

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan

**Environmental Report to accompany the submission
version of the Neighbourhood Plan**

July 2024

Quality information

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Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Name	Position
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V2	July 2024	Final for submission	CB	Principal Environmental Planner

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Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan (SHNP). The SHNP is being prepared under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and in the context of the adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan and the emerging Buckinghamshire Local Plan. Once 'made', the SHNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications in the neighbourhood area, as part of Buckinghamshire's local development framework.

SEA is a required process for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative effects and maximising potential positive effects. SEA for the SHNP is a requirement determined by Buckinghamshire Council and is reported on through the SEA Environmental Report. The report is sectioned into three parts that seek to each meet the regulatory requirements.

This is a Non-Technical Summary of the SEA Environmental Report for the SHNP. Before reporting on the three parts of the SEA, an introduction to the local plan context, the vision and objectives of the SHNP, and the scope of the SEA is provided.

Local Plan context

With regards to the adopted policy framework, the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP), adopted in 2021, provides the main strategic context for future growth in the neighbourhood area up to 2033. The VALP identifies Stoke Hammond as a 'medium village' and across all medium villages, 1,423 new homes are expected to be delivered over the plan period. However, most of these new dwellings have already been completed or committed, leaving only 65 dwellings to be allocated. No sites are identified in Stoke Hammond due to the 194 dwellings already committed in the Parish within the plan period.

In April 2020, Aylesbury Vale District Council, along with Wycombe, South Bucks, and Chiltern District Councils and Buckinghamshire County Council established Buckinghamshire Council as a single unitary authority. Work has since been underway on the emerging Buckinghamshire Local Plan which will identify a spatial vision for the whole area to 2040. The Council is in early plan-making stages, undertaking early evidence gathering whilst it awaits more information relating to proposed reforms to the planning system. It has advised Town and Parish Councils in its area that it will not be able to provide indicative housing figures (as per NPPF Para 68) until it has made further progress on the Local Plan.

SHNP vision and objectives

A simple vision for the plan was identified at early stages of plan development:

"The design of new buildings will reflect the rural character of the village."

This vision is supported by the following nine, more detailed, objectives:

1. To create energy efficient homes and mitigate climate change.

2. Ensure high-quality design and construction in both residential and commercial developments.
3. To preserve and enhance the character of the Stoke Hammond Conservation Area.
4. To protect and enhance the biodiversity of our area, our local wildlife and its habitat, and our trees.
5. To enhance and protect existing Green Infrastructure Assets for the benefit of the community.
6. Encourage walking and cycling in the neighbourhood area and better manage the harmful effects of traffic and parking.
7. To provide homes of the size and tenure suited to the need of the Parish population.
8. Encourage ecologically sound development that minimises the environmental footprint of development proposals.
9. Enhance existing Community Facilities for sport and leisure in recognition of the growth in parishioners since 2011.

Scope of the SEA

The SEA Scoping Report (December 2022) sets out the policy context and baseline information that has informed the development of key issues and the identification of appropriate sustainability objectives that will guide the SEA (the SEA framework). The SEA Regulations require that “*when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies*”. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. As such, these authorities were consulted over the period 14th December 2022 to 25th January 2023. A response was received from Natural England only, who agreed with the scope of the SEA.

The SEA framework for the SHNP is provided below.

SHNP SEA framework

SEA topic	SEA objectives
Landscape	Conserve and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape.
Historic environment	Protect and enhance heritage assets and their setting.
Biodiversity	Conserve, enhance, restore, and connect biodiversity interest in the Parish.
Flood risk	Avoid development in areas of flood risk.

Part 1: Identifying and assessing alternative options and presenting the preferred approach

An important element of the required SEA process involves assessing ‘reasonable alternatives’ in time to inform development of the draft proposals, and then publishing information on reasonable alternatives for consultation alongside the draft proposals. As such, Part 1 of the Environmental Report explains how work was undertaken to

develop and assess a ‘reasonable’ range of alternative approaches for the SHNP. Alternatives focus on potential site allocations (the spatial strategy) and were established following a process of considering how much growth and where growth should be located.

This work has identified that whilst there is currently no identified strategic growth target for Stoke Hammond it is recognised that the settlement may be subject to additional land allocations to meet district housing needs in the progression of the Local Plan. Especially considering that the Parish falls outside of the designated Green Belt where it is assumed that there will be a preference for future growth.

The Parish Council have explored sites that are in contention for allocation in the SHNP and a shortlist of eight sites were progressed as reasonable alternative options (for the purposes of SEA) and presented to the public (along with SEA findings) at informal consultation in March 2023. These sites remain the alternative options for allocation in the SHNP and summary assessment findings for these site are provided below. Detailed findings can be found in Appendix B.

The assessment approach considers development at the sites pre-mitigation (i.e., a policy-off approach) and the following key is used to navigate the summary tables.

Key			
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)	R	Likely positive effect	G
Neutral/no effect	Y	Uncertain effect	B

Site 3: West of Newton Leys

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	Y
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	B

Site 5: Parish Council Land adjoining Community Association

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	Y
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	Y

Site 10: Southwest of Leighton Road (merged with Site 9)

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	R
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	R

Site 14: Hunters Lodge (merged with Site 15)

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	Y
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	Y

Site 18: North of Harrup Close

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	R
Biodiversity	R
Flood risk	Y

Site 19: Orchard End/ Meadowside (merged with Site 20)

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	R
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	Y

Site 29: North of Old School Lane

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	R
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	Y

Site 36: East of Fenney Road

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	Y
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	Y

The Parish Council have progressed as allocations Sites 3, 5, 18, 19 (merged with 20), and 36. These sites are considered most in keeping with the vision and objectives of the SHNP and most appropriate based on the evidence that has been developed (including the SEA). These sites when taken to the community, were deemed either the least harmful or most beneficial and offer the greatest support to the key objective of improving sports and recreational facilities.

Part 2: Assessment of the draft plan

Part 2 of the Environmental Report presents an assessment of the full draft SHNP. Assessment findings are presented as a series of narratives under the 'SEA framework' topic headings. The following overall conclusions are reached:

Overall, no significant effects are considered likely in the implementation of the SHNP. Minor negative effects in relation to landscape are associated with greenfield development proposals (i.e., development in a previously undeveloped area) but the Plan notably places great weight on landscape considerations for future growth and provides policy mitigation. Residual broadly neutral effects are concluded for the remaining themes of biodiversity, historic environment, and flood risk. Notably, the spatial strategy avoids development in key sensitive areas relating to biodiversity and flood risk and provides policy and design mitigation that should reduce the significance of any effects in relation to the settings of designated and non-designated heritage assets.

No recommendations are made that are necessary to reduce the significance of any impacts, but it is noted that there could be more positive contributions in relation to the historic environment if the site allocation policy were to include more guidelines around implementing greenspace / green infrastructure, which positively contributes to the setting of heritage features.

Part 3: Next steps

Following submission, the SHNP and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation, and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the SHNP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

If the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the Neighbourhood Plan will then be subject to a referendum, organised by Buckinghamshire Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the SHNP will become part of the Development Plan for Buckinghamshire, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be primarily undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No potential significant negative effects have been identified that would require additional or more stringent monitoring in this case.

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan (SHNP). The SHNP is being prepared under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and in the context of the adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan and the emerging Buckinghamshire Local Plan. Once 'made', the SHNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications in the neighbourhood area, as part of Buckinghamshire's local development framework.
- 1.2 SEA is a required process for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative effects and maximising potential positive effects.¹

SEA explained

- 1.4 It is a requirement that the SEA process is undertaken in-line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The Regulations stipulate that a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that "*identifies, describes, and evaluates*" the likely significant effects of implementing "*the plan, and reasonable alternatives*".² The report must then be considered when finalising the plan.
- 1.5 More specifically, the report can be structured to address requirements by answering the following three questions:
 - 1) What has plan-making/ SEA involved up to this point?
 - including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.
 - 2) What are the SEA findings at this stage?
 - i.e., in relation to the current draft plan.
 - 3) What happens next?

This Environmental Report

- 1.6 This Environmental Report, which accompanies the submission version of the SHNP, is the latest document to be produced as part of the SEA process. It has been updated to reflect the minor changes made to neighbourhood plan following consultation on the Regulation 14 'pre-submission' version of the SHNP.

¹ Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: A) an Environmental Report, or B) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a 'screening' process. The SHNP was officially 'screened in' by Buckinghamshire Council as requiring SEA in November 2022.

² Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

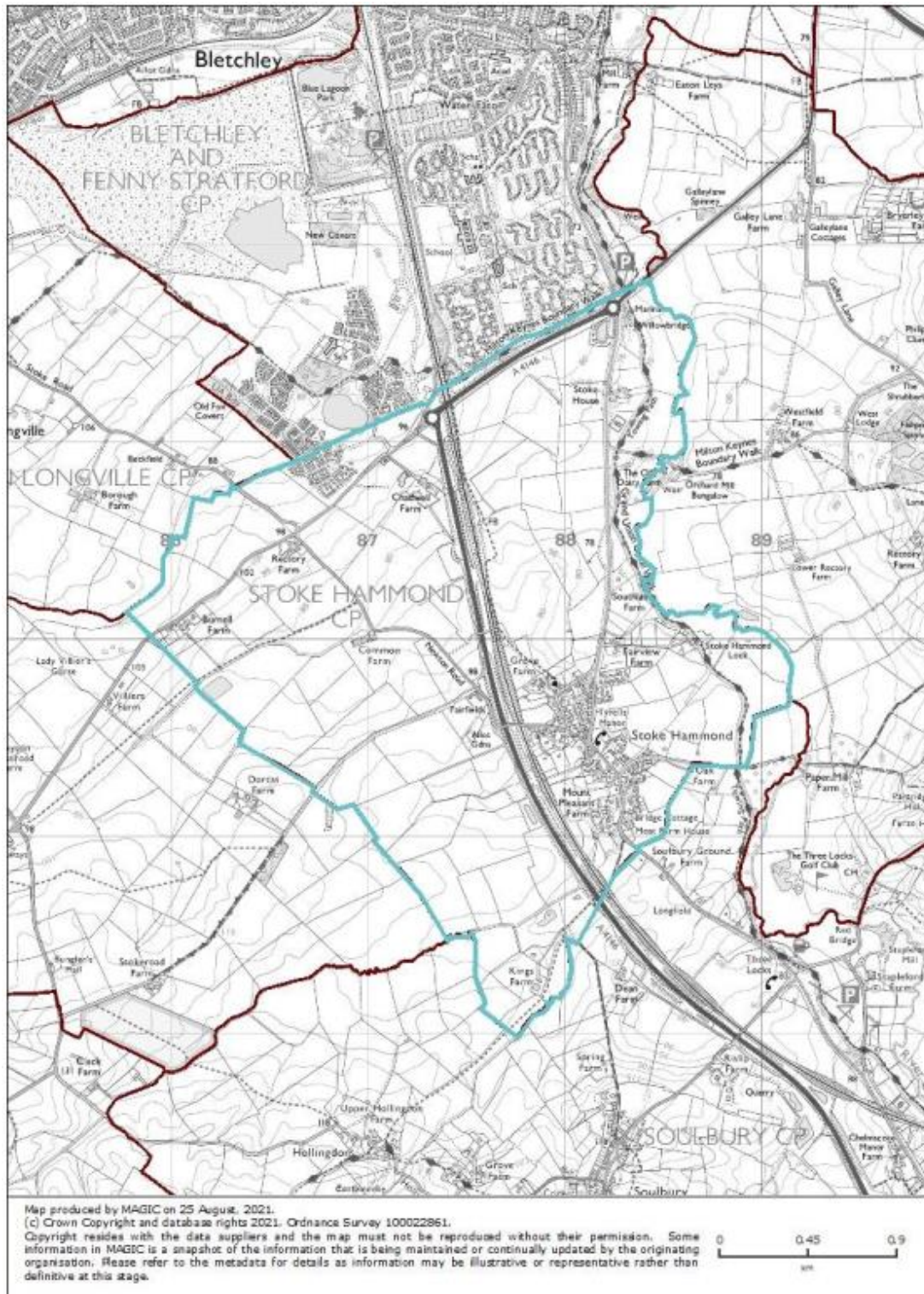
- 1.7 The report answers the three questions outlined above in turn, as discrete 'parts' of the report. However, before answering these questions, two further introductory sections are presented to further set the scene (Chapters 2 and 3).

2. What is the plan seeking to achieve?

Introduction

- 2.1 This section is an introductory chapter to consider the context provided by both Buckinghamshire Council's local planning framework, and the vision and objectives of the SHNP. The designated neighbourhood area (Figure 2.1) lies south of Milton Keynes along the A4146.

Figure 2.1: Stoke Hammond neighbourhood area



Local Plan context

- 2.2 With regards to the adopted policy framework, the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP), adopted in 2021, provides the main strategic context for future growth in the neighbourhood area up to 2033. The VALP identifies Stoke Hammond as a 'medium village' and across all medium villages, 1,423 new homes are expected to be delivered over the plan period. However, most of these new dwellings have already been completed or committed, leaving only 65 dwellings to be allocated. No sites are identified in Stoke Hammond due to the 194 dwellings already committed in the Parish within the plan period.
- 2.3 In April 2020, Aylesbury Vale District Council, along with Wycombe, South Bucks, and Chiltern District Councils and Buckinghamshire County Council established Buckinghamshire Council as a single unitary authority. Work has since been underway on the emerging Buckinghamshire Local Plan which will identify a spatial vision for the whole area to 2040. The Council is in early plan-making stages, undertaking early evidence gathering whilst it awaits more information relating to proposed reforms to the planning system. It has advised Town and Parish Councils in its area that it will not be able to provide indicative housing figures (as per NPPF Para 68) until it has made further progress on the Local Plan.

Vision and objectives of the SHNP

- 2.4 A simple vision for the plan was identified at early stages of plan development:
- "The design of new buildings will reflect the rural character of the village."*
- 2.5 This vision is supported by the following nine, more detailed, objectives:
1. To create energy efficient homes and mitigate climate change.
 2. Ensure high-quality design and construction in both residential and commercial developments.
 3. To preserve and enhance the character of the Stoke Hammond Conservation Area.
 4. To protect and enhance the biodiversity of our area, our local wildlife and its habitat, and our trees.
 5. To enhance and protect existing Green Infrastructure Assets for the benefit of the community.
 6. Encourage walking and cycling in the neighbourhood area and better manage the harmful effects of traffic and parking.
 7. To provide homes of the size and tenure suited to the need of the Parish population.
 8. Encourage ecologically sound development that minimises the environmental footprint of development proposals.
 9. Enhance existing Community Facilities for sport and leisure in recognition of the growth in parishioners since 2011.

3. What is the scope of the SEA?

Introduction

- 3.1 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA, i.e., the sustainability topics and objectives that should be a focus of the assessment of the Plan and reasonable alternatives.
- 3.2 The SEA Scoping Report (December 2022) sets out the policy context and baseline information that has informed the development of key issues and the identification of appropriate sustainability objectives.

Consultation

- 3.3 The SEA Regulations require that “*when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies*”. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England.³
- 3.4 As such, these authorities were consulted over the period 14th December 2022 to 25th January 2023. A response was received from Natural England only. Natural England agreed with the scope and proposed SEA objectives, and suggested additional consideration is given to addressing net gains in biodiversity, and in identifying monitoring measures.

The SEA framework

- 3.5 The SEA framework presents a list of SEA topics and objectives that together comprise a framework to guide the appraisal. The SEA framework for the SHNP is provided in **Table 3.1**.

Table 3.1: SHNP SEA framework

SEA topic	SEA objectives
Landscape	Conserve and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape.
Historic environment	Protect and enhance heritage assets and their setting.
Biodiversity	Conserve, enhance, restore, and connect biodiversity interest in the Parish.
Flood risk	Avoid development in areas of flood risk.

³ These consultation bodies were selected “*by reason of their specific environmental responsibility, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes*” (SEA Directive, Article 6(3))

Part 1: What has plan-making / SEA involved to this point?

4. Introduction (to Part 1)

Overview

- 4.1 Whilst work on the SHNP has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of all the work carried out to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives at this, pre-submission stage.
- 4.2 More specifically, this part of the report presents information on the consideration given to reasonable alternative approaches to addressing a particular issue that is of central importance to the Plan, namely the allocation of land for housing, or alternative sites. Land is currently being identified to meet locally identified affordable housing needs.

Why focus on development sites?

