. The

SEA Requirement	Comments
	<p>Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for residential or other forms of development.</p> <p>The adopted Babergh Core Strategy (2014) identifies Wherstead as being within the Ipswich Fringe as well as the Holbrook functional cluster, although the village does not feature in the hierarchy of settlements. Policy CS2 – Settlement Pattern seeks to direct development to towns/urban areas (which includes the Ipswich Fringe) 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.</p> <p>The emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan continues to identify Wherstead as being within the Ipswich Fringe, while designating Bourne Hill as a Hinterland Village. While the new Local Plan is not yet adopted (this is expected to be later in 2021 or early 2022), it 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 and that it is proposed that 21% of these will be in the Ipswich Fringe and 9% at the Hinterland Villages. The Joint Local Plan does not identify a minimum housing requirement that the Wherstead Neighbourhood Plan should meet although the Joint Local Plan allocates the site west of Bourne Hill currently being developed for 75 new homes by Bellway Homes. There is no requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan to identify additional housing sites in the Neighbourhood Plan.</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 Wherstead 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 Wherstead Parish was described earlier in this chapter. Key issues of relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan are the presence of the AONB and a number of international and nationally designated nature conservation sites within the Parish.
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,	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.

SEA Requirement	Comments
	<p>The Adopted Babergh Core Strategy (2014) identifies Wherstead as part of the Babergh Ipswich Fringe (edge of an urban area). New development will be directed sequentially to these urban areas as well as to the Core Villages and Hinterland Villages. The scale and location of development will depend upon the local housing need, the role of settlements as employment providers and retail/service centres, the capacity of existing physical and social infrastructure to meet forecast demands and the provision of new/enhanced infrastructure, as well as having regard to environmental constraints and the views of local communities as expressed in parish/community /neighbourhood plans.</p> <p>The emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan does not identify a minimum housing figure for Wherstead; however the Joint Local Plan does allocate the site for development of 75 new homes at The Klondyke and sets out the anticipated delivery pattern of these new dwellings across the Plan period.</p>
8. the transboundary nature of the effects,	The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on Wherstead 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.
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 Wherstead Parish. The population of the Parish in 2011 was 342 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, 	Wherstead Parish is home to a number of County Wildlife Sites in addition to several internationally and nationally designated sites. These include The Orwell Estuary SSSI, Ramsar site and SPA, Bobbitshole, Belstead SSSI and Freston and Cutler's Woods with Holbrook Park SSSI. An area of Ancient Woodland is also present in the west of the Parish. There is one Grade II* listed building and 21 Grade II listed buildings. The Parish also has an area of land within Flood Zone 3 in the north-east and 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 is one designated landscape within Wherstead Parish. This is the Suffolk Coast and Heath AONB which extends into the north and east as well as the southern boundaries of the Parish.

SEA Screening Conclusion

2.9 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 Wherstead Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects when assessed against the topics listed in the SEA Regulations.

2.10 The Neighbourhood Plan sets out objectives and 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. It does not directly impact on land use through the allocation of sites for housing or other forms of development.

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

Next steps

2.12 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
June 2022