

## Harston Neighbourhood Plan

# Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Determination Statement

April 2024

## Executive Summary

This statement sets out the reasons for the determination that the draft Harston Neighbourhood Plan is likely to require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. In addition, this statement determines that the making of the Harston Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

This determination statement is intended to demonstrate that the Harston Neighbourhood Plan is compatible with certain European Union obligations as required by the basic conditions, namely:

- Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment; and
- Article 6(3) and (4) of the EU Habitats Directive and with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Harston and South Cambridgeshire District Council will publish this determination statement in accordance with the regulatory requirements.

## Determination Statement

This statement has been produced to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan will, when examined, comply with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) in particular Regulation 32 and Regulation 15(1)e(ii) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

A neighbourhood plan is required to meet a number of basic conditions (which are set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990), one of which being it must not breach and must be otherwise compatible with EU and Human Rights obligations. This requires neighbourhood plans to fully consider the requirements of the SEA regulations which transpose the EU's SEA Directive into law and which requires those making plans that could impact on the environment to consider whether they are likely to have a significant effect or not.

Regulation 32 in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) sets out an additional basic condition to those set out in primary legislation. Regulation 32 states: "The making of the neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (d)) or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007 (e) ) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects).

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion was prepared by Place Services on behalf of South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) for the Harston Neighbourhood Plan (See Appendix 1).

SCDC has consulted the statutory consultees (Historic England/Natural England/Environment Agency) on the Screening Report prepared by Essex Place Services and asked for their views on whether a SEA is required.

Consultation responses were received from the three statutory consultees. Their conclusions are summarised below, and their detailed comments are included in Appendix 2.

### **Historic England:**

The Screening Report and draft neighbourhood plan) supplied with the consultation indicates that within the plan area there is a range of designated historic environment assets. There is also likely to be other features of local historic, architectural or

archaeological value, and consideration should also be given to the wider historic landscape. The documentation indicates that the Harston Neighbourhood Plan proposes to allocate a site for housing/other use via Policy HAR 28 for approximately 6 dwellings. Given the likely significant effects (both positive and negative) upon the historic environment, Historic England hence concurs with the Council's view that a Strategic Environmental Assessment will be required. (15 March 2024).

### **Natural England:**

Natural England notes that your authority, as competent authority, has undertaken an appropriate assessment (AA) of the Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with regulation 63 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended). Natural England is a statutory consultee on the appropriate assessment stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process. The appropriate assessment concludes that your authority is able to ascertain that the Neighbourhood Plan will not result in adverse effects on the integrity (AEOI) of any of the sites in question. Having considered the assessment, and the measures proposed to mitigate for all identified adverse effects that could potentially occur as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan, Natural England advises that we concur with the assessment conclusions, providing that all mitigation measures are appropriately secured (21 March 2024).

### **Environment Agency:**

Based on a review of environmental constraints for which we are a statutory consultee, we find that there are areas of fluvial flood risk and watercourses within the neighbourhood plan area. In particular, we note that the boundary does extend into areas of Flood Zones 2 and 3 of the designated main River Cam/Rhee. On the basis that future development is steered away from the sensitive aspects of the environment highlighted, we do not consider there to be potential significant environmental effects relating to these environmental constraints. Nevertheless, we recommend the inclusion of relevant policies to cover the management of flood risk. Allocation of any sites and any windfall development delivered through the Plan period should follow the sequential approach. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 161 sets this out (26 March 2024).

### **Overall conclusions**

The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for town and country planning purposes and sets a framework for future development consent. The policies of the Neighbourhood Plan can be considered to determine the use of small areas at local level commensurate with their status in determining local planning applications.

The Plan proposes to allocate a site for approximately 6 dwellings and other uses (Policy HAR 28) thus allocating land for development purposes and therefore the Harston Neighbourhood Plan includes content that could give rise to significant negative effects on the environment, or any social or economic tenets of sustainability.

The Harston Neighbourhood Plan should therefore be **screened in** for its requirement of Strategic Environmental Assessment in line with the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC.

The HRA screening report indicates that the Harston Neighbourhood Plan is predicted to have likely significant effects on screening concluded that likely significant effects on Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, Fenland SAC and Wicken Fen Ramsar site cannot be ruled out resulting from the Harston Neighbourhood Plan. The requirement for the Plan to undertake further assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Regulations 2017 (as amended) is therefore **screened in**.

## Appendix 1: Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening for Harston Neighbourhood Plan

As part of the process of making a Neighbourhood Plan, Harston Parish Councils have requested a screening opinion to see whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required. Such a requirement can be screened out if it is felt, based on the information available, that the Neighbourhood Plan would not have a likely significant environmental affect.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion was prepared by Place Services on behalf of South Cambridgeshire District Council for the Harston Neighbourhood Plan.



# Harston Neighbourhood Plan

## Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report and Appropriate Assessment (AA)

February 2024







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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The Purpose of this Report

This screening report is an assessment of whether or not the contents of the Harston Neighbourhood Plan requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/ EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations. A SEA is required if the Neighbourhood Plan is deemed to have a likely significant effect on the environment.

This report will also screen to determine whether the Neighbourhood Plan requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). An HRA screening report is required when it is deemed that likely adverse significant effects may occur on protected Habitats (European) Sites as a result of the implementation of a plan or project.

## 1.2 The Harston Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan will set out planning policies for the Harston Neighbourhood Plan area. Once formally adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan carries the same legal weight as Local Development Plans adopted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), in this case South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The Vision for the Plan is set out to address these areas of need. The Vision states,

‘To maintain the village’s rural charm, where new buildings are in keeping with the rural setting and its historic identity is retained. The environment, located in the green belt, will be enhanced for everyone to enjoy while embracing sustainability and biodiversity.

A cohesive, diverse, vibrant community will be fostered, anchored by a thriving school, with improved community facilities & services to make it a great place to call home while being ecologically and environmentally friendly. Any new development should focus on creating affordable housing opportunities and be sensitively and sustainably designed. Improved connectivity will be created through well-designed transport options, with cycleways and footpaths that serve the needs of the community.’

A total of 18 objectives, under eight themes, have been devised for the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure the delivery of this Vision. These are:

- Village and settlement character
  - Objective 1: New development will be designed to a high standard and will reinforce Harston’s distinctive rural charm and sense of place.
  - Objective 2: Harston’s historic identity will be retained and strengthened

- Objective 3: The vulnerability and sensitivity of Harston's historic core and Button End in terms of heritage significance and settlement/landscape character will be fully considered in all applicable parish-based planning decisions
- Open space
  - Objective 4: Existing locally important open spaces within the village will be protected and opportunities will be taken to improve the quality and quantity in this provision.
- Parish-wide landscape and biodiversity
  - Objective 5: Retain and enhance Harston's wider landscape character for all to enjoy
  - Objective 6: Protect, enhance and increase areas and networks of biodiversity value
- Climate change and flood management
  - Objective 7: New development will achieve high sustainable design and construction standards, ensuring new development will belong in a zero carbon future
  - Objective 8: Support new low carbon and renewable energy infrastructure
  - Objective 9: Flood risk from all sources will be a key consideration in all land use planning decisions and new development will not result in increased risk of flooding.
- Housing supply
  - Objective 10: Existing affordable housing needs will be addressed through the provision of affordable housing schemes targeted at meeting parish level needs.
  - Objective 11: The size, mix and tenure of new residential development will be suitable for attracting young families to the parish and allowing older residents to downsize.
- Traffic and parking
  - Objective 12: Traffic generation from new development proposals will be fully considered and appropriately mitigated.
  - Objective 13: Existing parking infrastructure for motorised vehicles will be improved and better managed in locations associated with village shops and community facilities in order to make our village environment safer and more pleasant.
- Active travel
  - Objective 14: Different parts of the village will be better connected through an improved rural and village footpath network.
  - Objective 15: New development will utilise all opportunities to secure active travel routes to facilitate ease of access to both neighbouring developments,

surrounding countryside and village services

- Harston's village hub and community infrastructure
  - Objective 16: We will plan to sustain and develop further enhanced community meeting spaces in central locations, to allow for increased opportunities for the community to come together
  - Objective 17: Harston's community infrastructure (comprising our school, health services and community spaces) will be maintained and where necessary expanded to meet the needs of residents
  - Objective 18: We will support shops and businesses along the High Street in order to support parish residents in both their working and leisure time

## 1.3 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan

The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan sets out the planning policies and land allocations to guide the future development of the District up to 2031. It includes policies on a wide range of topics such as housing, employment, services and facilities, and the natural environment.

### 1.3.1 Content regarding the Neighbourhood Plan area within the Local Plan

#### 1.3.1.1 The Settlement Hierarchy and Principle of Development

The Local Plan identifies Harston as an 'Group Village' within Policy S/10. The Local Plan states of Group Villages,

'Group villages are generally less sustainable locations for new development than Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres, having fewer services and facilities allowing only some of the basic day-to-day requirements of their residents to be met without the need to travel outside the village. All Group Villages have at least a primary school and limited development will help maintain remaining services and facilities and provide for affordable housing to meet local needs. Development will not be permitted on sites capable of accommodating scheme sizes significantly larger than 8 or exceptionally 15 dwellings in Group villages.'

There are no Local Plan housing allocations for development within the Harston Neighbourhood Plan boundary, however the Local Plan does not seek to restrict any allocations being proposed within Neighbourhood Plans.

Policy S/7 of the Local Plan covers policy regarding 'Development Frameworks'. Development Frameworks define where policies for the built-up areas of settlements give way to policies for the countryside. The Policy supports development within such frameworks (including that in Harston), and includes further information on proposals outside development frameworks for Neighbourhood Plans, stating that,

'(2) Outside development frameworks, only allocations within Neighbourhood Plans that have come into force and development for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses which need to be located in the countryside or

where supported by other policies in this plan will be permitted.'

### 1.3.1.2 Protected Village Amenity Areas

Policy NH/11: Protected Village Amenity Areas, identifies parcels of open space within villages that are considered important to maintain village character and should not be developed. The Policy stipulates that development will not be permitted within or adjacent to these areas if it would have an adverse impact on the character, amenity, tranquillity or function of the village. There are a number of such areas within the Neighbourhood Plan area and these can be viewed by visiting the [Local Plan Policies Map on the South Cambridgeshire District Council website](#).

### 1.3.1.3 Local Green Space

Policy NH/12: Local Green Space of the Local Plan identifies green areas of particular importance to local communities. The Policy protects these spaces from development that would adversely impact on the character and local significance which makes them of value to the community. Inappropriate development would not be approved except in very special circumstances and in discussion with the local community.

Within Harston, land is protected through the requirements of this Policy under designation NH/12-035 - Recreation Ground, Harston. This designation can also be viewed by visiting the [Local Plan Policies Map on the South Cambridgeshire District Council website](#).

## 2. Legislative Background

### 2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment states that,

‘Environmental assessment is an important tool for integrating environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

(10) All plans and programmes which are prepared for a number of sectors and which set a framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment(7), and all plans and programmes which have been determined to require assessment pursuant to Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna(8), are likely to have significant effects on the environment, and should as a rule be made subject to systematic environmental assessment. When they determine the use of small areas at local level or are minor modifications to the above plans or programmes, they should be assessed only where Member States determine that they are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

(11) Other plans and programmes which set the framework for future development consent of projects may not have significant effects on the environment in all cases and should be assessed only where Member States determine that they are likely to have such effects.’

The Harston Neighbourhood Plan may influence frameworks for future development or become used ancillary to those plans and programmes that do set such a framework, and as such it has been determined that the principle of the Neighbourhood Plan should be screened for the necessary application of the SEA Directive.

The Report from the Commission to The Council, The European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions states, on the application and effectiveness of the Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Directive 2001/42/EC), that

‘the following Plan & Programme (P&P), and modifications to them, are covered when prepared and/or adopted by an authority and required pursuant to legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions:

- P&P prepared for certain sectors and which set the framework for future development consent in respect of projects under the Environmental Impact Assessment-EIA-Directive.



- P&P requiring an assessment under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).
- P&P setting the framework for development consent in respect of projects (not limited to those listed in the EIA Directive; see above) and determined by "screening" as being likely to have significant environmental effects.'

This report represents this screening process in regard to the content and influence of the Harston Neighbourhood Plan.

## 2.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations (The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended), a competent authority must carry out an assessment of whether a plan or project will significantly affect the integrity of any European Site (also referred to as Habitats Sites in the National Planning Policy Framework), in terms of impacting the site's conservation objectives.

The first stage of HRA is the screening assessment of the impacts of a land use proposal against the conservation objectives of Habitats sites. Specifically, it is to ascertain whether or not a proposal (either alone or in combination with other proposals) would potentially damage the internationally designated features of that site. European sites are also known as Natura 2000 sites.

