

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Whitchurch Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report

April 2023

Quality information

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Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

AECOM has been commissioned to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Whitchurch Neighbourhood Plan (WNP).

SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. SEA of the WNP is a legal requirement¹. This is a Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the SEA Environmental Report.

The WNP is being prepared by the Parish Council in the context of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Buckinghamshire Council (previously Aylesbury Vale District Council). Once 'made' the WNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications, alongside the LDF.

An SEA Environmental Report was published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) in November 2022. This is the submission version of the SEA Environmental Report, which accompanies the WNP in Regulation 16 Consultation.

Structure of the Environmental Report

SEA reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:

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 draft plan.
3. What happens next?

Each of these questions is answered in turn within a discrete 'part' of the Environmental Report and summarised within this NTS. However, firstly there is a need to set the scene further by answering the questions 'What is the Plan seeking to achieve?' and 'What's the scope of the SEA?'

What is the Plan seeking to achieve?

The WNP has a clear vision for 2040, which is:

"The village of Whitchurch has grown but the required growth has conserved and enhance the special character and heritage of the village, the surrounding countryside and protected our most valued green spaces. New homes have helped address local needs and sustained the demand for community facilities and services. Safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists have reduced reliance on cars."

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 completed in accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations ('the SEA Regulations'). The WNP was subject to informal screening by Buckinghamshire Council followed closely by formal Scoping consultation in 2022 which sought the wider opinions of statutory consultees.

To achieve this vision, the following five objectives have been identified:

- To provide affordable homes from local people, particularly for those looking to downsize and young people wanting to stay in the parish.
- Securing a more appropriate mix of housing in new developments which recognises the need for a balanced community.
- Conserving and enhancing the special heritage character of the village and its landscape setting.
- To sustain community facilities and services that are essential to community life.
- To encourage measures that will make the parish's roads safer for all users.

What is the scope of the SEA?

The scope of the SEA is reflected in a list of topics, objectives, and assessment questions, which, taken together indicate the parameters of the SEA and provide a methodological 'framework' for assessment. A summary framework is presented below, and a full framework which includes assessment questions is provided within the main Environmental Report (see **Table 3.2**).

SEA theme	SEA objective(s)
Air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support objectives to improve air quality within and surrounding the neighbourhood plan area and minimise all sources of air pollution.
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain and enhance the extent and quality of biodiversity and geodiversity habitats and networks within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area. • Support the resilience of the neighbourhood area to the potential effects of climate change, including flood risk.
Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the neighbourhood area.
Historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.
Land, soil and water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure the efficient and effective use of land. • To protect and enhance water quality and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape, including green infrastructure corridors?
Population and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents and in suitably connected places, supported by the appropriate and timely provision of infrastructure to enable cohesive and inclusive communities.
Transportation and movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

Plan-making / SEA up to this point

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 to the allocation of land for housing, or alternative sites.

Specifically, **Part 1** of the report -

1. explains the process of establishing the reasonable alternatives.
2. presents the outcomes of assessing the reasonable alternatives; and
3. explains reasons for establishing the preferred option, considering the assessment.

The decision was taken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives in relation to the matter of allocating land for housing, given the following considerations:

- WNP objectives, particularly housing objectives to provide sufficient and appropriate high-quality housing to meet local needs.
- 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.

Establishing the alternatives

The Environmental Report explains how reasonable alternatives were established following a process of considering the strategic policy context ('top down' factors) and the site options in contention for allocation ('bottom-up' factors).

This work identified eight site options with the potential to deliver growth within Whitchurch, which are:

- Site A – land North of Oving Road for the development of four dwellings.
- Site B – land at Barrettstown West for the development of seven dwellings.
- Site C – land at Barrettstown East for the development of 26 dwellings.
- Site F – land at Manor Farm North for the development of 25 to 35 dwellings.
- Site G – land at Kempson House North for the development of 20 to 30 dwellings.
- Site H – land at Kempson House West for the development of 18 dwellings.
- Site J – land at Little London North for the development of 8 to 10 dwellings.
- Site L – land at Greenacres Stables for the development of 32 dwellings.

These options were presented to the public in November 2022. No further options were identified following Regulation 14 consultation.

Assessing the alternatives

The table below presents summary findings for the assessment of these options, with detailed findings presented in **Chapter 6** of the Environmental Report.

SEA theme	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site F	Site G	Site H	Site J	Site L
Air quality								
Biodiversity and geodiversity								
Climate change and flood risk								
Health and wellbeing								
Historic environment								
Land, soil, and water resources								
Landscape								
Population and communities								
Transportation and movement								

Key

Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)		Likely positive effect	
Neutral / no effect		Uncertain effect	

Overall, there are no likely adverse effects identified in relation to the population and communities theme for any sites. Residential development at each site could contribute to the provision of affordable housing. Only site A is a possible concern due to the potential for the developable area of the site to be reduced below the 0.3 hectares threshold for affordable housing.

Sites A and F perform most favourably overall, with likely positive effects on health and wellbeing and population and communities respectively. The main weakness of site A, other than air quality, is its position on Oving Road. The main weakness of site F is its value as greenfield land.

Site H also performs relatively well compared to the other sites, with only two likely adverse effect identified in relation to air quality and landscape, which is the same across all sites for air quality and the majority of sites for landscape (reflecting greenfield development).

Sites B, C, G and L perform slightly less favourably, with all sites having likely adverse effects on transportation and movement and landscape. Regarding transportation and movement, for sites B, C and L, this is related to their position on Oving Road, and for site G, this is related to its position on the A413 and value as a

footpath along open green space. Regarding landscape, this is due to the loss of a significant amount of greenfield land.

Site J performs least favourably overall due to concerns around health and wellbeing (the site is furthest from the recreation ground), the historic environment (the site falls within the Conservation Area), and transport and movement (poor visibility out of Little London onto the A413).