- 4.3 The decision was taken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives in relation to the matter of allocating land for housing, given the following considerations:
- SHNP vision and objectives, particularly the housing objective to provide homes of the size and tenure suited to the need of the Parish population.
 - Housing growth is known to be a matter of key interest amongst residents and other stakeholders; and
 - The delivery of new homes is most likely to have a significant effect compared to the other proposals within the Plan. National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.
- 4.4 Wider thematic policy is explored in **Part 2** (What are the SEA findings at this stage) of the Environmental Report.

Structure of this part of the report

- 4.5 This part of the report is structured as follows:
- **Chapter 5** - explains the process of establishing reasonable alternatives.
 - **Chapter 6** - presents the appraisal of reasonable alternatives; and
 - **Chapter 7** - explains reasons for selecting the preferred option, considering the appraisal.

5. Establishing reasonable alternatives

Introduction

- 5.1 The aim here is to explain the process that led to the establishment of alternative sites and thereby present “*an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with*”.⁴
- 5.2 Specifically, there is a need to explain the strategic parameters that have a bearing on the establishment of options (in relation to the level and distribution of growth) and the work that has been undertaken to date to examine site options (i.e., sites potentially in contention for allocation in the SHNP). These parameters are then drawn together in order to arrive at ‘reasonable alternatives’.

Strategic parameters

- 5.3 As highlighted in Chapter 2, Buckinghamshire Council are unable to provide an indicative housing figure for the SHNP, and there are no further housing requirements to be met in Stoke Hammond under the adopted VALP.
- 5.4 Whilst Buckinghamshire Council are unable to provide an indicative housing growth figure for Stoke Hammond at this stage, the Parish Council recognises that this does not mean that there will not be additional growth directed towards the Parish and given that the Parish falls outside of the Green Belt there is a good chance that Stoke Hammond will need to contribute to the wider district needs.

Site options

- 5.5 The Parish Council, supported by consultants O'Neill Homer, have sought to assess all emerging site options that could potentially deliver new homes over the plan period.
- 5.6 A total of 37 sites were initially identified but 23 were sifted as unavailable (16 with no response received from landowners, five following a response and instruction from landowners, and two in the absence of a detailed response from landowners). One further site was also later withdrawn following submission of an application for development at the site to Buckinghamshire Council.
- 5.7 As the site assessment process got underway, another site was removed given it was land locked and no means of suitable access could be demonstrated. Additionally, four sites were merged (at Hunters Lodge, Leighton Road, and at Orchard End/ Meadowside). This resulted in a short-list of the following eight sites:

⁴ Schedule 2(8) of the SEA Regulations

- Site 3: West of Newton Leys
- Site 5: Parish Council Land adjoining Community Association
- Site 10: Southwest of Leighton Road (merged with Site 9)
- Site 14: Hunters Lodge
- Site 18: North of Harrup Close
- Site 19: Orchard End/ Meadowside (merged with Site 20)
- Site 29: North of Old School Lane
- Site 36: East of Fenney Road

Establishing alternatives

- 5.8 Whilst there is currently no identified strategic growth target for Stoke Hammond it is recognised that the settlement may be subject to additional land allocations to meet district housing needs in the progression of the Local Plan. Especially considering that the Parish falls outside of the designated Green Belt where it is assumed that there will be a preference for future growth. The shortlist of eight sites identified above were progressed as reasonable alternative options for allocation sites (for the purposes of SEA) and presented to the public (along with SEA findings) at informal consultation in March 2023. These sites remain the alternative options for allocation in the SHNP and the assessment of these sites is presented in Chapter 6.

Regulation 14 consultation

- 5.9 The feedback at Regulation 14 consultation has not altered the group's approach to allocating homes for new development over the plan period, and no new sites have been identified. Feedback from landowners in relation to the site assessments that were presented at Regulation 14 consultation have been considered in the next chapter, which presents these findings again.

6. Assessing reasonable alternatives

6.1 The following eight shortlisted sites have been identified for assessment:

- Site 3: West of Newton Leys
- Site 5: Parish Council Land adjoining Community Association
- Site 10: Southwest of Leighton Road (merged with Site 9)
- Site 14: Hunters Lodge (merged with Site 15)
- Site 18: North of Harrup Close
- Site 19: Orchard End/ Meadowside (merged with Site 20)
- Site 29: North of Old School Lane
- Site 36: East of Fenney Road

6.2 Each site has been subjected to detailed appraisal (with detailed supporting narrative) which can be found in **Appendix B**. Conclusions for each site are summarised below, and the Parish Council identify their preferred approach in Chapter 7.

Methodology

6.3 The assessment approach considers development at the sites pre-mitigation (i.e., a policy-off approach). The following key is used to navigate the summary tables.

Key			
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)	R	Likely positive effect	G
Neutral/no effect	Y	Uncertain effect	B

Site 3: West of Newton Leys

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	Y
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	B

Site 5: Parish Council Land adjoining Community Association

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	Y
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	Y

Site 10: Southwest of Leighton Road (merged with Site 9)

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	R
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	R

Site 14: Hunters Lodge (merged with Site 15)

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	Y
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	Y

Site 18: North of Harrup Close

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	R
Biodiversity	R
Flood risk	Y

Site 19: Orchard End/ Meadowside (merged with Site 20)

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	R
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	Y

Site 29: North of Old School Lane

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	R
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	Y

Site 36: East of Fenney Road

SEA topic	Likely effect
Landscape	R
Historic environment	Y
Biodiversity	G
Flood risk	Y

7. Developing the preferred approach

- 7.1 The Parish Council have progressed as allocations Sites 3, 5, 18, 19 (merged with 20), and 36. These sites are considered most in keeping with the vision and objectives of the SHNP and most appropriate based on the evidence that has been developed (including the SEA). These sites when taken to the community, were deemed either the least harmful or most beneficial and offer the greatest support to the key objective of improving sports and recreational facilities.

Part 2: What are the SEA findings at this stage?

8. Introduction (to Part 2)

- 8.1 This Part of the report presents an appraisal of the submission version of the draft Stoke Hammond NP under the four identified SEA objectives. This reflects the established assessment framework.
- 8.2 The Stoke Hammond NP contains 10 policies. These are listed in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1: Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan policies

Policy Reference	Policy Name
SH1	Settlement Boundaries
SH2	Design Code
SH3	Local Heritage Assets
SH4	Green Infrastructure
SH5	Sustainable Travel
SH6	Housing Mix
SH7	Addressing the 'performance gap'
SH8	Traffic Management
SH9	Site Allocations
SH10	Community Assets

Methodology

- 8.3 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see **Table 3.1**) as a methodological framework.
- 8.4 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the strategic nature of the policies under consideration and understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario) that is inevitably limited. Given uncertainties there is a need to make assumptions, e.g., in relation to plan implementation and aspects of the baseline that might be impacted. Assumptions are made cautiously and explained within the text (with the aim of striking a balance between comprehensiveness and conciseness). In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict 'significant effects', but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.
- 8.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e., the potential for the Neighbourhood Plan to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes, and projects. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.

9. Appraisal of the Stoke Hammond NP

Landscape

- 9.1 The neighbourhood area is within one National Character Area (NCA): 88 Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands. This area is characterised by a broad, gently undulating, lowland plateau that is broken up by shallow river valleys that gradually widen. Views of the NCA and its large-scale arable farmland can be seen in most directions, from the elevated ground of the surrounding NCAs, including the Chilterns NCAs. The Forest of Marston Vale Community Village is contained within the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands NCA, as is part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There are also a number of seminatural habitats within the NCA which offer communities close contact with the natural environment.
- 9.2 In terms of local landscape, the Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment identifies Stoke Hammond village and the east of the neighbourhood area as lying within the Newton Longville – Stoke Hammond Landscape Character Area (LCA). The LCA is characterised by rolling clay farmland, heavy clay soils, a nucleated settlement pattern and parliamentary enclosures with thorn hedges. The frequency of hedgerow trees is identified as a particularly important visual element. The countryside to the east of the village is designated as an Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL). It is noted that the landscape of the neighbourhood area has remained unchanged over the last decade; and though recent housing schemes have not encroached on the countryside, future development proposals may.
- 9.3 The site allocations have varying landscape sensitivities. Site NP01 (West of Newton Leys) is greenfield site located on the northern parish boundary adjacent to Newton Leys; it is removed from the settlement of Stoke Hammond but is unlikely to bring forward significant negative effects for landscape character and distinctiveness. Site NP02 (North of Harrup Close) is located within Stoke Hamond, and away from the AAL designation – as such, development is unlikely to impact upon the wider landscape character and distinctiveness but could affect the townscape environment. Site NP05 (Orchard End / Meadowside (merged with Site 20)) is another greenfield site, but due to its location between Stoke Hammond and the trainline, development is unlikely to impact on the landscape of the area. However, sites NP03 (East of Fenny Road) and NP04 (Parish Council Land adjoining Community Association) are wholly within the AAL – taking them forward for development is more likely to have landscape impacts through effects to the character and quality of the designated area.
- 9.4 The site allocation policy does make stipulations for landscape. Policy SH9 indicates that proposals for development on site NP01 (West of Newton Leys) will share the allocated area with a significant level of green space, which will separate existing and new development. This will likely bring forward benefits for landscape, as it will provide visual breaks between developed areas, which will help retain the character of the area. Additionally, development proposals for this site would need to undertake a Landscape Visual Assessment (LVA) to mitigate any impacts on views of the open countryside. This demonstrates a landscape focus by ensuring work is done to protect the character of the site