This HRA Screening Report has been undertaken in order to accompany the Harston Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, state that submitted Plans need to be accompanied by a statement explaining how the proposed Plan meets the 'basic conditions' set out in Schedule 4B of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. These basic conditions include a requirement to demonstrate how the Plan is compatible with certain obligations, which includes the need to undertake an HRA.

In line with the Court judgement (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats site.

On 26 June 2018. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 received Royal Assent and the UK left the EU. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 made sure that UK laws continue to operate following the UK's exit. Relevant EU Directives have been transposed into UK law and those are unchanged until amended by Parliament. The requirements for HRA under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain in place with minor changes being affected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Amendment (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Parliament is however at liberty to introduce future changes to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) since, after 31 December 2020, the UK is no longer bound by the EU Habitats or Wild Birds Directives.

At the present time the position, under section 6(3) EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (as amended), is that the courts in the UK, with the sole exception of the Supreme Court, will continue to be bound by HRA judgements handed down by the CJEU and by domestic courts prior to 31 December 2020 when interpreting the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This is the case as long as the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) remain unmodified by Parliament.

There is currently a legal requirement for HRA screening of Plans prior to being adopted so any additional plans or projects which might reasonably interact with the Harston Neighbourhood Plan will be considered before post consultation.

## 3. SEA Screening

### 3.1 When is SEA Required?

Planning Practice Guidance – Strategic environmental assessment requirements for neighbourhood plans (Paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 11-026-20140306) states that,

‘In some limited circumstances, where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it may require a strategic environmental assessment. Draft neighbourhood plan proposals should be assessed to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. This process is commonly referred to as a “screening” assessment and the requirements are set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

If likely significant environmental effects are identified, an environmental report must be prepared in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) of regulation 12 of those Regulations.

One of the basic conditions that will be tested by the independent examiner is whether the making of the neighbourhood plan is compatible with European Union obligations (including under the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive).

To decide whether a draft neighbourhood plan might have significant environmental effects, it must be assessed (screened) at an early stage of the plan’s preparation according to the requirements set out in regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These include a requirement to consult the environmental assessment consultation bodies.

Each consultation body will be able to advise on particular topics relevant to its specific area of expertise and responsibility, and the specific information that it holds.

Where it is determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for the determination should be prepared. A copy of the statement must be submitted with the neighbourhood plan proposal and made available to the independent examiner.’

Articles 2 and 3 of the SEA Directive set out the circumstances in which a SEA is required. Table 1 sets out the assessment of whether the principle of the Harston Neighbourhood Plan will require a full SEA.

**Table 1: Exploring whether the Principle of the Plan would warrant SEA**

**Question 1: Is the Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?**

Yes - The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for adoption through legislative procedure.

**Question 2: Is the Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provision? (Typical characteristics of "administrative provisions" are that they are publicly available, prepared in a formal way, probably involving consultation with interested parties. The administrative provision must have sufficient formality such that it counts as a "provision" and it must also use language that plainly requires rather than just encourages a Plan to be prepared.)**

Yes - The Neighbourhood Plan would be considered as falling within the category of an 'administrative provision'.

**Question 3: Is the Plan 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?**

Yes to both criteria - The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for town and country planning and sets a framework for future development consent.

**Question 4: Will the Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive?**

The Neighbourhood Plan's likely effect on sites and requirement for an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive is explored in Section 4 of this Report.

**Question 5: Does the Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a Plan likely to require assessment under the Habitats Directive?**

Yes to one of the criteria - the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan can be considered to determine the use of small areas at local level commensurate with their status in determining local planning applications.

**Question 6: Does the Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in the Annexes of the EIA Directive)?**

Yes - the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for town and country planning and sets a framework for future development consent.

**Question 7: Is the Plans sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, or is it a financial or budget Plan, or is it co -financed by structural funds or European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) programmes 2000 to 2006/7?**

The Neighbourhood Plan does not serve a purpose related to national defence or civil emergency, a financial or budget Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan is not co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7.

**Question 8: Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?**

Likely significant effects are explored in more detail in Section 3.3 of this Screening Report. The 'conclusions' section of the Report outlines whether the Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA or not due in regard to its effects on the environment.

The following section looks at the criteria for assessing the effects of the Neighbourhood Plan and the identified effects of the Neighbourhood Plan in line with the criteria. Crucially, it will determine whether there are any likely significant effects on the environment.

## 3.2 Criteria for Assessing the Effects of the Neighbourhood Plan

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects on the environment, referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below.

### Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC – Significant Effects

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to
  - 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,
  - the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
  - the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
  - environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,

## Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC – Significant Effects

- 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).

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
- the cumulative nature of the effects,
- the transboundary nature of the effects,
- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
  - \* special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
  - \* exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
  - \* intensive land-use,
  - \* the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

### 3.3 Likely Significant Effects resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan

The following assessment will consider the likelihood of the Harston Neighbourhood Plan (at the time of writing) to have significant effects on the environment. The table below will explore the likelihood of effects on the following required themes, as included within Annex I of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC):

- Biodiversity;
- Population;

- Human health;
- Fauna;
- Flora;
- Soil;
- Water;
- Air;
- Climatic factors;
- Material assets;
- Cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage;
- Landscape; and
- The interrelationship between the above factors.

**Table 2: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects on the Environment**

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
<p>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>	<p>The Plan sets out relevant policies which will be used to determine proposals for development within the Neighbourhood Plan area once adopted.</p> <p>A Neighbourhood Plan must demonstrate conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and once brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies only in the Local Plan for that Neighbourhood Plan area. The principle of development is established for the area through Local Plan policy, representing land within the Harston development framework. The Plan’s Policy HAR 13 – Supporting rural exception sites to meet Harston’s affordable housing needs supports limited development outside but on the edge of the development framework within the Plan area. Policy HAR 27: Station Road (SIG Roofing site) similarly supports community housing needs on a brownfield site adjacent to but outside the development framework.</p> <p>Policy HAR 28 allocates previously developed land for approximately 6 dwellings. The allocated site is within the development framework (as established within the Local Plan)</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>and represents previously developed land. The site is not however identified within the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and as such the Local Plan’s Sustainability Appraisal can not be considered relevant in the selection of the site within the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>Irrespective of the Neighbourhood Plan policies’ compliance with those of the Local Plan, which will be considered in finalising the Neighbourhood Plan and through the independent examination of the Neighbourhood Plan, it is considered that the degree to which the Neighbourhood Plan sets a framework for development (by allocating resources) is high. This is primarily due to the Neighbourhood Plan allocating land for development purposes.</p>
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan, when/if ‘made,’ will have weight in all planning decisions within the Plan area. The Neighbourhood Plan provides policies for the Plan area, relevant to a local level only. The Neighbourhood Plan allocates land for development purposes.</p> <p>In consideration of the above, the degree to which the Neighbourhood Plan influences other plans or programmes is considered high in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan area. This is again primarily related to the Plan’s position of allocating land for development purposes in the first instance and in advance of any forthcoming consideration of the site as part of the Local Plan process.</p>
<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Plans are required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Neighbourhood Plan policies seek to ensure environmental considerations are taken into account. The Neighbourhood Plan includes policies related (directly / indirectly) to ensuring environmental considerations will be integrated into any forthcoming development within the Plan area. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy HAR 8: Protecting and enhancing Harston’s</li> </ul>



Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>landscape character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy HAR 9: Protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Harston parish</li> <li>• Policy HAR 12: Managing flood risk in Harston parish</li> </ul> <p>Irrespective of the adequacy of the above policies, adopted Local Plan policies apply within the Neighbourhood Plan area, which have been subject to thorough assessment within the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment. This ensures that environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development, will be considered for all development proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan area.</p>
Environmental problems relevant to the plan area	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan reflects a small area and the Plan’s policy content seeks to address environmental issues. The policy content of the adopted Local Plan will additionally apply to any proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Local Plan policies have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) within the context of the Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan and this Screening Report identify the following potential (direct / indirect) environmental problems or sources of potential problems relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Plan area is within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) of various SSSIs. Development proposals within IRZs are required to be consulted on with Natural England, should they be of a type that could warrant negative effects on the relevant SSSI.</li> <li>• This includes, for some parts of the Neighbourhood Plan area, new housing developments, which will require an assessment of recreational pressure on relevant SSSIs and measures to mitigate adverse impacts e.g. alternative open space provision. The site of Station Road (SIG Roofing site), allocated for residential development within Policy HAR 27 of the Neighbourhood Plan, falls within this particular IRZ.</li> <li>• A number of Priority Habitats (from the Priority</li> </ul>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>Habitat Inventory<sup>1</sup>) are scattered throughout the Plan area. These include Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh, Lowland Fens, Deciduous Woodland, Chalk Rivers, and Traditional Orchards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a large Scheduled Monument in the Plan area: ‘Settlement site at Manor Farm’ distanced from the village’s development framework to the south west.</li> <li>• There are 17 Listed Buildings within the Plan area, the majority of which are Grade II listed. There are however three Grade II* listed buildings are located within the Plan area – ‘Harston House and part of walled garden’, ‘Manor House’, and ‘Church of All Saints.’ The majority of these listed buildings are associated with the historic core of Harston.</li> <li>• Various TPOs are scattered throughout the Neighbourhood Plan area.</li> <li>• The River Rhee (a tributary of the River Cam) flows through the Neighbourhood Plan area, and with it areas of land within Flood Risk Zones 3 and 2. The river is located to the west of the built up area of Harston.</li> <li>• Large parts of the eastern and central areas of the Neighbourhood Plan area are of a ‘high’ and medium-high’ groundwater vulnerability. This indicates the vulnerability of groundwater to any pollutant discharged at ground level based on the hydrological, geological, hydrogeological and soil properties of the land.</li> <li>• This vulnerability is associated with the Neighbourhood Plan area being predominantly located over a Principal Aquifer (bedrock), reflecting importance in terms of groundwater as a resource (drinking water supply) but also in supporting surface water flows and wetland ecosystems.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> a spatial dataset that describes the geographic extent and location of Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 habitats of principal importance.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The non-developed areas of the Plan area consist of Grade 2 ('very good') soils. This represents land which is classified as the Best and Most Versatile (BMV) for agricultural purposes.</li> <li>• The entirety of the Plan area that does not represent the built-up area, is located within the Green Belt.</li> <li>• The Parish is located in National Landscape Character Area 87 – East Anglian Chalk and within the County Landscape Character Area – Chalkland. The Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment 2021 divides the wider area into smaller areas referred to as 'landscape character types and areas' (LCAs). Harston parish falls within the Harston Chalklands LCA, the Rhee Valley Meadowlands LCA, and the Harston Farmlands LCA.</li> <li>• The Harston Landscape Character Appraisal 2024 indicates that the landscape is sensitive to development, particularly the chalk ridge areas. As a result of their open character and distinctive skyline and hilltops, they could be harmed through insensitive development.</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Plan area is entirely within either a Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) for chalk, or sand and gravel.</li> </ul>
<p>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>The content of the Neighbourhood Plan is not in conflict with those relevant planning documents within the wider district and county area related to waste management or water protection.</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
<p>The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects on the following factors:</p>	<p>The following impacts have been identified within this Screening Assessment:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biodiversity</li> </ul>	<p>The Plan includes Policy HAR 9: Protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Harston parish. This policy sets out that development proposals will need to avoid impacts in the first instance, and where not possible ensure mitigation or compensation. The Policy also seeks to ensure or proposals a measurable net gain for biodiversity, and that this should be achieved on-site wherever possible and in accordance with the BS8683:2021 process for designing and implementing Biodiversity Net Gain.</p> <p>The HRA element of this Screening Report concludes that the Neighbourhood Plan is predicted to have a Likely Significant Effect on the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC (Habitats site), located approximately 8km to the west. The Plan supports the principle of development, and the Plan area is within the 10km key sustenance zone for protected bats. This Report undertakes the required Appropriate Assessment (AA) to ensure that recommendations can be made and embedded within the Plan’s policy where relevant. Assuming that the recommendations are embedded, then this SEA Screening can conclude that any effects on biodiversity that would require the full application of the SEA Directive (a SEA Environmental Report) can be screened out.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Population</li> </ul>	<p>It is considered that there would be no significant effects on population resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan. This is due to the small scale of the Plan area.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health</li> </ul>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan includes various policies that could directly or indirectly affect human health in a positive manner. These include Policy HAR 6: Harston’s Local Green Spaces and Protected Village Amenity Areas, Policy HAR 7:</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>Improving open space provision in Harston, Policy HAR 21: Connecting our village through an improved network of rural routes, and Policy HAR 22: Delivering active travel infrastructure as part of new development.</p> <p>There are no significant effects resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan regarding human health that would warrant a strategic assessment through SEA.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fauna</li> </ul>	<p>There are no direct impacts resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan on fauna that are considered significant at the Plan level. The Plan seeks the protection and enhancement of biodiversity at key sites and does not propose any development that could lead to the direct deterioration of known or designated habitats.</p> <p>Possible effects on fauna (outside those associated with Habitats sites) cannot be considered strategically significant to the extent that Strategic Environmental Assessment would be warranted. Such issues are more appropriate to be considered on a case-by-case 'project level' basis at the development management stage and in accordance with relevant development management policies contained within the Local Planning Authority's adopted Local Plan.</p> <p>As identified within the HRA element of this Report, the Plan area is within 10km of the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC which is designated for the presence of protected species. Based on the assumption that the Appropriate Assessment's recommendations will be embedded into the Neighbourhood Plan, effects on fauna that would require the full application of the SEA Directive (a SEA Environmental Report) can also be screened out.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flora</li> </ul>	<p>Numerous and various areas of Priority Habitat exist within the Plan Area. The Plan seeks to protect and enhance existing biodiversity assets in the Neighbourhood Plan area.</p> <p>In addition to the Plan's policies that seek the protection and enhancement of flora, Local Plan policies apply. As a result,</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	no effects are expected to result from the Neighbourhood Plan regarding flora.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soil</li> </ul>	<p>Although representing Grade 3 ('good to moderate') and Grade 2 ('very good') soils, none of the non-developed areas of the Neighbourhood Plan are allocated for development.</p> <p>There are no identified significant negative implications surrounding soil quality as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water</li> </ul>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan allocates land for development purposes, however residential uses are not considered to give rise to ground water pollutants (e.g. give rise to hazardous substances such as pesticides, oils, petrol and diesel, solvents, arsenic, mercury or chromium VI; or non-hazardous substances such as ammonia or nitrates).</p> <p>The HRA element of this Screening Report identifies that the Plan area lies outside the IRZ for water sensitive Habitat sites and that no likely significant effects are expected of the Plan either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Air</li> </ul>	<p>There are no identified air quality issues within the Plan area. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for development purposes, and it is considered that it would not contribute to any exacerbation of conditions regarding air quality. The likelihood of significant effects is therefore screened out.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climatic factors</li> </ul>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan area contains areas of Flood Risk Zone 3 associated with the Rivers Cam. The Plan's single allocation is distanced from this area.</p> <p>It is therefore considered that SEA would not be required regarding matters of flood risk and any additional speculative development coming forward within any such flood risk zone would be more appropriately considered at the planning</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	application stage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Material assets</li> </ul>	<p>The Plan area contains land within a Minerals Safeguarding Area for sand and gravel and chalk within the County Council’s adopted Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Proposals Map) (2021).</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan does not propose any development within these areas that could be considered in conflict with the adopted Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021).</p> <p>Regarding other material assets, the content of the Neighbourhood Plan is not considered to have any significant effects due to the extent / size of the Plan area. Such issues are more appropriate to be considered on a case-by-case basis at the development management stage and in accordance with relevant development management policies contained within the LPA’s adopted Local Plan.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural heritage</li> </ul>	<p>The Plan area contains several Listed Buildings, as well as a Scheduled Monument.</p> <p>Although the Plan allocates land for development purposes it is not considered to be located in such an area that could affect these listings or their settings. The Plan includes Policy HAR 4: Conserving and enhancing heritage assets in Harston, and Policy HAR 5: Preserving the special character of Harston’s historic core and Button End in terms of heritage significance and rural character. These policies seek to conserve or enhance the significance of heritage assets. The Plan also adds buildings / structures that the Plan intends to ensure are locally-listed.</p> <p>Irrespective of the adequacy of the Plan’s policy in the conservation and enhancement of the Plan area’s heritage assets, policy regarding the protection and enhancement of the Historic Environment also exists at the LPA level which additionally applies in the Plan area. Any effects on heritage are, as a result, considered a development management issue in the context of the Plan and its content. There are not</p>