Developing the preferred approach

The Parish Council's reasons for developed the preferred approach in light of the alternatives assessment are identified below:

“A reasonable approach to housing growth for a large village with environmental constraints was established in coming to a final view on site selection, as detailed in Section 5 of the Site Assessment Report published alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.

The findings of the site assessments undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan in this report were considered alongside community preferences following consultation events in July 2021 and November 2021. The consultation events highlighted that there were two sites, Sites F and H, that attracted substantially less concern from the community than others.

When balancing the outcome of these tests and taking into consideration the approach to housing growth the Neighbourhood Plan allocates Site H and reserves Site F.”

Assessment findings at this stage

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

Overall, **no significant negative effects** are considered likely in the implementation of the WNP. **Significant positive effects** are anticipated in relation to the population and communities theme, predominantly reflecting the potential provision of high-quality and accessible housing of a range of tenures, connected to the existing settlement area.

Minor negative effects are predicted as likely in relation to the SEA themes of air quality, land, soil, and water resources, and landscape. This predominantly reflects the greenfield development through W3, potentially resulting in the loss of high-quality agricultural land, and likely minor increases in traffic in and nearby the Aylesbury AQMAs.

Minor positive effects are concluded as most likely in relation to the SEA themes of biodiversity, climate change and flood risk, historic environment, and transportation and movement. The allocation and reserve sites are not significantly constrained in relation to biodiversity and flood risk. Whilst there are heritage constraints, the provisions of the WNP seek to ensure no residual impacts in relation to the significance of assets or their settings. Additional policy provisions which identify positive characteristics which contribute to heritage settings, design codes, important local views, and traffic mitigation measures at key locations are notable benefits of the plan.

Neutral effects are concluded as most likely in relation the health and wellbeing SEA theme, with no significant deviations from the baseline predicted.

Cumulative effects

Cumulatively, the WNP will support the wider Bucks local housing strategy and supply of sites for development. In particular, the provision of a reserve site in the eventuality that the emerging Local Plan identifies additional development needs will boost supply and provide greater clarity for residents both within and surrounding the Parish. On this basis, **positive cumulative effects** are considered most likely.

Recommendations

At this stage, no significant negative effects are considered likely that would require more stringent mitigation. The minor negative effects identified are largely unavoidable with a lack of suitable alternative brownfield sites and in the context of a rural village environment. On this basis **no recommendations** are identified. Despite this, it is recognised that the views of statutory consultees are being sought at consultation and will be considered in the next iteration of plan-making and SEA.

Next steps

Part 3 of the Environment Report explains the next steps that will be taken as part of plan-making and SEA.

Plan finalisation

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

Assuming 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 WNP will become part of the Development Plan for Buckinghamshire Council, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

Monitoring

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.

It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the WNP will be undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the WNP that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council.

However, a Heritage Appraisal was undertaken in March 2023 in respect of the Manor Farm site allocation, which suggested that further investigation is likely to be required, such as geophysical surveys, before any determination of a planning

application can be made. A detailed settings assessment will also be required to inform any future development plans and planning application. It is recommended that the progression of development proposals at site allocations is monitored alongside the effectiveness of NDP policies in this respect.

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Whitchurch Neighbourhood Plan (WNP).
- 1.2 The WNP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and in the context of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Buckinghamshire Council (previously Aylesbury Vale District Council). Once 'made' the WNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications, alongside the LDF.
- 1.3 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. SEA of the WNP is a legal requirement.²

SEA explained

- 1.4 It is a requirement that SEA is undertaken in-line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which transposed into national law EU Directive 2001/42/EC on SEA.
- 1.5 In-line with the Regulations, 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*".³ The report must then be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
- 1.6 More specifically, the Report must answer 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 draft plan.
 3. What happens next?

This Environmental Report

- 1.7 An Environmental Report for the WNP was published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) in November 2022. No responses were received directly relating to the SEA, but in response to comments made on the draft WNP, minor policy updates have been made. This Environmental

² 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 completed in accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations ('the SEA Regulations'). The WNP was subject to informal screening by Buckinghamshire Council and formal Scoping consultation in 2022 sought the wider opinions of statutory consultees.

³ Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Report accompanies the latest 'submission' version of the WNP. It will be submitted alongside the WNP and publicised at Regulation 16 consultation.

- 1.8 This report essentially answers questions 1, 2 and 3 in turn (see para 1.6), to provide the required information.⁴ Each question is answered within a discrete 'part' of the report.
- 1.9 However, before answering question 1, two initial questions are answered to further set the scene; what is the plan seeking to achieve? And what is the scope of the SEA?

⁴ See **Appendix A** for further explanation of the regulatory basis for answering certain questions within the Environmental Report, and a 'checklist' explaining more precisely the regulatory basis for presenting certain information.

2. What is the Whitchurch NP seeking to achieve?

Introduction

2.1 This section considers the strategic planning policy context provided by the LDF for Buckinghamshire Council, before then presenting the Neighbourhood Plan vision and objectives. **Figure 2.1** below presents the Plan area.