and its surrounding area, and the visual impact of development is reduced as far as possible. Policy SH9 also makes provisions for landscape through site NP03 (East of Fenny Road), and site NP04 (Parish Council Land adjoining Community Association). These sites encroach into the designated AAL, and so the policy indicates development proposals at these locations should be supported by an LVA. Again, this demonstrates a landscape focus by ensuring work is done to protect the important character of these sites and their surrounding area, whilst maintaining the integrity of the landscape designation in proximity.

9.5 Policy SH2 focuses on the design of development coming forward in the Stoke Hammond neighbourhood area. It makes the following stipulations for landscape and character:

- New buildings and extensions will need to use materials that respect and compliment the materials used in existing buildings. This will ensure new development fits in with the surrounding built environment and does not detract from the views to and from buildings, the settlement, and the streetscape.
- New development proposals cannot significantly detract from important views within the Stoke Hammond Conservation Area. By protecting key views, the policy is making provisions for landscape - protecting an important component that contributes to the landscape character and how the landscape is experienced.
- Boundary treatments should reflect the surrounding areas, and screening should be provided where it is necessary and appropriate. This will maintain the visual amenity and character of the settlement by ensuring boundary infrastructure is incorporated into the design of developments, helping to enhance the look and feel of these areas.
- New and innovative architectural designs within the settlement boundary will be supported where they are well integrated into the existing street scene. This will reduce visual impacts and changes to character linked to development design by ensuring the development considers the existing surroundings and respects the key features within the Stoke Hammond boundary.

9.6 The wider Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan policies make provisions for landscape and character. Policy SH1 defines settlement boundaries in the neighbourhood area and keeps development from occurring outside these boundaries unless it is essential or the development in question is suited to a countryside location. This reduces the landscape impact of development in the Stoke Hammond neighbourhood area, through a reduced risk of character erosion, and loss of important landscape features and views. Policy SH4 identifies a Green Infrastructure Network in the neighbourhood area, which comprises of open spaces, local green spaces, woodlands, individual trees, ponds, and public rights of way. Development proposals that are within or adjacent to the identified network will need to maintain or enhance its visual characteristics – this will have an indirect positive impact for landscape by contributing to the visual amenity and character of the neighbourhood area.

- 9.7 Policy SH6 discusses the appropriate housing mix that should come forward for the neighbourhood area and outlines the need for residential development to be achieved without detriment to the character of the surrounding area. This indicates landscape has been considered through this policy, as development will need to be sensitively designed and constructed to ensure integrity is maintained. Policy SH7 places an emphasis on addressing the 'performance gap' of new developments and incentivises developments to use Passivhaus standard. Different plot coverages and layouts to those currently within the associated character area will be supported where they can demonstrate they will not bring forward significant harm to the character area in question. This demonstrates a landscape consideration through ensuring proposals fit in with the surroundings as far as possible, thus reducing visual impacts. Finally, Policy SH8 outlines the need for car parking spaces to use permeable surfaces to allow for rainwater absorption, which will help maintain the rural character of the street scene by keeping the streetscape clear of water and associated visual distractions. Additionally, the policy indicates off street vehicle parking provision should not bring forward unacceptable visual harm – again, protecting the character and landscape of the area by ensuring view disruptions do not occur.
- 9.8 Overall, the Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan works well to implement policies that conserve and enhance local character and distinctiveness of the landscape. The site allocation policy includes the need for significant levels of green space, and the undertaking of LVAs to mitigate impacts on the landscape and key views associated with new development. This works to protect and enhance landscape character and quality by breaking up development and ensuring appropriate mitigation is delivered alongside development. Furthermore, the wider plan policies work to strengthen landscape character and distinctiveness through the identification of a Green Infrastructure Network, and ensuring development design standards are met through proposals. This works to provide enhancement opportunities through contributing to the Green Infrastructure Network and meeting standards, thus reducing visual impacts to the surrounding area. Development within undeveloped areas will ultimately lead to **negative effects** for landscapes, however, the policy mitigation provided is likely to ensure that residual effects are **minor in nature**.

Historic environment

- 9.9 The historic environment within the Stoke Hammond neighbourhood area comprises of 15 listed buildings (one Grade II*, and 14 Grade II). Additionally, the Stoke Hammond Conservation Area is within the neighbourhood area – designated in 1991, it covers two parts of the village along Church Road and Newton Road.
- 9.10 Policy SH3 is focused specifically on local heritage assets. It indicates that development proposals with the potential to impact upon local heritage assets must consider the significance of heritage features, and demonstrate the potential impacts are justified. This helps to ensure only essential development comes forward in proximity to heritage features, thus minimising the risk of unnecessary loss of / impacts to the historic environment.
- 9.11 Sites NP01 (West of Newton Leys), NP03 (East of Fenny Road) and NP04 (Parish Council Land adjoining Community Association) are removed from

heritage assets and the conservation area, and so development is considered less likely to result in significant effects. However, site NP02 (North of Harrup Close) is partially within the designated conservation area, and is within proximity to listed buildings – as such, development here has the potential to impact upon the setting of heritage features. Additionally, site NP05 (Orchard End / Meadowside (merged with Site 20)) is within proximity of the conservation area, and a listed building – again, development here has the potential to impact upon the historic environment of the area (though it is noted the rail line already interrupts views and additional development has recently been granted in this area).

- 9.12 Only one of the site allocations within Policy SH9 includes specific provisions for the historic environment. NP02 (North of Harrup Close) indicates any development will need to be sensitively designed to mitigate potential adverse impacts on the setting of the listed Stoke Lodge (Grade II listed). This demonstrates the neighbourhood plan is actively seeking to protect and enhance heritage assets by ensuring the setting of the named feature is not compromised through residential development. However, the greenspace provision included within NP01 (West of Newton Leys) will likely contribute to enhancing the setting of the surrounding historic environment by providing visual breaks within the development area.
- 9.13 Policy SH2 makes the following stipulations for the historic environment of Stoke Hammond:
- Development will need to conserve and enhance the historic character and heritage assets of the neighbourhood area, especially within the conservation area. As such, proposals must consider the scale of harm or loss that could occur, and the significance of the heritage features. This works to protect and enhance the historic environment by providing support for specific features and their settings.
 - New buildings and extensions will need to use similar or complimentary materials. This will help reduce any potential impacts of development on the historic environment by ensuring it respects the existing built environment. The use of similar materials will help new development to blend in and reduce visual changes to the setting of heritage features.
- 9.14 The wider Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan policies make provisions for the historic environment. Policy SH1 defines the Stoke Hammond settlement boundary and seeks to prevent development occurring outside the boundaries unless it is essential. This will help to protect locally important heritage features (and their settings) outside of the settlement boundary from being impacted by development. Policy SH4 is concerned with identifying a Green Infrastructure Network. By maintaining and enhancing this Green Infrastructure Network, the Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan is also likely contributing to the maintenance and enhancement of the setting of heritage features.
- 9.15 In conclusion, the Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan includes a heritage specific policy to help protect specific features within the neighbourhood area. It is noted two sections of the site allocation policy include stipulations that would likely help to mitigate potential impacts on the historic environment. Whilst the majority of the site allocation policy does not make provisions for heritage, the design guidelines under Policy SH2 would likely provide mitigation

for the historic environment in proximity to development areas. The wider plan policies also provide for the historic environment, through maintaining settlement boundaries and protecting features that contribute to the historic setting. Given this, broadly **neutral** effects are concluded as most likely. It is noted this could be more positive effects if the site allocation policy were to include more guidelines around implementing greenspace / green infrastructure, which positively contributes to the setting of heritage features.