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>considered to be any elements of the Plan that would give rise to significant effects on the historic environment at the strategic level that would require the full application of the SEA Directive.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape</li> </ul>	<p>The Plan area is located in the National Landscape Character Area 87 – East Anglian Chalk and within the County Landscape Character Area – Chalkland. The Harston Landscape Character Appraisal 2024 indicates that the landscape is sensitive to development. Additionally, the non-built up areas of the Plan area are within the Green Belt.</p> <p>Policy HAR 8: Protecting and enhancing Harston’s landscape character sets out the requirements for development proposals within the Plan area’s three Landscape Character Areas including the preservation of locally important views.</p> <p>In light of the Plan’s policy stance regarding landscape features there are no significant strategic landscape effects identified within this Report that would warrant the requirement for the application of the SEA Directive and the formulation of a SEA Environmental Report.</p>
<p>The cumulative nature of the effects.</p>	<p>The Plan allocates only a single site for development purposes and therefore any negative cumulative effects can be ruled out.</p>
<p>The trans boundary nature of the effects.</p>	<p>The adopted Local Plan can be seen to support the protection and improvement of conditions relevant to those sustainability factors listed within the SEA Directive. The Neighbourhood Plan is not in conflict with these wider thematic policies.</p> <p>The HRA Screening element of this Report, which explores in-combination effects with other relevant plans and projects, does however identify in-combination effects regarding Habitats (European) sites. Embedded mitigation measures for projects (planning applications) will need to be considered in project level HRA/AA reports assessed by South</p>



Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	Cambridgeshire District Council and secured by a condition attached to any planning consent.
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	It is considered that there is no risk to human health or the environment as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan. This is in consideration of the above screening requirements related to sustainability themes. The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to give rise to any accidents that can be considered to have a significant risk to human health or the environment.
The magnitude spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The Neighbourhood Plan relates to the local level only. The magnitude and spatial extent of the Plan’s content is therefore not considered significant in a wider District context. No effects are highlighted within this SEA screening at either the local or wider geographic area.
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• special natural characteristics or cultural heritage</li> <li>• exceeded environmental quality standards</li> <li>• intensive land use</li> </ul>	<p>As highlighted above in the screening of the Neighbourhood Plan per sustainability theme, the Neighbourhood Plan has not been assessed as having negative effects associated with environmental themes. Nevertheless, the Neighbourhood Plan’s allocation of a site for development purposes in the first instance requires the full application of the SEA Directive, and the possibility of effects should be more thoroughly assessed through that process.</p>
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or	As highlighted above in the screening of the Plan per sustainability theme, the Neighbourhood Plan has not been assessed as having any significant effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or



Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
international protection status.	international protection status.

## 4. HRA Screening

### 4.1 Habitat Regulations Assessment of Development Plans

This section forms a plan level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) as required by Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

This section of this Report aims to:

- Identify the Habitats sites within 20km of Harston Neighbourhood Plan area.
- Summarise the reasons for designation and Conservation Objectives for each site to be considered in this assessment.
- Screen the Harston Neighbourhood Plan for its potential to impact upon a Habitats site.
- Assess the potential for in combination effects from other projects and plans in the area.
- Identify if there are any outstanding issues that need further investigation.

### 4.2 Court Judgements and their consideration in this Report

#### 4.2.1 CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17

As previously mentioned, in line with the Court judgement (CJEU People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Habitats site.

This HRA Screening Report does not therefore consider mitigation measures within the assessment of Likely Significant Effects resulting from the Harston Neighbourhood Plan.

#### 4.2.2 CJEU Holohan C- 461/17

This Court judgement imposes more detailed requirements on the competent authority at Appropriate Assessment stage:

1. [...] an 'Appropriate Assessment' must, on the one hand, catalogue the entirety of habitat types and species for which a site is protected, and, on the other, identify and examine both the implications of the proposed project for the species present on that site, and for which that site has not been listed, and the implications for habitat types and species to be found outside the boundaries of that site, provided that those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site.
2. [...] the competent authority is permitted to grant to a plan or project consent

which leaves the developer free to determine subsequently certain parameters relating to the construction phase, such as the location of the construction compound and haul routes, only if that authority is certain that the development consent granted establishes conditions that are strict enough to guarantee that those parameters will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

3. [...] where the competent authority rejects the findings in a scientific expert opinion recommending that additional information be obtained, the 'Appropriate Assessment' must include an explicit and detailed statement of reasons capable of dispelling all reasonable scientific doubt concerning the effects of the work envisaged on the site concerned.

Within this Stage 1 HRA Screening report, the assessment determines the requirement whether or not a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is needed for the Harston Neighbourhood Plan.

## 4.3 Habitats (European) Sites

Habitats sites is the term used in the (revised) NPPF (2021) to describe any site which would be included within the definition at Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) for the purpose of those regulations. These now form part of the UK national network of sites for nature protection. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of UK's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

All Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are designated for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are designated for other species, and for Habitats. Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) are also part of the National Network of sites. This is because all SPAs and SACs are comprised of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and all Ramsar sites in England are SSSIs. Together, SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites make up the Habitats sites in England. The following offers a description and explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites.

### 4.3.1 Explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites

#### Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

SPAs are areas which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds. Example: Ouse Washes is internationally important for wintering waterfowl. Legislation: Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

#### Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

SACs are areas designated to protect habitat types that are in danger of disappearance, have a small natural range, or are highly characteristic of the region; and to protect species that are endangered, vulnerable, rare, or endemic. Example: woodland habitat of Eversden and Wimpole Woods for the population of Barbastelle bats. Legislation: Conservation of

Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

### Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)

Ramsar Sites are designated to protect the biological and physical features of wetlands, especially for waterfowl habitats. For example, Wicken Fen is an outstanding remnant of East Anglian peat fens and supports one species of British Red Data Book plant fen violet *Viola persicifolia* which survives at only two other sites in Britain. Ramsar sites often overlap with SACs and SPAs and UK planning policy determines that they should be accorded the same importance when developments are proposed. Legislation: Ramsar Convention (1971) – Wetlands of International Importance and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

### 4.3.2 Habitats Sites to be considered

There are four Habitats sites which lie within 20 km of the Harston Neighbourhood Plan area. This is shown in Table 3 and in Appendix 2.

**Table 3: Habitats Sites within 20km to be considered in this assessment**

SPA
N/A
SAC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eversden and Wimpole Woods</li> <li>Fenland</li> <li>Devil’s Dyke</li> </ul>
Ramsar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wicken Fen</li> </ul>

Consideration was given to potential impact pathways, Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) for the underpinning SSSIs for the Habitats sites listed in Table 3 and Zones of Influence as confirmed on MAGIC website: [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk).

Harston parish lies within the 10km IRZ bat sustenance or wider conservation area for the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, designated for its population of Barbastelle bats (Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document, February 2022). All significant impacts or

severance to flightlines must be assessed within this area as these could, without mitigation, result in adverse effect on integrity of this Habitats site.

All four Habitats sites are vulnerable to recreational pressure. In simple terms, this means that harm to the integrity of such sites could arise because people are using such sites for recreational purposes (such as dog walking). Consequently, if development was to likely increase the quantity of recreational use, that development could potential result in harm. Only residential development has the potential to increase recreational pressure. The potential increase in pressure will depend on the location of the development and quantity of new homes (and hence people) it will deliver.

Natural England's guidance for assessing and mitigating the recreational pressure impacts of residential development to SSSIs within Cambridgeshire (ref 330067 dated 12 July 2019) needs to be considered in the HRA screening assessment for Harston Neighbourhood Plan. Cambridgeshire SSSI Recreation Pressure Impact Risk Zone (IRZs) are available to view via [www.magic.defra.gov.uk](http://www.magic.defra.gov.uk) and relevant SSSIs are listed in Annex B of the Natural England guidance.

The Harston Neighbourhood Plan area is outside the 5km IRZ for recreational pressure for both Devil's Dyke SAC and Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC. In relation to Wicken Fen Ramsar site and Fenland SAC, Natural England has delayed setting a recreational pressure IRZ for the site pending analysis of the findings of the Footprint Ecology Wicken Fen Visitor Survey commissioned by the National Trust. In the meantime, Natural England expect the findings and recommendations of this study to inform the assessment of recreational pressure impacts as part of the HRA process for relevant development proposals and plans. By way of a precautionary approach in assuming a 20km zone of influence for recreational impacts to Wicken Fen, the Harston Neighbourhood Plan area lies within this distance so this site needs to be screened in for assessment of likely significant effect from predicted recreational pressure.

Harston parish lies outside the 5km Impact Risk Zones for Wicken Fen SAC and Ramsar site relating to water quality and quantity impacts.

In their consultation response to the North East Cambridgeshire Area Action Plan (May 2020), Natural England welcomed consideration of in-combination air quality effects on Devils' Dyke SAC, in line with the requirements of the Wealden judgement and their advice was that consideration should also be given to any implications for air quality.