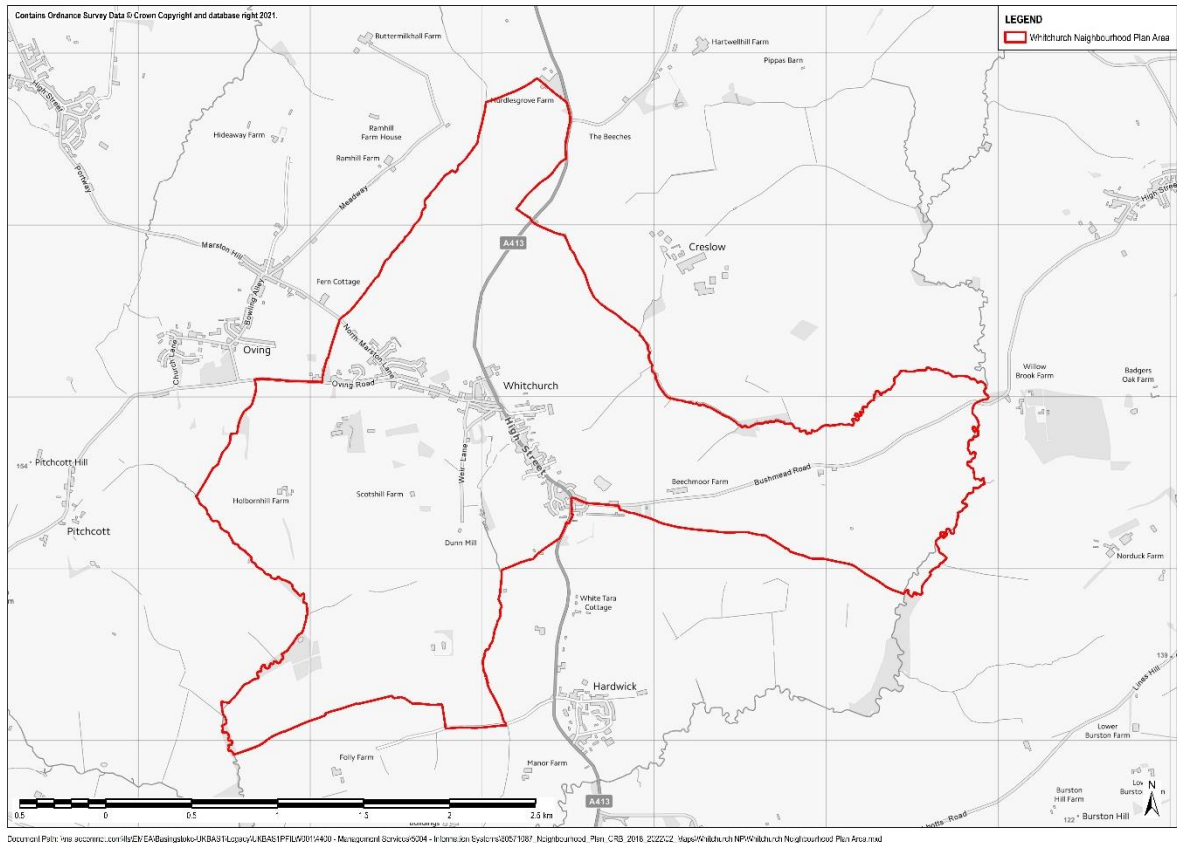


Figure 2.1 Whitchurch neighbourhood area

Strategic planning context

2.2 Whitchurch lies within the Vale of Aylesbury and is being developed in the context of Buckinghamshire Council’s Local Development Framework (LDF). Falling formerly under the remit of Aylesbury Vale District Council, the adopted planning framework consists of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) (2013-2033). With the creation of Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority in 2020, work is now progressing on the Buckinghamshire Local Plan, which must be in place for the whole council area by April 2025.

2.3 This work is at an early stage; an initial call for sites of previously developed land (brownfield) was completed in April 2021, which looked for land that could be reused for homes. This was followed by an early engagement questionnaire that ended in February 2022. During this period, residents were asked to complete a questionnaire survey to start early discussions and discover the

issues which local residents and organisations think are important in shaping the future of the area.

- 2.4 Most recently, a wider call for sites has concluded, which includes greenfield sites. This will help the Council gather a full understanding of the land available for development within Buckinghamshire. The council may still consider sites submitted later. All sites submitted through both call for sites will be technically assessed in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA).
- 2.5 The VALP identifies Whitchurch as a 'larger village' in the settlement hierarchy. Table 2 further identifies a need for 130 homes over the plan period 2013 to 2033, all of which have been, or will be, delivered through existing completions and commitments. This includes the allocation site Holt's Field (D-WHI009) which is anticipated to deliver 22 new homes.

Whitchurch NP vision and objectives

- 2.6 The WNP has a clear vision for 2040, which is:

"The village of Whitchurch has grown but the required growth has conserved and enhance the special character and heritage of the village, the surrounding countryside and protected our most valued green spaces. New homes have helped address local needs and sustained the demand for community facilities and services. Safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists have reduced reliance on cars."

- 2.7 To achieve this vision, the following five objectives have been identified:

- To provide affordable homes from local people, particularly for those looking to downsize and young people wanting to stay in the parish.
- Securing a more appropriate mix of housing in new developments which recognises the need for a balanced community.
- Conserving and enhancing the special heritage character of the village and its landscape setting.
- To sustain community facilities and services that are essential to community life.
- To encourage measures that will make the parish's roads safer for all users.

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 themes and objectives that should be a focus of the assessment of the plan and reasonable alternatives. Further information, including the policy review and baseline information that has supported the development of key sustainability issues and objectives, is presented in **Appendix B**.

Consultation

- 3.2 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.⁵ As such, these authorities were consulted in January 2022.
- 3.3 Only Natural England and Historic England responded during the consultation period. Natural England had no specific comments to make, whilst Historic England agreed with the scope of the SEA but asked for the scheduled monument ‘Bolbec Castle’ to be added as a baseline consideration. This has since been incorporated in historic environment considerations.

The SEA framework

- 3.4 The SEA scope is summarised in a list of themes, objectives, and assessment questions, known as the SEA framework. **Table 3.2** presents the SEA framework as broadly agreed in 2022.

Table 3.1 Summary SEA framework

SEA theme	SEA objective	Assessment question (will the proposal help to...)
Air quality	Support objectives to improve air quality within and surrounding the Plan area and minimise all sources of air pollution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and encourage more sustainable transport options? Enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements? Encourage development which reduces the need to travel? Implement measures (such as green infrastructure development) which will help to support good air quality in the Plan area? Ensure development connects to the existing road network, promoting ease of access and suitably mitigating any potential increases in congestion?
Biodiversity and geodiversity	To maintain and enhance the extent and quality of biodiversity and geodiversity habitats and networks within	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance priority habitats and the links between them? Achieve a net gain in biodiversity? Support habitat restoration or new habitat creation within the identified Network Enhancement or Expansion Zones?