Biodiversity

- 9.16 The neighbourhood area does not intersect with any international biodiversity and geodiversity designations, nor is it within proximity to any. In terms of national designations, the Poker's Pond Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is outside of the neighbourhood area but on the neighbourhood area boundary to the south. Additionally, the Nares Gladley Marsh SSSI and the Kings and Bakers Wood and Heaths SSSI are both within 3km east of the neighbourhood area – though there is no overlap with SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) for the types of development likely to come forward through the Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan (i.e., rural non-residential, residential, and rural residential). As such, further consultation with Natural England regarding SSSIs is unlikely to be required. Furthermore, the King's Wood and Rushmere National Nature Reserve (NNR) is within 2km east of the neighbourhood area.
- 9.17 Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats in the neighbourhood area are comprised of deciduous woodland and traditional orchards. It is recognised that there are areas of lowland meadows and good quality semi-improved grassland within proximity to the neighbourhood area boundary. With regards to the National Habitat Network⁵, most of the Stoke Hammond neighbourhood area is within the Network Expansion Zone - this is land with potential for expanding, linking and / or joining networks across the landscape. In addition, part of the neighbourhood area overlaps with Network Enhancement Zone 1 in the southern and north-east extents of the neighbourhood area. This is land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitats which is likely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat.
- 9.18 All but one of the site allocations are not expected to bring forward negative impacts for biodiversity, given their lack of priority habitat coverage or proximity to important designations. However, site NP02 (North of Harrup Close) contains trees and hedgerows within and on its boundaries, which contribute to the priority habitat network (no main habitat is identified, but additional important habitat exists).
- 9.19 There are no specific biodiversity policies included within the Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan. The site allocation NP01 (West of Newton Leys) in Policy SH9 indicates a significant green space will need to be included within the development design to separate new development from the existing housing. This would likely have a secondary benefit for biodiversity and geodiversity by providing more space for biodiversity and improving connectivity.

⁵ The National Habitat Network is a spatial dataset that describes the geographic extent and location of habitat networks for 18 priority habitats based primarily, but not exclusively, on the Priority Habitat Inventory. The Priority Habitat Inventory is a spatial dataset that describes the geographic extent and location of Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 habitats of principal importance. This inventory replaces Natural England's previous separate BAP habitat inventories. Additional data has also been added in relation to habitat restoration-creation, restorable habitat, plus fragmentation action, and network enhancement and expansion zones.

- 9.20 The wider plan policies also have indirect impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity in the neighbourhood area. Policy SH1 defines the settlement boundary for Stoke Hammond and prevents development from occurring outside this boundary unless it is essential. This protects areas that are likely to have a higher biodiversity value by focusing development in already developed areas, which are also likely to be less biodiverse. Furthermore, Policy SH4 focuses on maintaining and improving the identified Green Infrastructure Network – by ensuring development within or adjacent to the network delivers biodiversity net gains, and the loss of contributing land is resisted. This will have secondary benefits for biodiversity through protecting the existing biodiverse areas and their connectivity.
- 9.21 Overall, the Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan has a small focus on biodiversity – this reflects the generally low biodiversity value of the neighbourhood area (there are no designations within the neighbourhood area, and priority habitat coverage is limited). As it stands, broadly **neutral** effects are considered most likely through adopting the Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan.

Flood risk

- 9.22 The Stoke Hammond neighbourhood area is intersected by a number of waterbodies. This includes the River Ouzel on the eastern neighbourhood area boundary, the Grand Union Canal, streams, drains, and standing bodies of water. Areas along the River Ouzel and the streams lie within fluvial Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3. Surface water flood risk is also prevalent within the neighbourhood area; again, especially in proximity to the River Ouzel and the streams that intersect Stoke Hammond. It is noted that there have been flood events in and around the village of Stoke Hammond in recent years, and that surface water flooding is more problematic than fluvial flooding.
- 9.23 In terms of flood risk, all sites are within fluvial Flood Zone 1, and as such are at very low risk of fluvial flooding. Additionally, the sites are at low risk of surface water flooding – each with their own pockets of higher risk areas that could be avoided or mitigated through development. However, a brook runs adjacent to Site NP04 (Parish Council Land adjoining Community Association) with an area of Flood Zone 3 following its course but confined the brook and its sides. Surface water flood risk associated with the brook extends north of the waterbody excluding the site entirely. Additionally, site allocation NP05 (Orchard End / Meadowside (merged with Site 20)) indicates any development proposals should be supported by a surface water drainage strategy. This will contribute to mitigating flood risk on this site by providing viable ways in which to reduce surface water.
- 9.24 Whilst there are no flood risk specific policies within the Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan, some of the wider plan policies would have indirect benefits relating to avoiding / mitigating flood risk. Policy SH1 defines the settlement boundaries and seeks to ensure development outside these boundaries is resisted unless it is essential. This avoids building on undeveloped areas that may be at greater risk of flooding, or land contributing to natural flood management, such as floodplains and overspill areas. Policy SH4 focuses on maintaining and enhancing the green infrastructure network. This could contribute to flood risk mitigation by encouraging greater interception

of water by vegetation and green spaces within the network, which could reduce surface water runoff. Finally, policy SH8 indicates car parking spaces should use permeable surfaces where possible, to allow for increased rainwater absorption. This will help reduce the amount of water trapped on the surface, thus reducing the risk of surface water flooding.

- 9.25 Despite flood risk being identified as a concern for the neighbourhood area, the Stoke Hammond Neighbourhood Plan has a small focus on flooding. This may be due to the chosen sites being at lower risk. The wider plan policies would likely have indirect benefits for mitigating flood risk; through ensuring development outside the settlement boundary is resisted, protecting the green network, and incorporating permeable surfaces into parking provision. As such, **broadly neutral** effects are concluded as most likely.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

- 10.1 Overall, no significant effects are considered likely in the implementation of the SHNP. Minor negative effects in relation to landscape are associated with greenfield development proposals (i.e., development in a previously undeveloped area) but the Plan notably places great weight on landscape considerations for future growth and provides policy mitigation. Residual broadly neutral effects are concluded for the remaining themes of biodiversity, historic environment, and flood risk. Notably, the spatial strategy avoids development in key sensitive areas relating to biodiversity and flood risk and provides policy and design mitigation that should reduce the significance of any effects in relation to the settings of designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- 10.2 No recommendations are made that are necessary to reduce the significance of any impacts, but it is noted that there could be more positive contributions in relation to the historic environment if the site allocation policy were to include more guidelines around implementing greenspace / green infrastructure, which positively contributes to the setting of heritage features.

Part 3: What are the next steps?

11. Next steps and monitoring

11.1 This part of the report explains the next steps that will be taken as part of the plan-making and SEA process.

Plan finalisation

11.2 This Environmental Report accompanies the SHNP for submission to the Local Planning Authority, Buckinghamshire Council, for subsequent Independent Examination.

11.3 At Independent Examination, the SHNP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

11.4 If the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the Neighbourhood Plan will then be subject to a referendum, organised by Buckinghamshire Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the SHNP will become part of the Development Plan for Buckinghamshire, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

Monitoring

11.5 The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

11.6 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be primarily undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No potential significant negative effects have been identified that would require additional or more stringent monitoring in this case.

Appendices

Appendix A – Regulatory requirements

As discussed in **Chapter 1**, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) explains the information that must be contained in the Environmental Report; however, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. **Table AA-1** links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst **Table AA-2** explains this interpretation. **Table AA-3** identifies how and where within the Environmental Report the regulatory requirements have/ will be met.

Table AA-1: Questions answered by the Environmental Report, in accordance with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

Report section	Questions answered	Regulatory requirement met
Introduction	What is the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.
	What is the scope of the SEA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance. Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected. Key environmental problems/ issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment.
Part 1	What has plan-making/ SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach). The likely significant effects associated with alternatives. Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives assessment/ a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the Plan.
Part 2	What are the SEA findings at this current stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likely significant effects associated with the Plan. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce, and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan.
Part 3	What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A description of the monitoring measures envisaged.