After consideration of potential impact pathways, on a precautionary principle, it is concluded that Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, Fenland SAC and Wicken Fen Ramsar site should be assessed for any likely significant effects resulting from the Harston Neighbourhood Plan. This Habitat site is therefore included within scope for this HRA screening report, and any mitigation considered necessary would need to be secured at application stage in line with policies in the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan as well any project level HRA Appropriate Assessment as the competent authority for planning decisions.

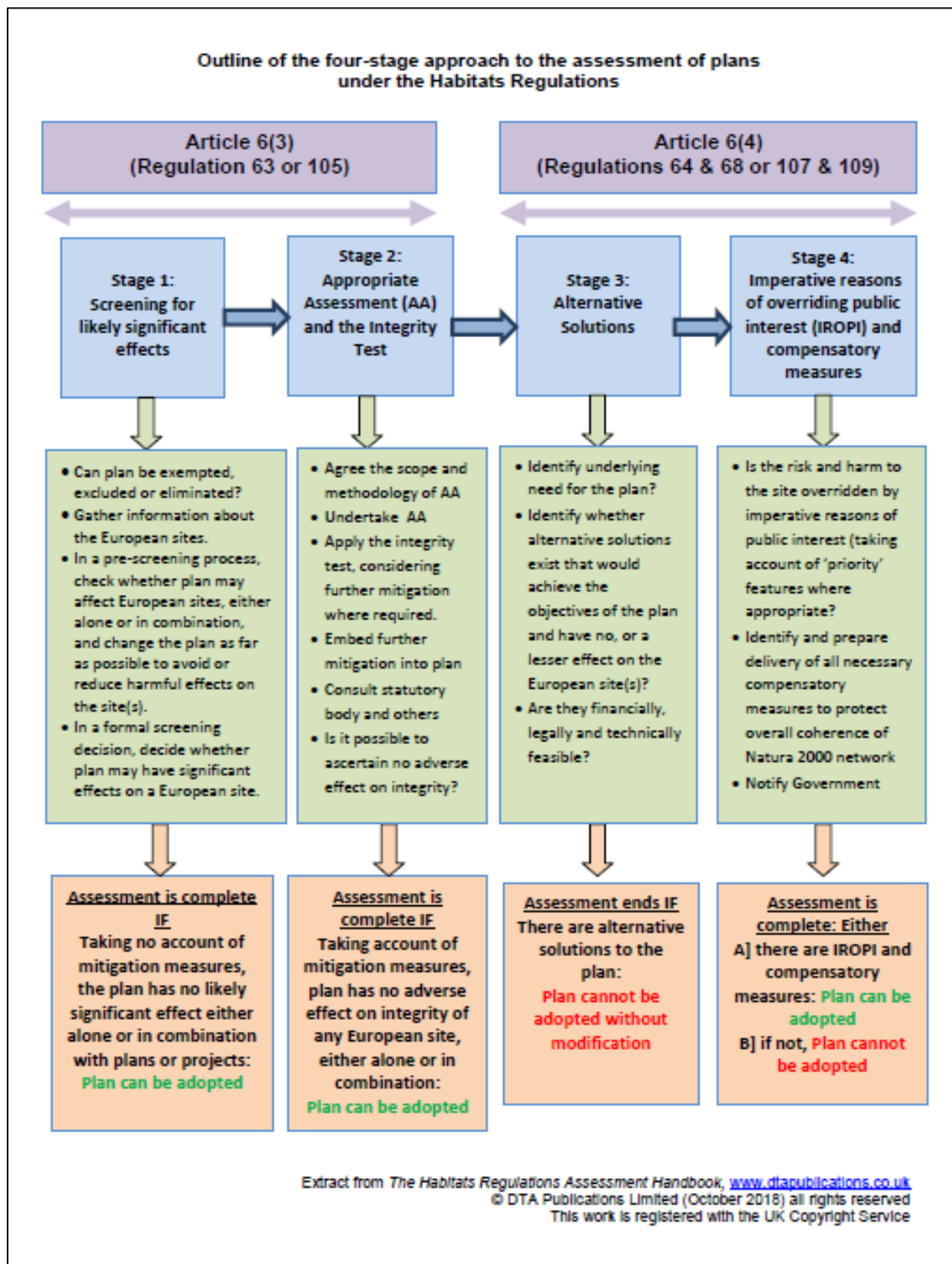
However, as the Harston Neighbourhood Plan allocates land for residential development, likely significant effects on protected species outside the designated site cannot be ruled out and there is also a predicted impact on three Habitats sites from recreational pressure in

combination with other plans and projects. It is therefore concluded that likely significant effect on Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, Fenland SAC and Wicken Fen Ramsar site cannot be ruled out resulting from the Harston Neighbourhood Plan.

## 4.4 Method and Approach

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 state that submitted Plans need to be accompanied by a statement explaining how the proposed Plan meets the 'basic conditions' set out in Schedule 4B of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. These basic conditions include a requirement to demonstrate how the Plan is compatible with EU obligations, which includes the need to undertake a HRA screening report; this is necessary to ensure the making of the neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a Habitats (European) site or a Habitats (European) offshore marine site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This document relates only to Stage 1 of the HRA process as set out in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Outline of the Four Stage Approach to the Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Regulations (taken from the DTA handbook).





### 4.4.1 Stage 1: HRA Screening

The screening stage identifies if any significant effects are likely because any policies or projects will have an impact on a Habitats site. Table 4 identifies the different categories assigned to each policy in the plan: Category A identifies those policies or projects that are considered to have No Negative Effect. Category B identifies those policies or projects that will have No Likely Significant Effect. Category C identifies those policies or projects that might have Likely Significant Effect upon a Habitats site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Section 4.5 considers each policy or projects and the results of the screening exercise recorded.

Each of the policies in the Harston Neighbourhood Plan has been screened to identify whether they would have any effect on a Habitats site and allocated to a category as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Screening categorisation**

<p><b>Category A: No negative effect</b></p> <p>Policies or projects that will not be likely to have any negative effect on a Habitats site.</p>
<p><b>Category B: No Likely Significant Effect</b></p> <p>Policies or projects that could have an effect but would not be likely to have a <i>significant</i> negative effect on a Habitats site alone or in combination. This conclusion could only be reached if the effects, even in combination and taking the precautionary principle into account, are considered trivial.</p>
<p><b>Category C: Likely Significant Effect</b></p> <p>Policies or projects which are predicted to have a likely significant effect on a Habitats site either alone or in combination with other plans and projects and require revision or further assessment (Appropriate Assessment).</p>

### 4.4.2 Potential impacts of Harston Neighbourhood Plan on Habitats Sites

There are a wide range of potential impacts on Habitats Sites that could arise from development plans. These can be summarised as -

- Land take by development;
- Impact on protected species found within but which travel outside the protected sites may be relevant where development could result in effects on qualifying interest species within the Habitats site, for example through the loss of feeding

grounds for an identified species.

- Increased disturbance, for example from recreational use resulting from new housing development and / or improved access due to transport infrastructure projects;
- Changes in water availability, or water quality as a result of development and increased demands for waste water treatment, and changes in groundwater regimes due to increased impermeable areas;
- Changes in atmospheric pollution levels due to increased traffic, waste management facilities etc. Pollution discharges from developments such as industrial developments, quarries and waste management facilities.

Each policy will be assessed against the criteria in the table below.

**Table 4: Assessment of potential impacts on Habitats Sites**

Nature of potential impact	How the Harston Neighbourhood Plan (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) could affect a Habitats site	Why these effects are not considered significant
Land take by development	The Harston Neighbourhood Plan area is outside the boundaries of the Habitats sites within scope of this HRA screening.	No likely significant effects are expected, as no development will be allocated on designated land. It is therefore, considered that impacts from land take by development can be screened out when considered from the Plan either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.
Impact on protected species outside the protected sites	<p>Part of the Harston Neighbourhood Plan area lies within the 10km IRZ for Eversden &amp; Wimpole Woods SAC.</p> <p>By following the guidance in the draft Eversden &amp; Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation protocol, the Council can ensure that the Special Area of Conservation bat populations thrive and that</p>	<p>The Harston Neighbourhood Plan allocates land for development which lies within the wider conservation area for this SAC and could result in significant impacts or severance of flightlines for Barbastelle bats.</p> <p>It is therefore considered that this impact pathway will not result in likely significant effects upon Eversden &amp; Wimpole Woods SAC from the</p>

Nature of potential impact	How the Harston Neighbourhood Plan (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) could affect a Habitats site	Why these effects are not considered significant
	<p>developments around the designated site avoid impacts on them, thereby preventing delays during their consideration at the planning stage.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, impacts on protected species outside the protected sites from the Neighbourhood Plan (either alone or in combination with other plans and projects) on the Habitats sites cannot be screened out and this impact pathway needs further assessment.</p>
<p>Recreational pressure and disturbance</p>	<p>The Harston Neighbourhood Plan area lies within the 10km impact risk zone (IRZ) for recreational disturbance relating to Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC and within the 20km IRZ relating to Wicken Fen Ramsar site and Fenland SAC which are all within the scope of this assessment.</p>	<p>As the Harston Neighbourhood Plan allocates land for development, impacts from recreation arising from the NP cannot be screened out when considered from the Plan in combination with other plans and projects and this impact pathway needs further assessment.</p>
<p>Water quantity and quality</p>	<p>The Harston Neighbourhood Plan area lies outside the impact risk zones for water sensitive Habitats sites and there are none within the scope of this assessment.</p>	<p>No likely significant effects are expected so changes in water quantity and quality have been screened out when considered from the Plan either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.</p>
<p>Changes in pollution levels</p>	<p>The Harston Neighbourhood Plan area lies outside the impact risk zones for pollution levels for sensitive Habitats sites and there are none within the scope of this assessment.</p>	<p>No likely significant effects are expected, as no development will be allocated on land within 200 metres of Habitats sites within scope. Changes in air pollution have been screened out when considered from the Plan either alone or in</p>

Nature of potential impact	How the Harston Neighbourhood Plan (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) could affect a Habitats site	Why these effects are not considered significant
		combination with other plans and projects.

## 4.5 Results from HRA Screening of Neighbourhood Plan Policies

Each of the policies in the Harston Neighbourhood Plan was screened in turn to identify whether they would have any impact on a Habitats site and the result of this exercise is recorded in Table 5.

**Table 5: Assessment of potential impacts from the Plan policies**

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
Policy HAR 1: New development and design	<p>1. A design-led approach should be taken for all development proposals. In doing so, development proposals should recognise and reinforce Harston’s distinctive character, as described in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Harston Design Guidance and Codes (HDG&amp;C 2023) and</li> <li>• the Harston Landscape Character Appraisal 2024 (HLCA 2024).</li> </ul> <p>2. Development proposals should be informed by the design guidance and codes found in the HDG&amp;C 2023 as well as the village character appraisals found within the HLCA 2024, and accord with the principles</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>set out in this policy.</p> <p>3. Descriptions as to how a development scheme complies with this policy should be provided in the Design and Access statement or Planning Statement as applicable. Submission of a completed design checklist (Appendix 1) is encouraged.</p> <p>Design Principles - Local architecture:</p> <p>Building heights: The height of buildings should respond appropriately to the context provided by surrounding buildings including in terms of height (predominantly 2 storeys or less), street widths, sense of enclosure in the street, topography and vegetation. See Design Code LA01.1 Building height, scale and roofscape in the HDG&amp;C 2023.</p> <p>Roof design: new roof types and pitch should reflect existing characteristics within the site surroundings and the scale of roofs should be in proportion to the dimensions of the building. As above, see Design Code LA01.1.</p> <p>Building materials and colour palette: Choice of buildings materials should reflect those found in the site surroundings or character area (see Map 4). Depending on the predominant materials in the area where a proposal is located, suitable</p>		

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>materials could be:</p> <p>a) Wall materials: Cambridge buff brick, red brick, render, pebbledash render, weatherboarding, wooden frame.</p> <p>b) Painted wood colours: white, olive green, black or grey.</p> <p>c) Roof materials: dark stone tiles, stone tiles, reconstituted stone tiles, clay roof tiles in muted brown-red, concrete tiles, thatched roof.</p> <p>Building modifications, extensions and plot infills: development proposals will be expected to demonstrate their proposal is appropriate taking into account Design Code LA01.4 Building Modifications, Extensions and Plot Infills.</p> <p>Design Principles – A Rural Village</p> <p>Plot and Building Layout:</p> <p>d) plot and building layout should reinforce the small scale, historic character that provides the village feel of Harston and be in-keeping with the predominant development pattern found in the character area in which a proposal is located (either linear or informal)</p> <p>e) building lines should be consistent, with subtle variations for visual interest. Infill development will be expected to maintain a building</p>		