⁵ These consultation bodies were selected “*by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes*” (SEA Directive, Article 6(3)).

SEA theme	SEA objective	Assessment question (will the proposal help to...)
	and surrounding the Plan area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks and the network of open spaces?
Climate change and flood risk	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities in the Plan area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the number of journeys made by polluting vehicles? Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? Improve or extend local footpaths, cycle paths or strategic green infrastructure routes? Increase the number of new development meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources? Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources? Support the transition to electric vehicles?
	Support the resilience of the Plan area to the potential effects of climate change, including flood risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change? Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the Plan area? Sustainably manage water runoff? Increase the resilience of the local built and natural environment? Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are duly considered in the design of new development in the Plan area?
Health and wellbeing	Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the Plan area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote accessibility to a range of leisure, health, and community facilities, for all age groups? Provide and enhance community access to open green spaces? Promote the use of healthier modes of travel, including active travel networks? Improve access to the countryside for recreational use? Avoid negative impacts to the quality and/ or extent of existing recreational assets, including formal and informal footpaths?
Historic environment	To protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the Plan area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings? Conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of locally important features and their settings? Protect the integrity of the historic setting of key monuments of cultural heritage interest as listed in the Buckinghamshire HER? Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies? Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the WNP area?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Assessment question (will the proposal help to...)
Land, soil, and water resources	To ensure the efficient and effective use of land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid the loss of high-quality agricultural land resources? • Support the continued operation of waste infrastructure within and surrounding the Plan area? • Promote any opportunities for the use of previously developed land, or vacant/ underutilised land? • Avoid the unnecessary sterilisation of, or hindering of future access to, mineral resources?
	To protect and enhance water quality, and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid impacts on water quality? • Support improvements to water quality? • Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside development? • Protect waterbodies from pollution? • Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/ or water recycling? • Improve the resilience of water supplies?
Landscape	To protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape, including green infrastructure corridors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and/ or enhance local landscape character and quality of place? • Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character? • Identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place? • Protect and extend/ enhance green infrastructure corridors? • Protect visual amenity? • Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the rural setting, including trees and hedgerows?
Population and communities	Ensure growth in the Plan area is aligned with the needs of all residents and in suitably connected places, supported by the appropriate and timely provision of infrastructure to enable cohesive and inclusive communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality and affordable housing? • Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes targeted at aligning the housing stock with local needs? • Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's changing needs? • Improve the availability and/ or accessibility of local services and facilities? • Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities? • Contribute to improving aspects of deprivation in the Plan area? • Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing and future residents?
Transportation and movement	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage more use of sustainable transport modes? • Encourage the uptake of active travel opportunities? • Extend or improve active travel networks? • Enable sustainable transport infrastructure improvements?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Assessment question (will the proposal help to...)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitate on-going high levels of home and remote working?• Improve road safety?• Reduce impacts on residents from the road network?• Improve parking facilities?

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

4. Introduction (to Part 1)

Overview

- 4.1 Whilst work on the Whitchurch Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of work to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives.
- 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 WNP, namely the allocation of land for housing, or alternative sites.

Why focus on 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:
 - Housing growth is known to be a matter of key interest amongst residents and other stakeholders.
 - 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.

Structure of this part of the report

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

5. Establishing alternatives

Introduction

- 5.1 The aim of this chapter 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*”⁶.
- 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 WNP). These parameters are then drawn together to arrive at ‘reasonable alternatives.’

How much growth?

- 5.3 The Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) identifies a need for 130 homes over the plan period 2013 to 2033, all of which have been, or will be, delivered through existing completions and commitments. This includes the allocation site Holt’s Field (D-WHI009) which is anticipated to deliver 22 new homes.
- 5.4 As a result, the WNP is under no obligation to find more housing land for the next decade. However, the Parish Council is mindful of the provision of Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in respect of securing protection for the WNP, and of the preparation of a new Buckinghamshire Council Local Plan (BCLP) to cover the whole county and a longer plan period. The Parish Council is therefore considering making one or more housing site allocations of a total quantum that will be consistent with its status as a ‘Larger Village’ in the settlement hierarchy.
- 5.5 In this regard, the level of growth within the WNP is not set in stone at this stage. However, growth will be determined by the availability of suitable sites within the settlement boundary of the Parish, community opinion, and the village’s position in the settlement hierarchy as outlined in the VALP.
- 5.6 Notably, the VALP describes larger villages as “*large, more sustainable villages that have at least reasonable access to facilities and services and public transport, making them sustainable locations for development*”.

Where should growth be located?

- 5.7 The site assessment process began with the Parish Council forming a Steering Group to oversee the project on its behalf. The Steering Group engaged with the local community to publicise the WNP and to seek opinions and preferences on its vision and objectives. In March 2021, it commenced a ‘land availability’ exercise, which led to 10 sites in the Parish being put forward for potential housing development. This included a number of sites identified and appraised in Aylesbury Vale District Council’s Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)⁷.

⁶ Schedule 2(8) of the SEA Regulations.

⁷ Aylesbury Vale District Council (2017): ‘Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

5.8 The Steering Group requested additional information from all landowners to ensure that all 10 sites were available. A late submission (Site L) was received at this stage, which took the total number of sites up to 11 (details of sites outlined in **Table 5.1** below, ‘*’ marks sites identified and appraised in the Aylesbury Vale District Council’s HELAA). However, three sites (D, E and K) were withdrawn at this stage, reducing the total number of sites to eight (shown in **Figure 5.1** below). These eight sites qualify for further assessment and are therefore being taken forward for consideration through the SEA.