Table AA-2: Questions answered by the Environmental Report, in accordance with regulatory requirements

<u>Schedule 2</u>	<u>Interpretation of Schedule 2</u>	
<i>The report must include...</i>	<i>The report must include...</i>	
1. an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	i.e. answer - <i>What's the plan seeking to achieve?</i>
2. the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'context'?</i>
3. the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;		
4. any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan'	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>
5. the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	
6. the likely significant effects on the environment including on issues such as 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;	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues & objectives?</i>
7. the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;	Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal	
8. an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information	An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (i.e. an explanation of the 'reasonableness of the approach')	i.e. answer - <i>What has Plan-making / SA involved up to this point?</i> [Part 1 of the Report]
9. a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	The likely significant effects associated with alternatives, including on issues such as... ... and an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives considered / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan.	
	The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan	i.e. answer - <i>What are the assessment findings at this current stage?</i> [Part 2 of the Report]
	The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan	
	A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring	i.e. answer - <i>What happens next?</i> [Part 3 of the Report]

Table AA-3: ‘Checklist’ of how (throughout the SEA process) and where regulatory requirements are or will be met.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how the requirement is met
Schedule 2 requirements:	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	Chapter 2 (‘What’s the plan seeking to achieve’) presents this information. The relationship with other plans and programmes is also set out in the SEA Scoping Report.
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.	These matters were considered in detail at the scoping stage, which included consultation on a Scoping Report published in 2022. The outcome of scoping was an ‘SEA Framework’, and this is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What’s the scope of the SEA’).
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.	
5. The environmental protection objectives established at international, national, or community level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	The Scoping Report (2022) presents a detailed context review and explains how key messages from the context review (and baseline review) were then refined to establish an ‘SEA framework’. The context review informed the development of the SEA framework and topics, presented in Chapter 3, which provide a methodological ‘framework’ for appraisal. With regards to explaining “how... considerations have been taken into account” - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 explains how reasonable alternatives were established in-light of available evidence. • Chapter 6 sets out the detailed appraisal of options. • Chapter 7 explains the Council’s ‘reasons for supporting the preferred approach’, i.e., explains how/ why the preferred approach is justified in-light of alternatives appraisal (and other factors). • Chapter 9 sets out the findings of the appraisal of the draft plan and Chapter 10 provides a summary of the findings and any recommendations.
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as 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. (Footnote: these effects should include	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 explains how reasonable alternatives were established in-light of available evidence. • Chapter 6 sets out the detailed appraisal of options. • Chapter 9 sets out the findings of the appraisal of the draft plan and Chapter 10 provides a summary of the findings and any recommendations. <p>As explained within the various methodology sections, as part of appraisal work, consideration has been given to the</p>

Regulatory requirement**Discussion of how the requirement is met**

secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short-, medium-, and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects).

SEA scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions.

7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce, and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme.

Where necessary, mitigation measures are identified within the alternatives appraisal (in Chapter 6 and Appendix B) and appraisal of the Draft Local Plan (Chapters 9 and 10).

8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.

Chapter 5 deals with 'Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with', in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues/ options.

Also, Chapter 7 explains the Council's 'reasons for selecting the preferred option' (in light of alternatives appraisal). Methodology is discussed at various places, ahead of presenting appraisal findings, and limitations/ assumptions are also discussed as part of appraisal narratives.

9. A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10.

At this stage no additional monitoring measures are identified as being necessary over and above those already being considered by Buckinghamshire Council.

10. A Non-Technical Summary of the information provided under the above headings.

A Non-Technical Summary (NTS) is provided at the start of the report.

The SA Report must be published alongside the Draft Plan, in accordance with the following regulations: Authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying SA Report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1 and 6.2).

At the current time, this SEA Environmental Report is being published alongside the submission version of the SHNP, with a view to informing Regulation 16 consultation.

The SA Report must be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the Plan. The SA Report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6, and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7, shall be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure.

Assessment findings presented within this Environmental Report, and consultation responses received, have been fed back to the Steering Group and have informed plan finalisation.

Appendix B Site assessments

Site 3: West of Newton Leys



Site 3: West of Newton Leys

Key			
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)	R	Likely positive effect	G
Neutral/no effect	Y	Uncertain effect	B

SEA objective

Likely effects

SEA objective	Likely effects	
Conserve and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape	<p>The site is a greenfield, singular land parcel, located on the northern parish boundary adjacent to Newton Leys. The site is at a similar elevation to the Newton Leys settlement area and borders existing development on one side.</p> <p>Given its location, the site generally relates more closely to the landscape character and settlement pattern of Newton Leys and would expand the new development area at Lansbury Road up to Stoke Road and Drayton Road. Whilst this encroaches upon open countryside, the roads offer a physical boundary line.</p> <p>Development here could also impact on potential views surrounding the site, but given the low landscape sensitivity no significant effects are considered likely.</p> <p>Whilst the landscape is of low sensitivity, it is recognised that development at this site requires design mitigation to protect settlement character and views within and beyond the parish boundary. Pre-mitigation minor negative effects are therefore considered likely.</p>	R
Protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings.	The site is distant from the settlement's conservation area and listed buildings, and development is not considered likely to lead to significant effects. Neutral effects are concluded as most likely.	Y
Conserve, enhance, restore, and connect biodiversity interest in the Parish	<p>No constraints in relation to internationally or nationally designated biodiversity are identified for the site. Within the site itself, aerial imagery indicates there are trees and hedgerows located on the site boundaries, though these do not form Priority Habitat. These features are components of the local ecological network and should be retained and enhanced (where possible) alongside new development.</p> <p>Overall, negative effects are not considered likely if development comes forward on this site given the lack of biodiversity and geodiversity designations or Priority Habitats. The national premise for biodiversity net gain in development will likely bring benefits/ minor positive effects and these efforts could be targets at improving existing features on-site such as tree and hedgerow borders.</p>	G
Avoid development in areas of flood risk	With regards to flood risk issues, the whole site is within Fluvial Flood Zone 1, which means it has a low probability of experiencing flooding from rivers. While there is a small area within the site which is at low risk of surface water flooding, the western site boundary along Stoke Road is at low to medium risk of surface water flooding. Additionally, the northern site boundary is within proximity to an extensive area at medium to high risk of surface water flooding. As such, uncertain effects are identified, recognising a need for detailed consideration of existing and future flood risk and appropriate mitigation.	B

Site 5: Parish Council Land Adjoining Community Association



Site 5: Land Adjoining Community Association

Key			
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)	R	Likely positive effect	G
Neutral/no effect	Y	Uncertain effect	B

SEA objective**Likely effects**

Conserve and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape	<p>The site is located adjacent to the existing built-up area of Stoke Hammond and borders existing development on one side. The site is at a similar elevation to the Stoke Hammond settlement, gently sloping in a north-east direction. The site lies entirely within an Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL) designated through the VALP and development at the site would encroach upon the open countryside.</p> <p>Development is likely to affect views into and from the settlement, particularly when accessing the village from Bragenham Side. However, aerial imagery identifies dense vegetation (trees / hedgerows) on the site boundaries, which would likely limit the impact on views and screen new development to an extent.</p> <p>The potential for significant negative effects is noted given the loss of greenfield land in an area of landscape sensitivity. Design mitigation may be able to reduce the extent of negative impacts and avoid significant effects arising, however, residual minor negative effects would still be considered likely as a result of development in a previously undeveloped area.</p>	R
Protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings.	<p>The site is distant from the settlement's conservation area and listed buildings, and development is not considered likely to lead to significant effects. Neutral effects are concluded as most likely.</p>	Y
Conserve, enhance, restore, and connect biodiversity interest in the Parish	<p>No constraints in relation to internationally or nationally designated biodiversity are identified for the site. Aerial imagery demonstrates there are trees and hedgerows located on the northern, eastern, and western site boundaries. These features, though not Priority Habitat, are likely to contribute to the local ecological network by functioning as wildlife corridors and local habitat. As such, they should be retained and enhanced (where possible) alongside new development.</p> <p>Overall, negative effects are not considered likely if development comes forward on this site given the lack of biodiversity and geodiversity designations or Priority Habitats. The national premise for biodiversity net gain in development will likely bring benefits/ minor positive effects and these efforts could be targets at improving existing features on-site such as tree and hedgerow borders.</p>	G
Avoid development in areas of flood risk	<p>An area of Flood Zone 3 adjoins the north of the site associated with the brook that runs adjacent. At present fluvial flood risk is confined to the brook and its sides and surface water flood risk extends north of the brook avoiding the site entirely. Bragenham Side is affected by areas of high surface water flood risk and development at the site should consider opportunities to improve road drainage in development. No significant impacts are expected onsite however, and neutral effects are considered most likely in development.</p>	Y