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>line consistent with the prevailing building line in the street.</p> <p>f) the density of proposals should be appropriate to the site context and immediate surroundings, also ensuring adequate space for landscaping, gardens and in-curtilage parking.</p> <p>Boundary Treatment: new boundary treatment should align with the prevailing character of the street and character area within which a development proposal is located. This means boundary treatments should primarily consist of hedgerows. See Design Guidance and Code LD03.2 Boundary Treatment.</p> <p>4. All development proposals are expected to ensure a good standard of amenity for people. This means:</p> <p>a) avoiding overlooking or loss of private residential amenity space, loss of daylight, or overshadowing</p> <p>b) ensuring existing occupants of neighbouring properties and future occupiers of the proposals are not exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution that may arise from the development. This can include noise, smoke, fumes, dust and lighting during construction and occupation. It can also include unacceptable levels of general disturbance arising from the development through activities such</p>		

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	as traffic movements during construction and occupation.		
Policy HAR 2: Protecting and enhancing important landscape features within and around the built-up environment	<p>1. To be supported, development proposals should recognise, maintain and where possible enhance the following landscape features in Harston.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The four Important Countryside Frontages - see Map 2 and Appendix 2</li> <li>- Existing hedgerows and trees, especially where these are visually prominent from public view points (see Map 7)</li> <li>- Existing hedgerows, trees or heavy shrubbery where they serve to define a property boundary or border the busy A10 and thereby helping to buffer village properties and soften the village streetscape.</li> <li>- Existing grass verges where they contribute positively to the pedestrian environment</li> <li>- Boundary ditches</li> <li>- Existing tall mature trees</li> <li>- Attractive vegetated front gardens</li> <li>- The visually important areas of open space shown on Map 6.</li> </ul> <p>2. Regardless of location all proposals should consider the requirement for and design of</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations



Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>landscaping schemes at the outset of a development, ensuring planting areas and species achieve good outcomes. The following considerations apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the important role landscaping can have in mitigating the visual and noise impacts of new development</li> <li>- opportunities for improving biodiversity (see also Policy HAR 9)</li> </ul>		
<p>Policy HAR 3: Protecting and enhancing landscape character and setting in and around Harston village.</p>	<p>1. All development proposals coming forward either in Harston village or within its settlement fringes (see Map 9 for settlement fringe areas) shall be sensitive to Harston’s distinctive landscape and settlement character, as described in detail in the Harston Landscape Character Appraisal 2024, (HLCA 2024)</p> <p>This means:</p> <p>Preserving and enhancing Harston’s locally important village views</p> <p>2. Development proposals will be expected to respect and not adversely impact on Harston’s locally important views within and from the settlement. The locally valued views for the purpose of this policy are shown on Map 7, and described in detail in Appendix 4.</p> <p>3. Where a development proposal falls within one of the views, the</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>proposal will be expected to take opportunities to enhance the landscape features found within the view (described in Appendix 4).</p> <p>Preserving and enhancing Harston’s village gateways</p> <p>4. Where a development proposal is likely to impact on one of Harston’s village gateways (see Map 8), summarised in the supporting text to this policy and described in more detail in Harston’s Landscape Character Appraisal 2024, proposals will only be supported if the sense of arrival and place is protected and, where applicable, opportunities are taken to enhance this.</p> <p>Settlement fringes</p> <p>5. Where development is proposed in any of the settlement fringe areas (as defined on Map 9), the development should respond appropriate to existing character and incorporate measures that mitigate and manage landscape and visual impacts appropriately. In this regard, proposals should be guided by the findings of the Settlement Fringe Sensitivity Assessment that is summarised in the supporting text to this policy and set out in more detail in (Section) in the HLCA 2024. Where opportunities arise, proposals will be expected to incorporate landscape enhancement measures.</p>		

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
<p>Policy HAR 4: Conserving and enhancing heritage assets in Harston</p>	<p>1. The buildings and structures listed in this policy and described in more detail in Appendix 3 to this plan, have been identified as non-designated heritage assets.</p> <p>2. Development proposals should seek to conserve or enhance the significance of the heritage assets, listed in this policy as well as any additional non-designated heritage assets that are in the plan area and included in the most up to date Cambridgeshire County Council Local List.</p> <p>3. When determining impact on a heritage asset (both designated and non-designated) the impact on the setting to a heritage asset as well as the asset itself will need to be assessed.</p> <p>4. Where proposals have an effect on a non-designated heritage asset or its setting, a balanced judgement will be applied having regard to the scale of harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. To ensure this can happen, the applicant will be required to prepare a statement (proportionate to the asset’s importance and so that the potential impact of the proposal can be understood) that describes the significance of the asset affected, including any contribution made by its setting.</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	Non-designated heritage assets: <LIST>		
Policy HAR 5: Reflecting the special character of Harston’s historic core and Button End in terms of heritage significance and landscape character	Harston’s historic core 1. In addition to conserving or enhancing designated heritage assets in line with Local Plan and national policy and guidance, development proposals coming forward in Harston’s historic core (see Maps 4 and 5) should: a) conserve or enhance its historical open spaces; the Memorial Green and The Green. b) conserve or enhance the non-designated heritage assets, and their setting, ensuring compliance with Policy HAR 4 c) conserve or enhance the characterful rural setting provided to the street scene (and its many heritage assets) by the following landscape features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the hedgerows and trees</li> <li>• the visually important areas of open land along Church Road/Royston Road and the High Street, opposite Memorial Green, also designated as Important Countryside Frontages in the 2018 Local Plan.</li> </ul> d) ensure new boundary treatment complement the existing distinctive	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>and characterful boundaries provided by hedgerows and low walls.</p> <p>Button End</p> <p>2. Proposals that are otherwise compatible with national and Local Plan policy with regards to appropriate uses in the Green Belt will, in principle, be supported where:</p> <p>a) The proposal results in a net reduction of large vans and lorries (commercial vans and HGVs) using the lane</p> <p>b) The proposal responds sensitively to the rural context of the lane. This means development should be of a modest scale and its visual presence from the lane and surrounding footpath should be softened through biodiversity friendly and climate resilient landscaping scheme.</p>		
<p>HAR 6: Harston Local Green Spaces</p>	<p>Local Green Spaces:</p> <p>1. The following areas of land, shown on Map 10 are designated as Local Green Spaces (in addition to the Harston recreation ground designated as LGS as part of the 2018 Local Plan)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGS 1: The Green, Royston Road</li> <li>• LGS 2: War Memorial Green</li> </ul>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGS 3: Queens Close Green</li> </ul> <p>2. Development on these sites will not be acceptable, unless consistent with national policy for Green Belts</p>		
<p>Policy HAR 7: Improving open space provision in Harston</p>	<p>1. Development proposals will be expected to contribute toward additional open space provision in terms of both quantity and quality in line with the Local Plan requirements.</p> <p>2. Where new open space provision or where contributions towards open space provision is required, consideration should be given to the community-wide aspiration to increase parishioners’ access to natural green spaces. As local initiatives such as the Harston gravel pits project, progress, contributions will be sought to assist with their delivery.</p> <p>Harston gravel pits</p> <p>3. Land shown on Map 11, is safeguarded for future informal open space provision to serve local community needs.</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>
<p>Policy HAR 8: Harston’s parish wide landscape character</p>	<p>1. Development proposals that come forward in Harston’s wider landscape must be sensitive to its distinctive character as described in the Harston Landscape Character Appraisal 2024</p> <p>2. For each of Harston’s landscape</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>character areas this means:</p> <p>Harston Chalklands Landscape Character Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retaining the open nature of the southwest to northeast aligned chalk ridge, with two noticeable hill tops/high points (St. Margaret’s Mount and Rowley’s Hill)</li> </ul> <p>River Rhee Landscape Character Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retaining or enhancing the wooded banks of River Rhee/River Cam, alongside the adjoining meadows</li> <li>• Conserving and enhancing the Gravel Pits woodland area</li> <li>• Conserving and enhancing the tranquillity, and distinctive sense of rural isolation Harston Farmlands</li> <li>• Conserving and enhancing the tranquillity, and distinctive sense of rural isolation</li> <li>• Conserving and enhancing the Rookery</li> </ul> <p>3. Preserving and enhancing Harston’s locally important wider landscape views</p> <p>Development proposals will be expected to respect and not adversely impact on Harston’s wider landscape views as shown on Map</p>		

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>7, and described in detail in Appendix 4.</p> <p>4. Where a development proposal falls within one of the views, the proposal will be expected to take opportunities to enhance the landscape features found within the view (described in Appendix 5)</p>		
<p>HAR 9: Protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Harston parish.</p>	<p>1. Development proposals that either directly or indirectly impact a site of biodiversity value in the neighbourhood plan area (as shown on Maps 13 and 14) must take account of their biodiversity value by applying the mitigation hierarchy set out in Clauses 2 and 3 below. Depending on the scale of a proposal and the sensitivity of a site, a long-term management plan may be required as part of a proposal.</p> <p>2. For all development proposals, the hierarchy of mitigation should be embedded into the design of the development with the following steps implemented in order:</p> <p>a) firstly, avoid impacts. This means retaining habitats of value for enhancement and management and retaining species in situ.</p> <p>b) secondly, mitigate impacts where these have been found to be unavoidable, through replacement of lost protected and priority habitats and accommodating displaced</p>	<p>No, Category B</p>	<p>Recommendation to amend policy text to require mitigation for significant impacts on hedgerows or any severance of bat flightlines within 10km IRZ of Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC.</p> <p>Additional text:</p> <p>‘Avoid significant impact on hedgerows or any severance of bat flight lines to protect foraging and commuting habitat for Barbastelle bats which could belong to the population protected by Eversden &amp; Wimpole Woods</p>



Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>species within the site boundary.</p> <p>c) thirdly, compensate if mitigation measures are insufficient.</p> <p>3. If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission will be refused.</p> <p>4. Proposals will be considered more favourably where they seek opportunities to create or strengthen links between existing and/or new habitats through the development site. Here, measures are sought which result in strengthening or enhancing the following nature networks in the plan area:</p> <p>a) River Cam corridor, including adjacent woodland and water meadows</p> <p>b) Hoffer Brook in southern part of the parish. See Map 14</p> <p>c) X in northern part of the parish. See Map 14</p> <p>5. In all locations, development proposals will be required to demonstrate measurable net gain for biodiversity, and this should be achieved on site wherever possible and in accordance with BS8683:2021-Process for designing and implementing Biodiversity Net</p>		SAC.'

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>Gain (BNG).</p> <p>6. Appropriate measures for delivering BNG in the plan area should focus on:</p> <p>a) retaining and enhancing the network of species and habitats currently present in the plan area, as described in the supporting text to this policy</p> <p>b) creating, strengthening or restoring links between existing and/or new natural habitats through the development site (see point 4 above)</p> <p>c) planting additional trees and hedgerows (prioritising species that will enhance local biodiversity, such as native planting and/or species capable of adapting to the changing climate).</p>		
<p>Policy HAR 10: Delivering sustainable design and construction in Harston</p>	<p>1. All development proposals will be expected to embed the principles of climate change mitigation and adaptation in line with national and Local Plan policy. This means adopting design and construction approaches that deliver low or zero carbon homes and buildings that demonstrate sustainable use of resources and high energy efficiency levels, for example through construction to the Passivhaus standard or through applying the Net Zero Carbon</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>Homes toolkit.</p> <p>2. All development proposals must be accompanied by a Sustainability Statement that outlines how a scheme:</p> <p>a) Applies the energy hierarchy by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• firstly, considering how the site layout and building orientation can optimise beneficial solar gain and reduce energy demands through site layout and building orientation</li> <li>• secondly, maximising energy efficiency through design (insulation, airtightness and mechanical heat recovery)</li> <li>• thirdly, where a heat source is required, ensuring that this is a low carbon or net zero carbon source</li> <li>• finally, once energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions have been minimised through the above measures, utilising opportunities to incorporate renewable energy systems.</li> </ul> <p>b) Adopts a whole building approach and ‘fabric first’ approach to optimise energy efficiency in the case of refurbishment projects which require planning permission.</p> <p>c) Minimises water usage in line with Local Plan requirements. Due to the plan area lying in an area of water stress high water efficiency</p>		