Table 5.1: Sites considered for potential housing development

Site	Area (hectares)	Capacity	Progression through the SEA
A – North of Oving Road	0.39	10	Yes
B – Barretstown West*	1.9	48	Yes
C – Barretstown East*	3	75	Yes
D – North West of Village*	9.11	228	No
E – North of Mount Pleasant*	0.69	17	No
F – Manor Farm North*	1.78	45	Yes
G – Kempson House North*	1.09	5	Yes
H – Kempson House West*	1.05	26	Yes
J – Little London North	0.25	6	Yes
K – Little London South	1	25	No
L - Greenacres Stables	2.8	32	Yes

Figure 5.1: Sites taken forward for consideration through the SEA



5.9 Together, these eight sites could deliver between 140 and 162 new homes, which is a disproportionately high figure in relation to the existing size of the village and its position in the settlement hierarchy. It is also a figure that is unlikely to receive community support. Assessment of the sites will inform the choice of sites for allocation in the WNP.

Establishing reasonable alternatives

5.10 The preceding text has served to highlight that the housing requirement for 130 homes in the Whitchurch area has been met through existing completions and commitments. Nevertheless, the Parish Council are considering making one or more housing site allocations to address Section 14 of the NPPF and in anticipation of the upcoming BCLP.

5.11 Having explored all identified site options, eight sites have been recognised as potentially suitable for development. For the purposes of SEA, these eight sites are potentially in contention for allocation in the WNP and represent reasonable alternatives for the Plan strategy.

Revisiting alternatives in 2023

5.12 Following Regulation 14 consultation, which presented an assessment of the options identified above, no responses were received which directly relate to the SEA.

5.13 Responses to the NDP include comments from Buckinghamshire Council, which has led to additional evidence development (particularly at the proposed site allocations) and minor policy wording updates. These evidence and plan updates do not identify any further alternatives for the plan and SEA to consider. This Environmental Report therefore presents (in Chapter 6) an assessment of the options previously consulted upon, incorporating the updated site allocation evidence. The updated WNP is considered in Part 2 of this Environmental Report.

6. Assessing alternatives

6.1 This chapter provides the assessment findings for the eight alternative options established in the previous chapter. To reiterate, the options are:

- Site A – land North of Oving Road for the development of four dwellings.
- Site B – land at Barrettstown West for the development of seven dwellings.
- Site C – land at Barretstown East for the development of 26 dwellings.
- Site F – land at Manor Farm North for the development of 25 to 35 dwellings.
- Site G – land at Kempson House North for the development of 20 to 30 dwellings.
- Site H – land at Kempson House West for the development of 18 dwellings.
- Site J – land at Little London North for the development of 8 to 10 dwellings.
- Site L – land at Greenacres Stables for the development of 32 dwellings.

Methodology

6.2 **Tables 6.1 to 6.8** provide details of the likely effects of each site, assessed against each SEA theme. Where appropriate, neutral effects or uncertain effects will be noted. **Figures 6.1 to 6.8** show the locations of each site.

6.3 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately, however where there is a need to rely on local knowledge or assumptions to reach a conclusion on the likely effects of a site, this is made explicit in the appraisal text.