Site 10: Southwest of Leighton Road (merged with Site 9)



Site 10: Southwest of Leighton Road

Key			
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)	R	Likely positive effect	G
Neutral/no effect	Y	Uncertain effect	B

SEA objective	Likely effects	
Conserve and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape	<p>The site is located just south of the existing built-up area of Stoke Hammond, extending further along Leighton Road, and is therefore disconnecting from the existing settlement boundary. The site is at a similar elevation to the Stoke Hammond settlement, gently inclining in an eastern direction.</p> <p>The site falls outside of the AAL designation of the VALP, but development encroaches upon open countryside where dispersed single dwellings form the character of the immediate area. The railway line and A4146 bound the site to the west. Development would be visible from the Leighton Road approach to the settlement.</p> <p>As such, minor negative effects are considered likely at this stage pre-mitigation. Given the lower landscape sensitivity of the site, effects are not considered likely to be significant.</p>	R
Protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings.	<p>The site does not intersect any historic environment designations; however, there is the Grade II listed Moat Farmhouse within 50m north of the site. It is possible that development at this site could impact on the setting of this heritage asset considering there is limited development to the south of the designation and limited existing screening. As such, the potential for negative effects is identified at this stage, prior to mitigation. Additional screening would likely be beneficial in reducing impacts, and low-density housing would be more in-keeping.</p>	R
Conserve, enhance, restore, and connect biodiversity interest in the Parish	<p>No constraints in relation to internationally or nationally designated biodiversity are identified for the site. Within the site itself, aerial imagery indicates there are trees and hedgerows located on the western and northern site boundaries, though these are not identified at Priority Habitat. These features form components of the local ecological network and should be retained and enhanced (where possible) alongside new development.</p> <p>Overall, negative effects are not considered likely if development comes forward on this site given the lack of biodiversity and geodiversity designations or Priority Habitats. The national premise for biodiversity net gain in development will likely bring benefits/ minor positive effects and these efforts could be targets at improving existing features on-site such as tree and hedgerow borders.</p>	G
Avoid development in areas of flood risk	<p>With regards to flood risk issues, the site has a moderately sized area of Flood Zone 3 on its western boundary; as such, this part of the site has a high risk of experiencing fluvial flooding. The whole of the site is also at varying risk of surface water flooding.</p> <p>There is a need to consider sequential testing, recognising there are other available areas for development outside of the flood zone. Mitigation would be required to address the potential negative effects identified for development at the site.</p>	R

Site 14: Hunters Lodge (merged with Site 15)



Site 14: Hunters Lodge

Key			
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)	R	Likely positive effect	G
Neutral/no effect	Y	Uncertain effect	B

SEA objective	Likely effects	
Conserve and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape	<p>The site is located adjacent to the existing built-up area of Stoke Hammond; it borders existing development to the east and is bound by the railway line and A4146 to the west. The site is at a similar elevation to the Stoke Hammond settlement, gently inclining in an eastern direction and falls outside of the VALP AAL designation. Given the railway line in the west and existing housing east, impacts in relation to views are likely to be minimised supported by design mitigation.</p> <p>Given the low sensitivity of the landscape in this area, minor negative effects because of greenfield development/ urban extension are considered likely pre-mitigation.</p>	R
Protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings.	<p>The site is distant from the settlement's conservation area and listed buildings, however, the farmhouse along Hunters Lodge (private) Road is a non-designated heritage asset of significant local importance. As such, the potential for negative effects is identified at this stage, prior to mitigation.</p>	R
Conserve, enhance, restore, and connect biodiversity interest in the Parish	<p>No constraints in relation to internationally or nationally designated biodiversity are identified for the site. Aerial imagery indicates there are trees and hedgerows located on the northern site boundary, though these are not identified as Priority Habitat. These features form components of the local ecological network and should be retained and enhanced (where possible) alongside new development.</p> <p>Overall, negative effects are not considered likely if development comes forward on this site given the lack of biodiversity and geodiversity designations or Priority Habitats. The national premise for biodiversity net gain in development will likely bring benefits/ minor positive effects and these efforts could be targets at improving existing features on-site such as tree and hedgerow borders.</p>	G
Avoid development in areas of flood risk	<p>The site is wholly within Flood Zone 1 and at low risk of fluvial flooding. Furthermore, the whole site is at very low risk of surface water flooding. Given this, neutral / no effects are considered likely in development at the site.</p>	Y

Site 18: North of Harrup Close



Site 18: North of Harrup Close

Key			
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)	R	Likely positive effect	G
Neutral/no effect	Y	Uncertain effect	B

SEA objective	Likely effects	
Conserve and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape	<p>The site is located within the existing built-up area of Stoke Hammond and is therefore well enclosed by existing development. The site is at a similar elevation to the Stoke Hammond settlement, gently sloping down in a south-eastern direction. New development at the site is likely to impact views from adjacent residential properties, particularly those adjacent to the site to the south-east along Harrup Close and Lodge Lane. More isolated dwellings to the north and east are unlikely to be impacted by development at this site given dense vegetation limits visibility in this direction. The site falls outside of the VALP AAL designation.</p> <p>Given the location of the site within the built-up area and adjacent to existing residential dwellings, effects relate more closely to the immediate townscape rather than the wider landscape. Minor negative effects are considered likely prior to design mitigation (which should include retention of hedgerows and trees).</p>	R
Protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings.	<p>The site falls partially within the designated conservation area and there are two Grade II listed buildings within proximity to the site; Stoke Lodge 30m north-east, and Little Thatch within 85m north of the site. It is likely development at this site could impact on the setting of these heritage assets, especially Stoke Lodge given the proposed site is adjacent to the feature. The site forms an area of greenspace within the conservation area. As such, negative effects are concluded likely at this stage, prior to mitigation measures.</p>	R
Conserve, enhance, restore, and connect biodiversity interest in the Parish	<p>No constraints in relation to internationally or nationally designated biodiversity are identified for the site. Within the site itself there are trees, and aerial imagery indicates there are trees and hedgerows located on the western and part of the eastern site boundaries. The site features are identified as part of the Priority Habitat Inventory (where no main habitat is identified but additional habitat exists) These features also form components of the local ecological network and should be retained and enhanced (where possible) alongside new development.</p> <p>Overall, a potential for negative effects and habitat loss is identified at this stage. The national premise for biodiversity net gain in development will also likely bring benefits/ minor positive effects and these efforts could be targets at improving existing features on-site such as tree and hedgerow borders.</p>	R
Avoid development in areas of flood risk	<p>With regards to flood risk issues, the site is wholly within Flood Zone 1 and at low risk of fluvial flooding. Furthermore, most of the site is at very low risk of surface water flooding, with a small section of the western site boundary at low risk. As such, neutral effects are considered likely in development at the site.</p>	Y

Site 19: Orchard End/ Meadowside (merged with Site 20)



Site 19: Orchard End

Key			
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)	R	Likely positive effect	G
Neutral/no effect	Y	Uncertain effect	B

SEA objective	Likely effects	
Conserve and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape	<p>The site is greenfield land located adjacent to the existing built-up area of Stoke Hammond, at a similar elevation, gently declining in a south-eastern direction. The site is bound in the west by the railway line and A4146 and borders existing development to the east.</p> <p>Given the location of the site close to the built-up area and bound by the railway line, effects relate more closely to the immediate townscape rather than the wider landscape. Minor negative effects are considered likely prior to design mitigation (which should include retention of existing hedgerows and trees).</p>	R
Protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings.	<p>The site lies close to the designated conservation area and the Grade II listed Stoke Lodge. Development at this site could impact on the setting of these heritage assets, particularly views into/ from the conservation area, though these are interrupted by the rail line and A4146 to some degree and it is noted that planning permission which has been granted at the Meadows will provide a buffer between the site and Stoke Lodge. As such, the potential for negative effects is highlighted at this stage, prior to mitigation measures. Mitigation has good potential to reduce the significance of residual effects.</p>	R
Conserve, enhance, restore, and connect biodiversity interest in the Parish	<p>No constraints in relation to internationally or nationally designated biodiversity are identified for the site. Within the site itself there are trees and hedgerows, and aerial imagery indicates there are trees and hedgerows located on the western, southern, and eastern site boundaries. Whilst these features are not identified as Priority Habitat, they do form components of the local ecological network and should be retained and enhanced (where possible) alongside new development.</p> <p>Overall, negative effects are not considered likely if development comes forward on this site given the lack of biodiversity and geodiversity designations or Priority Habitats. The national premise for biodiversity net gain in development will likely bring benefits/ minor positive effects and these efforts could be targets at improving existing features on-site such as tree and hedgerow borders.</p>	G
Avoid development in areas of flood risk	<p>The site is wholly within Flood Zone 1 and at low risk of fluvial flooding. Most of the site is also at very low risk of surface water flooding, except for two isolated areas within the site that are at low risk, and the eastern and southern site boundaries which are at varying risk of surface water flooding, ranging from high to low. Given the parameters of national and local planning policy which include directions for development to integrate sustainable drainage systems, negative effects are likely to be avoided and residual neutral effects are concluded as most likely (in the absence of the neighbourhood plan). Despite this, it is recognised that site specific policies in the neighbourhood plan should also highlight any need for sustainable drainage on-site, if the site is progressed.</p>	Y