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>requirements will be expected. and relying on underground aquifers, development proposals that have a high water-usage demand (due to size or nature of the scheme) or are inefficient in terms of water usage will not be supported.</p> <p>d) How the choice of building materials is appropriate. In this respect, restoration and renovation of existing buildings is preferred over new build. Where new build is involved, materials should be prioritised which are reused, reclaimed or natural from the local area or from sustainable sources and that are durable.</p> <p>e) The adaptability of the proposed buildings and associated spaces as climate continues to change e.g., using water more efficiently, reducing overheating and controlling high levels of rainwater runoff.</p>		
<p>Policy HAR 11: Supporting renewable energy and low carbon energy infrastructure in Harston Parish</p>	<p>1. Development proposals involving the creation of standalone renewable energy infrastructure or other infrastructure that will facilitate low carbon living in Harston community will be supported subject to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• proposals preserving or enhancing landscape character in line with other policies in this plan.</li> <li>• proposals being informed by meaningful community engagement</li> </ul>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>undertaken at the pre-application stage or earlier, evidenced via a community engagement statement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>proposals appropriately addressing community concerns</li> </ul> <p>2. Community-led proposals are particularly encouraged.</p>		
<p>Policy HAR 12: Managing flood risk in Harston parish</p>	<p>1. Development proposals on sites that contain an artesian well or which otherwise have the potential to impact on the drainage infrastructure supporting an artesian well should ensure drainage infrastructure associated with the artesian well remains intact or is improved as a result of the development.</p> <p>2. Proposals that result in an increased risk of surface or groundwater flooding will not be supported.</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>
<p>Policy HAR 13: Supporting rural exceptions housing to meet Harston’s affordable housing needs</p>	<p>1. Proposals for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes on rural exceptions sites adjoining the village development framework will be supported provided that:</p> <p>a) the number, size, design, mix and tenure of affordable homes are confined to, and appropriate to, meeting identified needs in the Harston plan area</p> <p>b) the housing remains affordable in</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>perpetuity</p> <p>c) the affordable housing is offered on a preferential basis to people with a strong local connection to the parish, defined in the supporting text to this policy</p> <p>d) all other criteria in South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Policy H/11-1 are met (or its equivalent replacement) and</p> <p>e) the proposed development contributes positively to the existing character of the villages and their setting in terms of design, layout, materials, landscaping and biodiversity.</p>		
<p>Policy HAR 14: Housing mix, including First Homes in Harston</p>	<p>1. Where the scale permits, residential development proposals must include a housing mix in terms of size and tenure that reflects the existing and future needs in Harston parish. The following provides a starting point for the determination of an appropriate housing mix</p> <p>a) In terms of size (market and affordable):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 60% of new dwellings to be 3-bedroom units and 36% to be 2 bedroom units</li> </ul> <p>b) Where affordable homes are being provided, they should be provided as affordable in perpetuity</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>and meet the following tenure mix:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75% social/affordable rent</li> <li>• 25% affordable home ownership comprising</li> <li>• 25% First Homes, to be delivered at a 50% discount</li> </ul> <p>2. Proposals providing an alternative mix to that set out above must be supported by up to date evidence of existing and future needs in the plan area.</p>		
<p>Policy HAR 15: Managing the movement of people and vehicles arising from new development</p>	<p>1. Development will not be permitted where pedestrian, cycle or vehicle movements arising from the development, including staff, visitors and deliveries, are likely to have a significant impact on highway safety.</p> <p>2. Where highway safety concerns are demonstrated, consideration will be given to imposing conditions on the operation of the development that mitigate the impact on highway safety such as controlling hours of operation or delivery times.</p> <p>3. Where existing road safety issues are already established, development proposals will be expected to take available opportunities to address or alleviate these as part of their proposal, wherever practicable to do so. This includes measures designed to reduce the level of conflict between</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	road users along the A10 e.g. increasing visibility at the exit points of driveways		
Policy HAR 16: Recognising and mitigating the impacts of development on traffic movements in Church Street	<p>1. Any development proposal in the plan area likely to lead to additional traffic movements along Church Street will be assessed in terms of their likely impact on road safety and residential amenity along Church Street. To be supported, development proposals must either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mitigate their impact through on-site measures or contribute towards the implementation of Church Street traffic and street scene intervention measures (see supporting text and Appendix 6), or</li> <li>• demonstrate there will be no adverse impacts on road safety for all users along Church Street as a result of the proposed scheme and that mitigation measures are therefore not necessary as a result of the proposed development.</li> </ul> <p>2. Additionally, development proposals in the plan area that will lead to additional movement of HGV or other wide vehicles (large vans) along Church Street will not be supported, unless it can be demonstrated that mitigation measures are in place that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure that traffic can flow along Church Street without drivers of any vehicle being forced to drive on the</li> </ul>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations



Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>pavement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the historic buildings, including their setting, are not at risk from being damaged by vehicles including through vibrations.</li> </ul>		
<p>Policy HAR 17: Traffic from employment uses at Button End</p>	<p>1. Proposals for new employment uses at Button End Industrial Estate will be supported where they will not lead to additional HGV movements or other wide vehicles (including large vans) along Button End and Church Street, as demonstrated through a transport assessment. Where proposed new development is projected to trigger additional movements of HGVs or other wide vehicles (including large vans), the proposal will only be supported if it is demonstrated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there will be no resulting adverse impacts on road safety for any road users in particularly non-motorised users, or where applicable these can be adequately addressed through mitigation measures</li> <li>traffic can flow along Button End without drivers having to drive onto the grass verges.</li> </ul> <p>2. Where necessary to address traffic impacts, conditions may be imposed that restrict the size and frequency of vehicle movements in and out of the site.</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
<p>Policy HAR 18: Parking provision in new development</p>	<p>1. On the following streets, all parking provision (including for visitors, customers, business vehicles including deliveries) must be provided for within the curtilage of a property or otherwise off the highway, unless the development proposal in question is not likely to have any adverse impact on residential amenity, lead to damage to road verges or compromise road safety through the creation of additional on-street parking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The High Street</li> <li>- Church Street</li> <li>- Button End</li> </ul> <p>2. The indicative car parking standards and the minimum cycle parking standards set out in the Local Plan Policy T1/3 and Figure 11 in the Local Plan, (and any update to this) provide the starting point for establishing parking requirements for new development proposals.</p> <p>3. On other streets, curtilage parking must be provided wherever possible. However, where a development scheme is likely to generate some on-street parking, including taking account of visitor parking and delivery drivers, this must be planned for as part of the development proposal. This means ensuring the street design has the</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>capacity to absorb additional on-street parking demand and this can be done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- without compromising the safety of all road users, in particular pedestrians, cyclists and those using mobility scooters</li> <li>- without impeding the flow of pedestrians and cyclists</li> </ul> <p>4. All parking design should be combined with landscaping to avoid parked vehicles dominating the street scene and to assist with surface water management</p>		
<p>Policy HAR 19: The 'Footpath' safeguarded land for future off-street parking</p>	<p>The land shown on Map 19 is safeguarded for the following future uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Southern part of the site as an off-road public car park with landscaping to mitigate impact on the openness of the Green Belt to the north</li> <li>• Remainder of the site to be set aside for biodiversity enhancements to benefit local wildlife.</li> </ul>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>
<p>Policy HAR 20: Telephone exchange site</p>	<p>The land shown on Map 20 is safeguarded for future off street public car parking area, to serve the needs of the High Street and to be accessed off the High Street, via the existing village hall car park.</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
<p>Policy HAR 21: Protecting and enhancing our rural routes and strengthening connections within the village through an improved network of rural routes</p>	<p>Maintaining and enhancing the existing rural footpath network.</p> <p>1. The existing network of rural routes, comprising both Public Rights of Way and the network of permissive routes, shown on Maps 21 and 22, is valued as providing important outdoor recreational opportunities and as providing active travel links into neighbouring settlements of Barrington, Haslingfield, Hauxton and Newton. The network will be protected or enhanced. Where opportunities arise to create new links into the existing network, proposals will be expected to do so.</p> <p>2. Where a proposal comes forward that will be visible from a public right of way, consideration should be given to the design and layout so that visual amenity from the public right of way is maintained and, where possible, enhanced. Development proposals that adversely impact the amenity value of the PROW network either through interruption to the network or through proposals which impact adversely on the enjoyment of the network (e.g. impacting on the visual amenity, wildlife value or open setting of a PROW) will not normally be supported.</p> <p>Aspirations for improving connections between different parts of the village through improvements</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>to the rural routes network.</p> <p>3. Development proposals that will help achieve the parish-wide aspirations described below and shown on Map 22, will be supported.</p> <p>i. The provision of a segregated path alongside Newton Road to provide a safe and suitable connection for both pedestrians and cyclists into Newton.</p> <p>ii. The provision of a new rural route at Newton Road, to the south-west towards Rowleys Hill and to connect into an existing permissive route.</p> <p>iii. The provision of a segregated path alongside London Road from the edge of the village to the Shelford Road junction</p> <p>iv. Improvements to the existing path from the Shelford Road junction to the parish boundary at Hill Farm (and ideally beyond in Newton parish)</p> <p>v. The provision of a safe and attractive rural route that connects residential areas south of London Road to the community orchard, located adjacent to the site of the pavilion. Such a route will also intersect existing public right of way 116/4, thereby providing an additional choice of route. See 4 and 5 on Map 22.</p> <p>vi. Improvements along Button End</p>		

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>(e.g. road surfacing, speed limit) so that it is safer and more suitable for cyclists and equestrians and upgrading of the footpath beyond.</p> <p>vii. Provision of a Cam trail route via the edge of the proposed Gravel Pits nature reserve and connecting to existing permissive path from Burnt Mill Bridge.</p> <p>viii. A new short route along the eastern side of Button End, to link up with the existing permissive</p> <p>Proposals that prejudice these improvements from coming forward will not be supported.</p>		
<p>Policy HAR 22: Delivering active travel infrastructure as part of new development</p>	<p>1. All new development proposals (where they generate movement of residents, workers, shoppers etc) should take every available opportunity, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide improved or new safe, convenient and high-quality internal footpaths;</li> <li>• provide direct footpath connections into neighbouring areas;</li> <li>• improve connectivity across the wider neighbourhood (avoiding or minimising routes along the busy A10) through the provision of new footpath links.</li> <li>• deliver improvements to the safety and attractiveness (e.g. through</li> </ul>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>improved landscaping) of the off-road alleyways and the A10 cycleway.</p> <p>2. Development proposals should take into account the needs of cyclists and those dependent on mobility scooters. This means providing appropriate infrastructure such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• secure and sheltered storage infrastructure</li> <li>• segregated cycle paths where necessary</li> <li>• suitable pavements with dropped kerbs at crossing points</li> <li>• ensuring adequate visibility from private driveways onto the highway</li> </ul> <p>3. Edge of settlement proposals should incorporate pedestrian permeability out into the countryside, through linking in with the existing Public Rights of Way network.</p> <p>4. Development proposals that result in decreased pedestrian connectivity between residential areas and shops and services (including the school) or which fail to utilise opportunities to provide new connections will not be supported.</p>		
Policy HAR 23: Harston	1. Development proposals that provide an improved and extended	No, Category B	Recommendation to amend policy

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
Community Pavilion	<p>building on the site of the community pavilion, located off ‘The Limes’ for the purpose of delivering enhanced community facilities (including improved sports and community meeting space provision) will be supported.</p> <p>2. The following priorities apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of a comprehensive approach to improving community facilities across the site and ensuring overall provision complements provision at the village hall</li> <li>• Proposed new recreation or sports facility should benefit local residents (including teenagers and young adults in the parish) and promote inclusive activities for local people and the wider community.</li> <li>• The provision of an accessible and user-friendly buildings for all including those with limited mobility.</li> <li>• The quality of the open recreation space provision to be retained or enhanced.</li> <li>• Improving the provision of over-flow parking (through better access and signage</li> </ul>		<p>text to require mitigation for significant impacts on hedgerows or any severance of bat flightlines within 10km IRZ of Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC.</p> <p>Additional text:</p> <p>‘Avoid significant impact on hedgerows or any severance of bat flight lines to protect foraging and commuting habitat for Barbastelle bats which could belong to the population protected by Eversden &amp; Wimpole Woods SAC.’</p>
Policy HAR 24: Harston and Newton Community	1. Proposals which will help sustain and enhance pre-school or primary school infrastructure in the parish (for example through housing which	No, Category A	No specific recommendations



Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
Primary School	<p>is targeted at younger families) will be considered favourably subject to meeting other policy criteria in this plan.</p> <p>2. Development proposals in the village that help facilitate the continued success of the school (including its function as a community activity space) will be supported where they are compatible with other policies in this plan.</p>		
Policy HAR 25: Harston’s Community Infrastructure Priorities	<p>1. Provision of new and improved infrastructure in the parish should be informed by the following overriding infrastructure priorities identified by the community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul> <p>2. All development proposals in the plan area should contribute towards infrastructure priorities where it is necessary to make the development acceptable and where directly, fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
Policy HAR 26: Supporting shops and services along Harston’s High Street	<p>1. Development proposals along Harston’s High Street, and within the village development framework, that diversify and enhance the range of shops and services will be supported provided that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they will not exacerbate existing traffic congestion along the High</li> </ul>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>Street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adequate parking and servicing arrangements are in place or will be made available as part of the proposal</li> <li>proposals will not generate unacceptable noises, fumes, smells or other disturbance to properties in the vicinity</li> <li>road safety considerations are fully considered and appropriately mitigated in accordance with Policy HAR 15 'Managing the movement of people and vehicles arising from new development' and Policy HAR 18 'Parking provision in new development'.</li> </ul>		
<p>Policy HAR 27: Station Road (SIG Roofing site)</p>	<p>Residential development that helps to meet Harston specific community housing needs as identified in Chapter 10 of this plan and as part of Policy HAR 24 (Harston and Newton Community Primary School) will in principle be supported on land at Station Road (see Map 23) subject to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposal meeting the exceptional circumstances set out for Green Belt land in the NPPF 2023.</li> <li>Compliance with other policies in this plan</li> </ul>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
<p>Policy HAR 28: 131 High Street</p>	<p>1. The land shown on Map 24 is allocated for the development of approximately 6 small 1 – 3 bedroom dwellings.</p> <p>2. The following criteria apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scheme must demonstrate safe highway access, that meets the satisfaction of the local Highway Authority. This may include ...</li> </ul>	<p>Yes, Category C</p>	<p>Mitigation measures for recreational pressure on SSSIs within Cambridgeshire will be needed in line with Natural England guidance. Green infrastructure / SANGS should be designed to absorb significant proportions of the day to day recreational needs of new residents, such as walking, dog-walking, jogging / exercise, children’s play facilities, and other informal recreation including enjoyment of the countryside. It should also aim to provide a semi-natural character, with significant proportion of semi-natural grassland, woodland, scrub and wetland habitat. Dependent upon a range of factors,</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the Habitats Sites?	Recommendations
			including the scale of development, consideration could be given to the provision of other amenities such as café / refreshment and toilet facilities.