Figure 6.1 Location of Site A: North of Oving Road

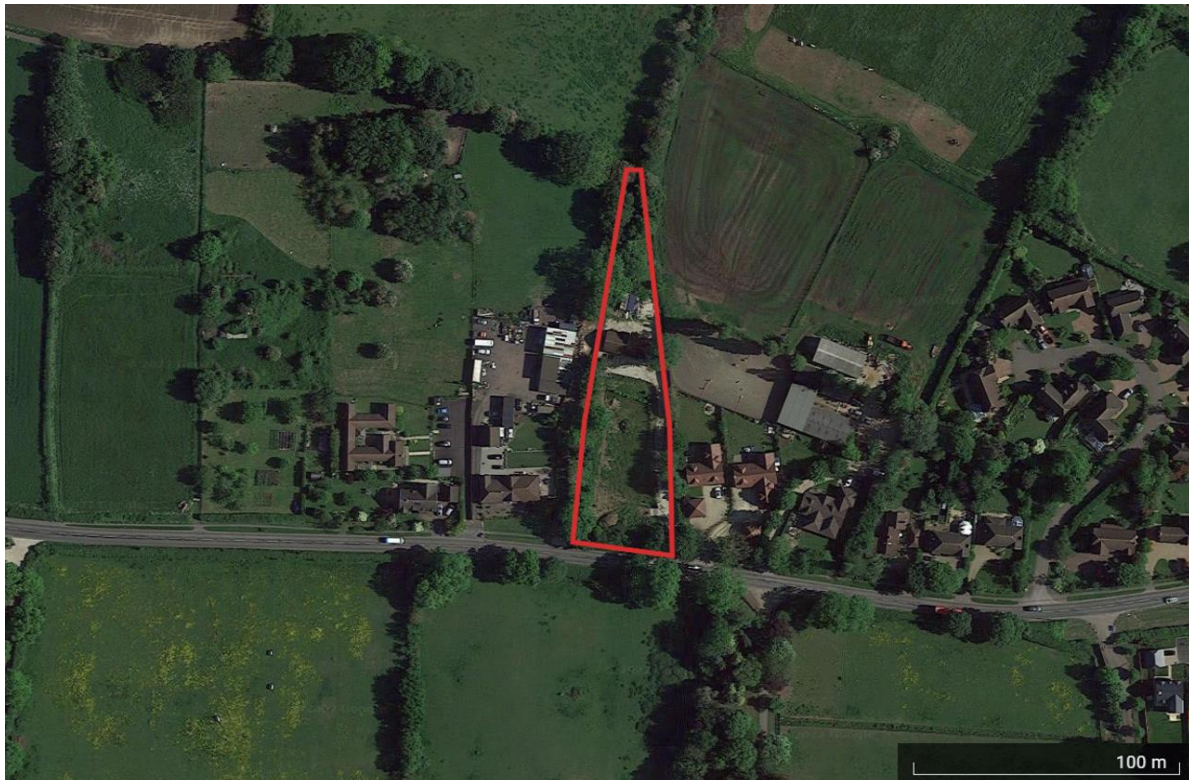


Table 6.1 Summary of the likely effects of Site A: North of Oving Road

SEA theme	Commentary, Site A: North of Oving Road	
Air quality	<p>There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within Whitchurch. However, there are three AQMAs in Aylesbury, which is located approximately 5 kilometres south of Whitchurch and is directly connected to the village via the A413. Any growth in Whitchurch will add traffic to local roads and affect air quality, both locally, and potentially further afield at these three AQMAs. However, the scale of development proposed at this site is unlikely to lead to significant effects, and minor negative effects are concluded at this stage. The cumulative effects of development in Whitchurch in relation to air quality, including an increased reliance on accessing Aylesbury for a wider range of services and facilities, will be considered through the plan appraisal.</p>	
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<p>An allocation at this site is unlikely to adversely impact any internationally or nationally designated sites for biodiversity. Site A does not overlap with a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for the types of development potentially to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan (i.e., residential and rural residential). There are no National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) located in the vicinity of the site, nor are there any Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats within the site. Moreover, the site is not located within a Network Enhancement Zone. Whilst the site does not impact any designated sites for biodiversity or contain any BAP Priority Habitats, it is thought locally to contribute to biodiversity. In the absence of on-site ecological surveys, the potential effects of this site on biodiversity and geodiversity are uncertain at this stage, though unlikely to be significant in any case.</p>	
Climate change and flood risk	<p>Development of this site will lead to inevitable increases in greenhouse gas emissions from an increase in the built footprint of</p>	

SEA theme

Commentary, Site A: North of Oving Road

	<p>Whitchurch village and an intensification of uses at this location. As the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which has a greater variety of services and facilities. In this respect, development at this site will likely cause an increase in the number of residents travelling to Aylesbury via private vehicle, increasing greenhouse gas emissions. However, climate change is a global issue, and the scale of development at Whitchurch will not have a significant impact on global emissions. With reference to flood risk issues, this site falls within Flood Zone 1, with a very low risk of fluvial flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%). The site also has a very low risk of surface water flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%).</p>	
<p>Health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Site A is in good proximity to Whitchurch Surgery on Oving Road, which is located approximately 400 metres away from the centre of the site by foot. The nearest major hospital is Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, which is accessible by car in approximately 20 minutes or by bus in approximately 30 minutes, although this requires one change at Aylesbury bus station. Site A is located approximately 700 metres away from the recreation ground off Ashgrove Gardens in Whitchurch, which has an outdoor gym and extensive children’s playground. It is likely that residents will walk to access this facility. There are many Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) around Whitchurch, including footpath OVI/28/3 which runs along the western boundary of this site towards Oving.</p>	
<p>Historic environment</p>	<p>Site A does not fall within the Conservation Area, nor is it considered to fall within the setting of the Conservation Area. No nationally listed buildings, scheduled monuments or registered parks and gardens are present on the site, nor is the site within the direct setting of any of these heritage assets. No features listed on the Whitchurch Parish HER are present on or adjacent to the site.</p>	
<p>Land, soil, and water resources</p>	<p>A recent ‘Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Assessment’ has not been undertaken for this location. However, the ALC assessment undertaken by Natural England in 2010 for South East England classified agricultural land on this site as Very Good⁸. The more recent ‘Predictive Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land Assessment’ for South East England indicates that the site has a high likelihood (>60%) of being underlain by BMV land⁹. In this respect, development of this site is likely to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land. However, this site is relatively small and consists of both greenfield and brownfield land, and according to local knowledge, is not actively farmed. Moreover, it is believed that this site sits on contaminated land. In terms of the water environment, no watercourses pass through the site. The site does not fall within a Source Protection Zone (SPZ), but it does fall within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone (Surface Water). The site also falls within the Great Ouse Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ).</p>	
<p>Landscape</p>	<p>The site is not within or in proximity to a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), or any Green Belt land. However, the site is located within an Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL) as identified by the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). An allocation at this site would result in the loss greenfield land, however this site is only 0.39 hectares and partially brownfield land</p>	

⁸ Natural England (2010): ‘Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

⁹ Natural England (2017) ‘Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land – Strategic scale map London and the South East (ALC019)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA theme **Commentary, Site A: North of Oving Road**

	<p>due to the presence of a barn style building on the site. The site has a relatively flat topography, sloping slightly towards the north, and is bordered by existing settlements to the east and west and Oving Road to the south. The site is also surrounded by trees and hedges, and in this respect, it is relatively enclosed within the landscape. However, the site borders the boundary of the WNP area to the west, and if developed, would close any remaining sense of a boundary between Whitchurch and Oving. With reference to locally important landscape features, the site does not contain any trees with Tree Preservation Order (TPO) designations.</p>	
<p>Population and communities</p>	<p>Residential development at this site will contribute positively towards meeting local housing needs. Policy H1 in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) outlines that only residential developments of 11 or more dwellings gross or sites of 0.3 hectares or more will be required to provide affordable housing. Although only four dwellings are proposed for this site, it is 0.39 hectares in size, and therefore supports the delivery of affordable housing. However, if the barn style building remains on the site, this could reduce the size of it to below 0.3 hectares, removing the affordable housing provision. As mentioned before, the village itself has limited services and facilities, and therefore it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury. However, development in Whitchurch will lead to an increase in population, which will likely lead to an increased demand for local amenities and potentially the provision of more local shops.</p>	
<p>Transportation and movement</p>	<p>Site A is located approximately 1.6 kilometres away from the service station on the High Street, which will increase the likelihood of residents driving to access this service. As the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which also has a train station. With reference to local public transport networks, the site is located approximately 1.2 kilometres from the closest bus stop, the Methodist Church on the High Street, which is serviced by Arriva X60. This route links Whitchurch to Aylesbury in the south and Buckingham / Milton Keynes in the north. Site A is located on Oving Road, which forms part of a 'rat run' east to west between Waddesdon and Leighton Buzzard / Milton Keynes. In this respect, development at this site will increase traffic and congestion on Oving Road.</p>	

Key

Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)		Likely positive effect	
Neutral / no effect		Uncertain effect	