Site 29: North of Old School Lane

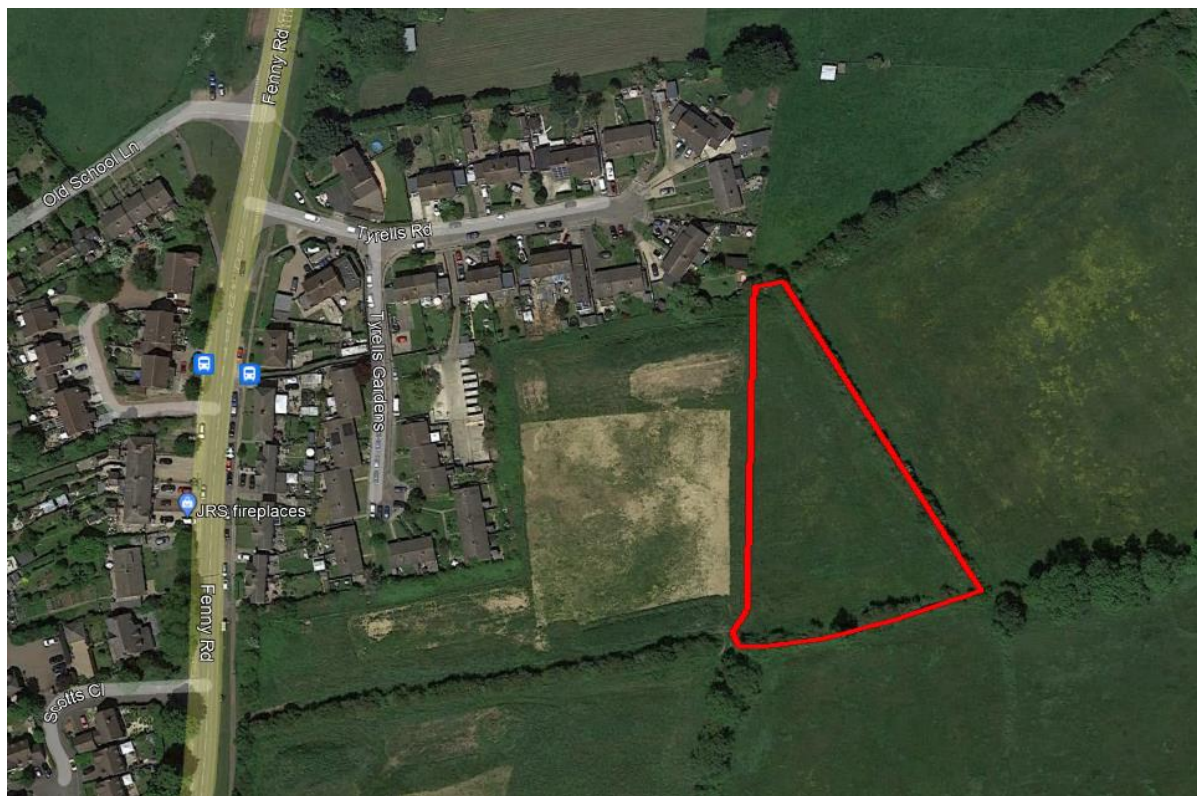


Site 29: North of Old School Lane

Key			
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)	R	Likely positive effect	G
Neutral/no effect	Y	Uncertain effect	B

SEA objective	Likely effects	
Conserve and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape	The site is located north of Stoke Hammond, adjacent to the settlement edge. The site is greenfield land at a similar elevation to the Stoke Hammond settlement, sloping downwards in a north-eastern direction. New development would encroach upon open countryside north of the settlement area, lying adjacent to the VALP designated AAL and contribute to reducing the landscape gap between Stoke Hammond and Newton Leys. Minor negative effects are therefore considered likely.	R
Protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings	The site does not intersect any historic environment designations, but the designated conservation area and five listed buildings lie within proximity. Development has the potential to affect the settings of the Grade II* Church of St Luke 35m north-west, Grade II listed Tomb of Fountaine Family in Churchyard 25m north-west, Grade II listed The Old Rectory 32m south-west, Grade II listed Orchard Cottage 20 south-east, and Grade II listed Swan Cottage 65m south. As such, negative effects are concluded likely at this stage prior to mitigation.	R
Conserve, enhance, restore, and connect biodiversity interest in the Parish	<p>No constraints in relation to internationally or nationally designated biodiversity are identified for the site. There are no BAP Priority Habitats on the site, however there is an area of deciduous woodland approximately 75m west of the site. Whilst direct impacts on this neighbouring habitat from development are unlikely, minor disturbances may occur due to noise and light pollution, particularly during construction.</p> <p>Aerial imagery indicates there are trees and hedgerows located on the western site boundary and partially on the northern and southern site boundaries. These features form components of the local ecological network and should be retained and enhanced (where possible) alongside new development.</p> <p>Overall, minor disturbances may need to be managed, particularly during construction phases, though these are not considered likely to equate to long-term negative effects, particularly when considered alongside the national premise for biodiversity net gain in development. Minor positive effects are considered most likely overall, particularly should net gain effects focus on improving ecological connections within and around nearby Priority Habitat.</p>	G
Avoid development in areas of flood risk	With regards to flood risk issues, the site is wholly within Flood Zone 1 and at low risk of fluvial flooding. Additionally, the whole site is at very low risk of surface water flooding. As such, neutral effects are considered likely in development at the site.	Y

Site 36: East of Fenny Road



Site 36: East of Fenny Road

Key			
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)	R	Likely positive effect	G
Neutral/no effect	Y	Uncertain effect	B

SEA objective

Likely effects

Conserve and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape	The greenfield site lies east of the Stoke Hammond settlement area and falls within the VALP designated AAL. The site is at the same elevation to the Stoke Hammond settlement and borders existing development to the west. Development at the site would encroach upon open countryside and likely impact upon settlement views east. Given the higher landscape sensitivity of the site, the potential for negative effects of significance is identified.	R
Protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings.	The site is distant from the settlement's conservation area and listed buildings, and development is not considered likely to lead to significant effects. Neutral effects are concluded as most likely.	Y
Conserve, enhance, restore, and connect biodiversity interest in the Parish	No constraints in relation to internationally or nationally designated biodiversity are identified for the site. Aerial imagery indicates there are trees and hedgerows located on all site boundaries, though these are not identified as Priority Habitat. These features form components of the local ecological network and should be retained and enhanced (where possible) alongside new development. Overall, negative effects are not considered likely if development comes forward on this site given the lack of biodiversity and geodiversity designations or Priority Habitats. The national premise for biodiversity net gain in development will likely bring benefits/ minor positive effects and these efforts could be targeted at improving existing features on-site such as tree and hedgerow borders.	G
Avoid development in areas of flood risk	With regards to flood risk issues, the site is wholly within Flood Zone 1 and at low risk of fluvial flooding. However, the southernmost third of the site is at low to medium risk of surface water flooding which will need to be managed by appropriate mitigation (i.e., drainage systems). Given the parameters of national and local planning policy which include directions for development to integrate sustainable drainage systems, negative effects are likely to be avoided and residual neutral effects are concluded as most likely (in the absence of the neighbourhood plan). Despite this, it is recognised that site specific policies in the neighbourhood plan should also highlight any need for sustainable drainage on-site, if the site is progressed.	Y