#### 4.5.1 Recommendations and HRA Screening Conclusion

There are three Habitats sites within scope of this HRA screening: Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, Fenland SAC and Wicken Fen Ramsar site. This are two potential impact pathways – impacts on protected species outside the protected sites e.g. Barbastelle bats, and predicted recreational pressure from residential development.

As the Harston Neighbourhood Plan allocate land for residential development, there are potential effects from the Plan alone and also predicted effects to consider in combination with other plans and projects. There is therefore a need to identify any relevant plans or projects likely to result in a significant effect on Habitats sites.

Both Policy HAR9 (Protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Harston parish) and Policy HAR23 (Harston Community Pavilion) require a policy text amendment to ensure that impacts upon Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC are considered at application stage for any future development within the Neighbourhood Plan area. As a result, there is no need for this Policy to be assessed at Stage 2 (Appropriate Assessment).

There is a single policy (HAR28) in the Harston Neighbourhood Plan which has been assigned to ‘Category C’ in relation to Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC when the Plan is considered alone. As a result, there is a need for this Policy to be assessed at Stage 2 (Appropriate Assessment) to consider mitigation to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the Habitats sites within scope from recreational pressure.

## 5. Appropriate Assessment and Considering the Integrity Test

### 5.1 Introduction to Appropriate Assessment

The Harston Neighbourhood Plan is, without mitigation, predicted to result in Likely Significant Effect from the Plan alone. This includes one potential impact pathway: impacts on protected species outside protected sites from the Plan alone and a further impact pathway of recreational pressure from the Plan in combination with other plans and projects.

The second stage of HRA is to undertake an 'Appropriate Assessment' of the implications of the Plan (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and establish whether there may be an Adverse Effect on Integrity (AEOI) of any Habitats sites in view of their Conservation Objectives. The process undertaken for the Appropriate Assessment is set out in this Chapter.

The Appropriate Assessment should be undertaken by the competent authority and should assess all aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan which can by themselves, or in combination with other plans and projects, affect the sites' Conservation Objectives. The assessment must consider the implications for each qualifying feature of each potentially affected Habitats site. Key vulnerabilities are set out in Appendix III and the Site Improvement Plans (SIPs) were used to obtain this information. Site Improvement Plans have been developed for each Habitats site in England as part of the 'Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 sites (IPENS)'. The Site Improvement Plans provide a high-level overview of the issues (both current and predicted) affecting the condition of the designation features of the site(s) and outlines the priority measures required to improve the condition of the features.

In order to identify potential in combination effects, other plans and projects which may affect the Habitats sites need to be identified. This should involve an 'Appropriate Assessment' of the implications of the Neighbourhood Plan, in relation to predicted disturbance in combination with other plans or projects, in order to establish whether there may be an Adverse Effect on the Integrity of any Habitats sites in view of their Conservation Objectives.

This stage is to undertake objective scientific assessment of the implications of the Neighbourhood Plan on the Qualifying Features of the listed Habitats sites using the best scientific knowledge in the field. It should apply the best available techniques and methods to assess the extent of the effects of the Neighbourhood Plan on the integrity of the Habitat sites. The description of the site's integrity and the impact assessment should be based on the best possible indicators specific to the qualifying features of Habitat sites within scope of this assessment, which can also be useful in monitoring the impact of the Neighbourhood Plan's implementation.

The Appropriate Assessment needs to assess all aspects of the Plan which can by themselves, or in combination with other plans and projects, affect the Conservation Objectives of one or more Habitats site. The assessment must consider the implications for

each qualifying feature of each potentially affected Habitats site. The focus of the appropriate assessment is therefore on the species and / or the habitats for which the Habitats site is designated.

The best scientific knowledge should be used when carrying out the Appropriate Assessment in order to enable the competent authority to conclude with certainty beyond scientific doubt that there will be no Adverse Effect on the Integrity of any Habitats site.

It is important that the Appropriate Assessment provides a better understanding of potential effects and can therefore assist in the identification of mitigation measures where possible to avoid, reduce or cancel significant effects on Habitats sites which could be applied when undertaking the 'integrity test'. All mitigation measures built into the Plan can be taken into account. The Appropriate Assessment is an iterative process, re-assessing changes and new or different mitigation measures before making its final conclusion. It must be clear which mitigation measures are being relied upon in order to meet the integrity test.

The integrity test must apply the precautionary principle. However, plan assessments are less precise than project assessments, and so it is important for the assessment process to eliminate the prospect of adverse effects integrity insofar as it is possible, given the level of specificity of this Neighbourhood Plan.

Natural England should be formally consulted on this document.

## 5.2 Approach and Methodology of the Appropriate Assessment

The potential Likely Significant Effects considered at Stage 1 HRA Screening stage are now carried forward for consideration at Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. The policies and their potential to have adverse effects on any Habitats site through a variety of impact pathways are now considered in more detail, for example habitat loss or deterioration, disturbance, direct and indirect effects; extent of the effects (habitat area, species numbers or areas of occurrence); importance and magnitude (e.g. considering the affected area or population in relation to the total area and population size).

Key vulnerabilities of each Habitats site using the relevant Site Improvement Plans are assessed. Site Improvement Plans have been developed for each Habitats site in England as part of the 'Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 sites (IPENS)' but they do not include Ramsar sites. Each Site Improvement Plan provides a high-level overview of the issues (both current and predicted) affecting the condition of the Natura 2000 features on the site(s) and outlines the priority measures required to improve the condition of the features.

Additional information is also provided for each site on the Designated Sites website and this information has been interrogated.

### 5.2.1 Use of Mitigation Measures

All mitigation measures built into the Harston Neighbourhood Plan can now be taken into account at Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

At this stage, other policies of the Plan can be considered in order to mitigate some of the predicted Likely Significant Effects which have been identified. This stage is an iterative process as avoidance and reduction measures can be incorporated in order to be able to avoid the potential impacts identified in the Appropriate Assessment or reduce them to a level where they will no longer adversely affect the site's integrity.

Where residual effects are identified, monitoring will be required as part of the Harston Neighbourhood Plan.

### 5.2.2 Applying the Integrity Test

Following the Appropriate Assessment and the consideration of all mitigation measures, the competent authority needs to make a judgement on whether any of the policies will have an Adverse Effect on Integrity on any Habitats site either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. This test incorporates the precautionary principle.

### 5.2.3 Embedding Mitigation

South Cambridgeshire District Council, as the competent authority, should consider the manner in which the Harston Neighbourhood Plan is to be implemented and any mitigation measures which could be relied upon when deciding whether it would have an Adverse Effect on Integrity, including when and how they can be embedded into the Neighbourhood Plan.

After considering mitigation, the integrity test should be re-applied to check if the proposed mitigation is now sufficient to avoid adverse effects on integrity of the Habitats sites within scope for the impact pathways identified. Where there may still be adverse effects on the ecological integrity of Habitats sites, in view of the sites' conservation objectives, additional mitigation measures should be considered.

## 5.3 Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment for the Harston Neighbourhood Plan

### 5.3.1 Consideration of the Plan Alone

There is a single impact pathway to consider from the Plan alone of impacts on protected species outside of protected sites.

### 5.3.2 Mitigation measures

Further measures are required in order to conclude that the Harston Neighbourhood Plan will not lead to AEOI alone, mitigation measures are necessary and these need to be embedded in the Neighbourhood Plan to avoid impacts from the following pathway:

- Impacts on protected species outside of protected site (Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC).

Considering the potential impact from the Harston Neighbourhood Plan alone, this impact pathway is considered below with mitigation recommended.

### 5.3.3 Impacts on protected species outside of protected site

The draft Bat Protocol for Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC (Biodiversity Issue B9) in the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD identifies that any development within 10km will be screened for impacts on the SAC, with particular reference to the severance of bat flight lines. Reference to the need to avoid significant impacts and any severance of Barbastelle bat flightlines for any development in Harston parish is considered necessary to for the Neighbourhood Plan to meet Local Plan policy requirements (NH/5 and Policy 69) and legal duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Appropriate levels of survey, assessment and mitigation measures need to be provided in support for any development supported by the Neighbourhood Plan as it could have an impact on the population of Barbastelle bats within and around the Eversden & Wimpole Woods SAC.

As the parish lies within the 10km sustenance or wider conservation area for Eversden and Wimpole woods SAC, policies HAR9 and HAR23, (or a separate policy to be added to the Harston Neighbourhood Plan) will need to embed the requirements of the Biodiversity SPD into the Plan to avoid any adverse effect on integrity of this Habitats site, from the Plan alone.

As a result, it is recommended that the following policy text should be embedded within policy HAR9:

- New text in Biodiversity clause 1 and reference on Maps 13/14 in relation to woodland habitats):

'avoid significant impact on hedgerows or any severance of bat flight lines to protect foraging and commuting habitat for Barbastelle bats which could belong to the population protected by Eversden & Wimpole Woods SAC.'

### 5.3.4 Impacts from recreational pressure

Biodiversity Issue B10 of the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD identifies recreational pressure on sensitive Sites of Special Scientific Interest from residential development. It advises that developers need to consider how to implement the detailed advice from Natural England to provide access to sufficient greenspace to meet daily recreational needs of new



residents.

As a result, it is recommended that the policy text for HAR 28 is amended to require mitigation for recreational pressure. This amendment should read:

- Additional text:

'Mitigate for recreational pressure on Eversden & Wimpole Woods SAC, Fenland SAC and Wicken Fen Ramsar site by promotion of circular walking routes of at least 2.7km, dedicated dogs off lead areas and dog waste bins.'

### 5.3.5 Re-applying the integrity test

With the above mitigation measures secured and implemented through policy text amendments embedded in the Plan policies, the Council can conclude it will avoid adverse effect on integrity as a result of disturbance impacts on protected species outside Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, Fenland SAC and Wicken Fen Ramsar site from the Harston Neighbourhood Plan when considered alone.

## 5.4 Other Plans and Projects: In-combination Effects

When considering screening and assessing of potential impacts from residential development, Natural England is unable to specify development thresholds; however, taking a proportionate approach, their guidance states that it should be possible for most proposals below 50 dwellings to be screened out for likely significant effect.

It is therefore recommended that the policies identified are amended to embed mitigation to avoid adverse effect on integrity of Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, Fenland SAC and Wicken Fen Ramsar site from recreational pressure from the Plan in combination with other plans and projects. With mitigation embedded into the Plan, there is no residual impact from the allocation of land for a minor development to be considered in combination with other plans and projects.

## 6. Conclusions

### 6.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared for town and country planning purposes and sets a framework for future development consent. The policies of the Neighbourhood Plan can be considered to determine the use of small areas at local level commensurate with their status in determining local planning applications.

Planning Practice Guidance on SEA of Neighbourhood Plans indicates that a strategic environmental assessment may be required, for example, where a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development; the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan; or the neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

The Plan allocates land for development purposes. The site is not however allocated or identified within the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and as such the Local Plan's Sustainability Appraisal cannot be considered relevant in the selection of the site within the Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore considered that the procedure of exploring 'reasonable alternatives' within the context of the SEA Directive should be followed in order to meet the basic condition regarding compatibility with certain Obligations (basic condition 'f').