Figure 6.2 Location of Site B: Barrettstown West



Table 6.2 Summary of the likely effects of Site B: Barrettstown West

SEA theme	Commentary, Site B: Barrettstown West	
Air quality	<p>There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within Whitchurch. However, there are three AQMAs in Aylesbury, which is located approximately 5 kilometres south of Whitchurch and is directly connected to the village via the A413. Any growth in Whitchurch will add traffic to local roads and affect air quality, both locally, and potentially further afield at these three AQMAs. However, the scale of development proposed at this site is unlikely to lead to significant effects, and minor negative effects are concluded at this stage. The cumulative effects of development in Whitchurch in relation to air quality, including an increased reliance on accessing Aylesbury for a wider range of services and facilities, will be considered through the plan appraisal.</p>	
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<p>An allocation at this site is unlikely to adversely impact any internationally or nationally designated sites for biodiversity. Site B does not overlap with a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for the types of development potentially to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan (i.e., residential and rural residential). There are no National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) located in the vicinity of the site, nor are there any Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats within the site. Moreover, the site is not located within a Network Enhancement Zone. Whilst the site does not impact any designated sites for biodiversity or contain any BAP Priority Habitats, in the absence of on-site ecological surveys, the potential effects of this site on biodiversity and geodiversity are uncertain at this stage, though unlikely to be significant in any case.</p>	
Climate change and flood risk	<p>Development of this site will lead to inevitable increases in greenhouse gas emissions from an increase in the built footprint of Whitchurch village and an intensification of uses at this location. As the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that</p>	

SEA theme

Commentary, Site B: Barrettstown West

	<p>residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which has a greater variety of services and facilities. In this respect, development at this site will likely cause an increase in the number of residents travelling to Aylesbury via private vehicle, increasing greenhouse gas emissions. However, climate change is a global issue, and the scale of development at Whitchurch will not have a significant impact on global emissions. With reference to flood risk issues, this site falls within Flood Zone 1, with a very low risk of fluvial flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%). The site also has a very low risk of surface water flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%).</p>	
<p>Health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Site B is in excellent proximity to Whitchurch Surgery on Oving Road, which is located approximately 300 metres away from the centre of the site by foot. The nearest major hospital is Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, which is accessible by car in approximately 20 minutes or by bus in approximately 30 minutes, although this requires one change at Aylesbury bus station. Site B is located approximately 600 metres away from the recreation ground off Ashgrove Gardens in Whitchurch, which has an outdoor gym and extensive children’s playground. It is likely that residents will walk to access this facility. There are many Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) around Whitchurch, including footpath WHI/32/1 which runs along the eastern boundary of this site.</p>	
<p>Historic environment</p>	<p>Site B does not fall within the Conservation Area, nor is it considered within the setting of the Conservation Area. No nationally listed buildings, scheduled monuments or registered parks and gardens are present on the site, nor is the site within the direct setting of any of these heritage assets. No features listed on the Buckinghamshire HER are present on or adjacent to the site.</p>	
<p>Land, soil, and water resources</p>	<p>A recent ‘Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Assessment’ has not been undertaken for this location. However, the ALC assessment undertaken by Natural England in 2010 for South East England classified agricultural land on this site as Very Good¹⁰. The more recent ‘Predictive Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land Assessment’ for South East England indicates that the site has a high likelihood (>60%) of being underlain by BMV land¹¹. In this respect, development of this site is likely to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land. However, according to local knowledge, this site is not actively farmed. In terms of the water environment, no watercourses pass through the site. The site does not fall within a Source Protection Zone (SPZ), but it does fall within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone (Surface Water). The site also falls within the Thame (Scotsgrove Brook to Thames) Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ).</p>	
<p>Landscape</p>	<p>The site is not within or within proximity to a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or any Green Belt land. However, the site is located within an Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL) as identified by the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). An allocation at this site would result in the loss of greenfield land, however the site is only 0.6 hectares. The site has a relatively flat topography and is bordered by existing settlement to the east and Oving Road to the north. However, development at this site would extend the village boundary and impact views from dwellings to the</p>	

¹⁰ Natural England (2010): ‘Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹¹ Natural England (2017) ‘Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land – Strategic scale map London and the South East (ALC019)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA theme **Commentary, Site B: Barrettstown West**

	<p>north and east of the site. Due to this, and due to the site's location within the AAL and loss of over 0.5 hectare of greenfield land, adverse effects are anticipated. With reference to locally important landscape features, the site does not contain any trees with Tree Preservation Order (TPO) designations.</p>	
<p>Population and communities</p>	<p>Residential development at this site will contribute positively towards meeting local housing needs. Policy H1 in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) outlines that only residential developments of 11 or more dwellings gross or sites of 0.3 hectares or more will be required to provide affordable housing. Although only seven dwellings are proposed for this site, it is 0.6 hectares in size, and therefore supports the delivery of affordable housing. As mentioned before, the village itself has limited services and facilities, and therefore it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury. However, development in Whitchurch will lead to an increase in population, which will likely lead to an increased demand for local amenities and potentially the provision of more local shops.</p>	
<p>Transportation and movement</p>	<p>Site B is located approximately 1.5 kilometres away from the service station on the High Street, which will increase the likelihood of residents driving to access this service. As the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which also has a train station. With reference to local public transport networks, the site is located approximately 1.1 kilometres from the closest bus stop, the Methodist Church on the High Street, which is serviced by Arriva X60. This route links Whitchurch to Aylesbury in the south and Buckingham / Milton Keynes in the north. Site B is located on Oving Road, which forms part of a 'rat run' east to west between Waddesdon and Leighton Buzzard / Milton Keynes. In this respect, development at this site will increase traffic and congestion on Oving Road.</p>	

Key

Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)		Likely positive effect	
Neutral / no effect		Uncertain effect	