The Harston Neighbourhood Plan can therefore be screened in for its requirement of Strategic Environmental Assessment in line with the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC.

### 6.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

This Habitat Regulations Assessment considers the impacts arising from the Harston Neighbourhood Plan. The HRA Screening stage identifies that, without mitigation, further consideration was required at the Appropriate Assessment stage to determine whether the Harston Neighbourhood Plan either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, would adversely affect the integrity of Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC as a result of impacts on protected species outside the protected sites potential impact pathway or Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, Fenland SAC and Wicken Fen Ramsar site from recreational pressure in combination with other plans and projects.

Embedded mitigation measures for projects (planning applications) will need to be considered in project level HRA/AA reports assessed by South Cambridgeshire District Council and secured by a condition attached to any planning consent.

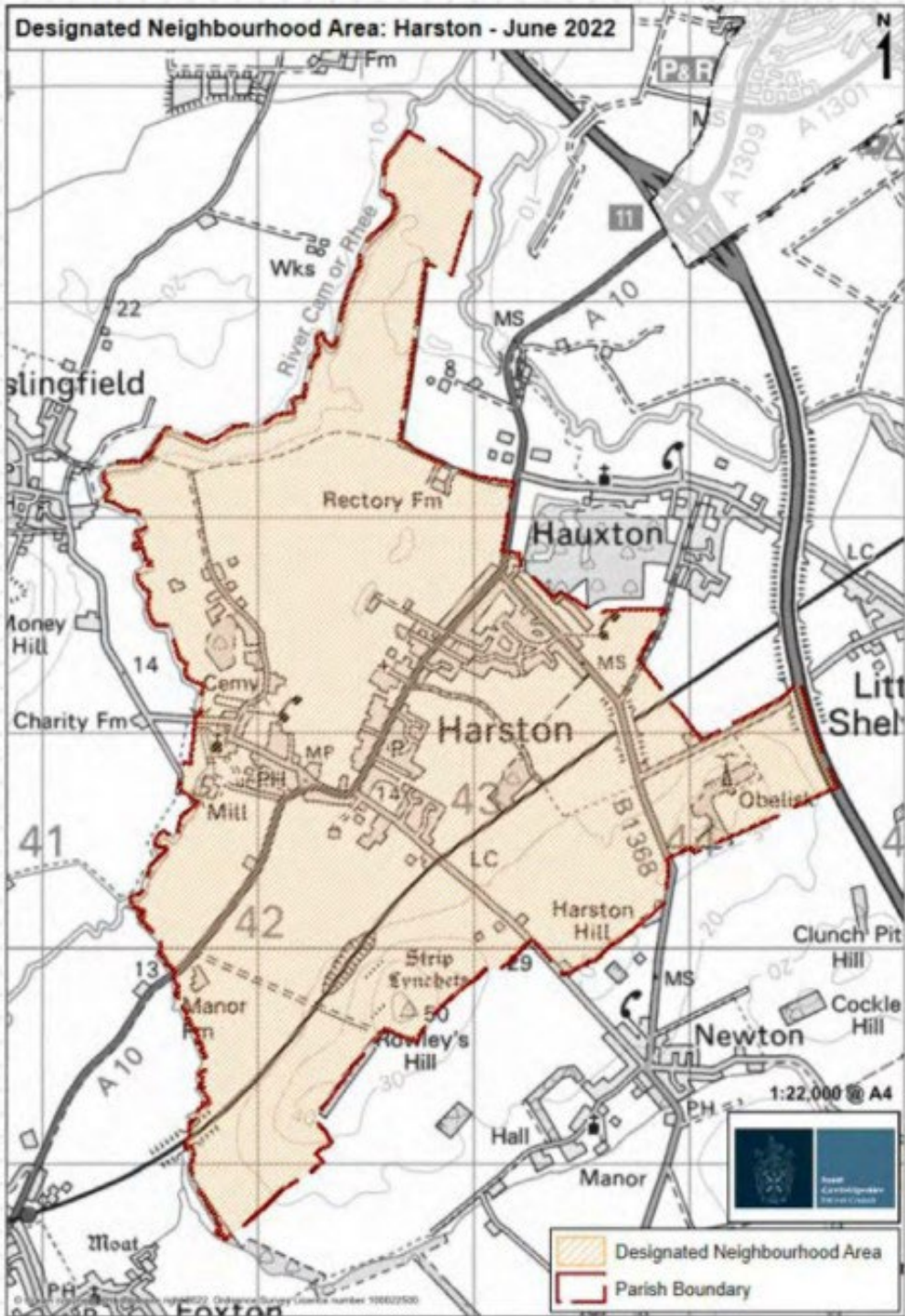
Subject to the above recommendation being incorporated and Natural England's review, this HRA Screening and Appropriate Assessment report, indicates that, with mitigation embedded, the Harston Neighbourhood Plan is not predicted to have an Adverse Effect on Integrity of the Habitats sites within scope, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

## 7. References

- Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (February 2022)
- Greater Cambridge Biodiversity SPD SEA & HRA screening report (v2 December 2021)
- Greater Cambridge Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment Issues and Options Scoping Report (Dec 2019)
- Harston Neighbourhood Plan Draft (February 2024)
- Natural England Conservation objectives for European Sites: East of England Website
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018)
- Tydlesley, D., and Chapman, C., (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, (April 2022) edition UK: DTA Publications Limited

# Appendix 1

## The Harston Neighbourhood Plan area

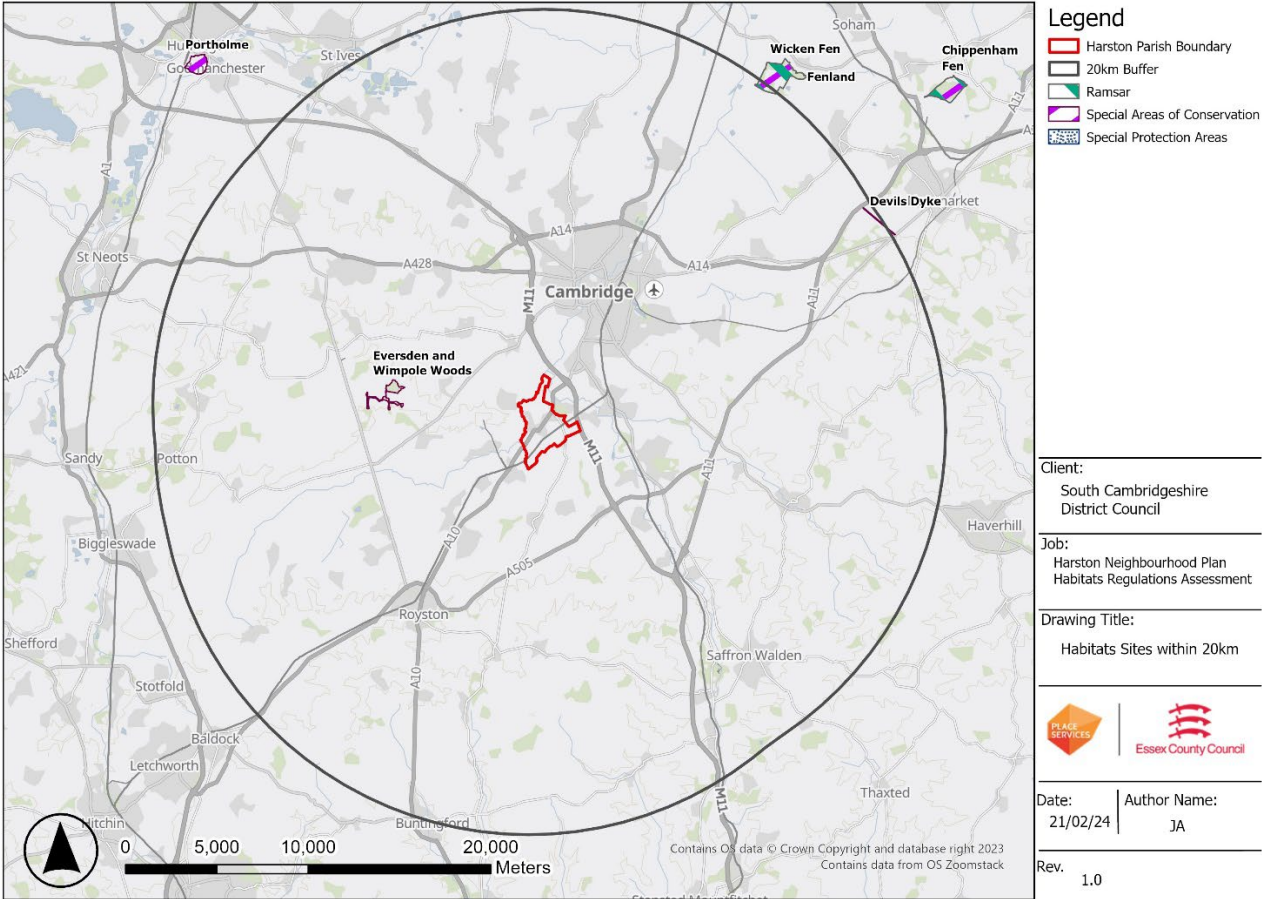


Source: Harston Neighbourhood Plan



# Appendix 2

## The Plan Area and Locations of the Habitats sites within 20 km



Source: Place Services, 2024



**Place Services**

County Hall, Essex CM1 1QH

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Essex County Council

## Appendix 2: Consultation Responses from the Statutory Environmental Bodies

### Historic England

15 March 2024

Thank you for your email regarding the above consultation. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process. Therefore we welcome this opportunity to review this request for a Screening Opinion. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the neighbourhood plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied with the Screening Opinion.

The supporting information (screening report and draft neighbourhood plan) supplied with the consultation indicates that within the plan area there is a range of designated historic environment assets. There is also likely to be other features of local historic, architectural or archaeological value, and consideration should also be given to the wider historic landscape. The documentation indicates that the Harston Neighbourhood Plan proposes to allocate a site for housing/other use via Policy HAR 28 for approximately 6 dwellings.

Given the likely significant effects (both positive and negative) upon the historic environment, Historic England hence concurs with the Council's view that a Strategic Environmental Assessment will be required.

I should be pleased if you can send a copy of the determination as required by REG 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the relevant local authorities are closely involved throughout the preparation of the plan and its assessment. They are best placed to advise on; local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the Historic Environment Record (HER), how the allocation, policy or proposal can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets.

We should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by you with your correspondence below. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our

obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the SA/SEA process and, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan/guidance) where we consider that, despite the SA/SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

Please do contact me, either via email or the numbers below, if you have any queries.

Ross McGivern, Historic Places Adviser, East of England, Historic England

### **Natural England:**

21 March 2024

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 01 March 2024. Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England is a statutory consultee in neighbourhood planning and must be consulted on draft neighbourhood development plans by the Parish/Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums where they consider our interests would be affected by the proposals made.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report: AA concludes 'No AEOL' and Natural England concurs with this conclusion**

Natural England notes that your authority, as competent authority, has undertaken an appropriate assessment (AA) of the Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with regulation 63 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended). Natural England is a statutory consultee on the appropriate assessment stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process.

Your appropriate assessment concludes that your authority is able to ascertain that the Neighbourhood Plan will not result in adverse effects on the integrity (AEOL) of any of the sites in question. Having considered the assessment, and the measures proposed to mitigate for all identified adverse effects that could potentially occur as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan, Natural England advises that we concur with the assessment conclusions, providing that all mitigation measures are appropriately secured.



We do not have any additional comments to make, however, we refer you to the advice in the attached annex which covers the issues and opportunities that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

For any further consultations on your plan, please contact:

[consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

Catherine Duerden, Sustainable Development Lead Adviser - West Anglia Team,  
Natural England

### **Environment Agency:**

26 March 2024

Thank you for consulting us on the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report for the Harston Neighbourhood Plan.

Based on a review of environmental constraints for which we are a statutory consultee, we find that there are areas of fluvial flood risk and watercourses within the neighbourhood plan area. In particular, we note that the boundary does extend into areas of Flood Zones 2 and 3 of the designated main River Cam/Rhee. On the basis that future development is steered away from the sensitive aspects of the environment highlighted, we do not consider there to be potential significant environmental effects relating to these environmental constraints. Nevertheless, we recommend the inclusion of relevant policies to cover the management of flood risk. Allocation of any sites and any windfall development delivered through the Plan period should follow the sequential approach. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 161 sets this out.

We encourage you to seek ways in which your neighbourhood plan can improve the local environment. For your information, together with Natural England, Historic England and Forestry Commission we have published joint guidance on neighbourhood planning, which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans. This is available at: [How to consider the environment in Neighbourhood plans - Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#).

We hope this information is of assistance. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Alison Craggs, Sustainable Places Planning Advisor, Environment Agency