Figure 6.3 Location of Site C: Barrettstown East



Table 6.3 Summary of the likely effects of Site C: Barrettstown East

SEA theme	Commentary, Site C: Barrettstown East
Air quality	<p>There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within Whitchurch. However, there are three AQMAs in Aylesbury, which is located approximately 5 kilometres south of Whitchurch and is directly connected to the village via the A413. Any growth in Whitchurch will add traffic to local roads and affect air quality, both locally, and potentially further afield at these three AQMAs. However, the scale of development proposed at this site is unlikely to lead to significant effects, and minor negative effects are concluded at this stage. The cumulative effects of development in Whitchurch in relation to air quality, including an increased reliance on accessing Aylesbury for a wider range of services and facilities, will be considered through the plan appraisal.</p>
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<p>An allocation at this site is unlikely to adversely impact any internationally or nationally designated sites for biodiversity. Site C does not overlap with a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for the types of development potentially to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan (i.e., residential and rural residential). There are no National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) located in the vicinity of the site, nor are there any Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats within the site. Moreover, the site is not located within a Network Enhancement Zone. Whilst the site does not impact any designated sites for biodiversity or contain any BAP Priority Habitats, in the absence of on-site ecological surveys, the potential effects of this site on biodiversity and geodiversity are uncertain at this stage, though unlikely to be significant in any case.</p>
Climate change and flood risk	<p>Development of this site will lead to inevitable increases in greenhouse gas emissions from an increase in the built footprint of Whitchurch village and an intensification of uses at this location. As the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that</p>

SEA theme

Commentary, Site C: Barrettstown East

	<p>residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which has a greater variety of services and facilities. In this respect, development at this site will likely cause an increase in the number of residents travelling to Aylesbury via private vehicle, increasing greenhouse gas emissions. However, climate change is a global issue, and the scale of development at Whitchurch will not have a significant impact on global emissions. With reference to flood risk issues, this site falls within Flood Zone 1, with a very low risk of fluvial flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%). Most of the site has a very low risk of surface water flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%). However, according to local knowledge, the 11 dwellings recently built along the northern boundary of Site C have experienced drainage problems due to the presence of semi-impervious subsoil on the site, which has subsequently caused issues with damp. Due to this, there are concerns that if this site were to be developed, dwellings here would face similar issues, and as a result surface water flooding on Oving Road would be exacerbated.</p>	
<p>Health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Site C is adjacent to Whitchurch Surgery on Oving Road, which is located approximately 100 metres away from the centre of the site by foot. The nearest major hospital is Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, which is accessible by car in approximately 20 minutes or by bus in approximately 30 minutes, although this requires one change at Aylesbury bus station. Site C is located approximately 500 metres away from the recreation ground off Ashgrove Gardens in Whitchurch, which has an outdoor gym and extensive children's playground. It is likely that residents will walk to access this facility. There are many Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) around Whitchurch, including footpath WHI/33/1 which cuts through the middle of this site towards the countryside, and WHI/27/1 which runs along the eastern boundary of this site towards Whitchurch.</p>	
<p>Historic environment</p>	<p>Site C does not fall within the Conservation Area. However, as the site is located approximately 100 metres west of the Conservation Area it likely falls within the setting of the Conservation Area. No nationally listed buildings, scheduled monuments or registered parks and gardens are present on the site, nor is the site within the direct setting of any of these heritage assets. No features listed on the Buckinghamshire HER are present on or adjacent to the site.</p>	
<p>Land, soil, and water resources</p>	<p>A recent 'Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Assessment' has not been undertaken for this location. However, the ALC assessment undertaken by Natural England in 2010 for South East England classified agricultural land on this site as Very Good¹². The more recent 'Predictive Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land Assessment' for South East England indicates that the site has a high likelihood (>60%) of being underlain by BMV land¹³. In this respect, development of this site is likely to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land. However, according to local knowledge, this site is not actively farmed. In terms of the water environment, no watercourses pass through the site. The site does not fall within a Source Protection Zone (SPZ), but it does fall within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone (Surface Water). The site also falls within the Thame (Scotsgrove Brook to Thames) Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ).</p>	

¹² Natural England (2010): 'Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007)', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹³ Natural England (2017) 'Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land – Strategic scale map London and the South East (ALC019)', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA theme **Commentary, Site C: Barrettstown East**

<p>Landscape</p>	<p>The site is not within or within proximity to a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or any Green Belt land. However, the site is located within an Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL) as identified by the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). An allocation at this site would result in the loss of a substantial area of greenfield land at 2.4 hectares. The site has a relatively flat topography and is bordered by existing settlement to the north. However, due to the size of the site, it will likely be relatively imposing on the landscape. Due to this, and due to the site's location within the AAL and loss of over 2 hectares of greenfield land, adverse effects are anticipated. With reference to locally important landscape features, the site does not contain any trees with Tree Preservation Order (TPO) designations.</p>	
<p>Population and communities</p>	<p>Residential development at this site will contribute positively towards meeting local housing needs. Policy H1 in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) outlines that only residential developments of 11 or more dwellings gross or sites of 0.3 hectares or more will be required to provide affordable housing. As 26 dwellings are proposed for this site, it supports the delivery of affordable housing. As mentioned before, the village itself has limited services and facilities, and therefore it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury. However, development in Whitchurch will lead to an increase in population, which will likely lead to an increased demand for local amenities and potentially the provision of more local shops.</p>	
<p>Transportation and movement</p>	<p>Site C is located approximately 1.3 kilometres away from the service station on the High Street, which will increase the likelihood of residents driving to access this service. As the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which also has a train station. With reference to local public transport networks, the site is located approximately 900 metres from the closest bus stop, the Methodist Church on the High Street, which is serviced by Arriva X60. This route links Whitchurch to Aylesbury in the south and Buckingham / Milton Keynes in the north. Site C is located on Oving Road, which forms part of a 'rat run' east to west between Waddesdon and Leighton Buzzard / Milton Keynes. In this respect, development at this site will increase traffic and congestion on Oving Road. According to local knowledge, Whitchurch Combined School on North Marston Lane experiences congestion around drop off and collection times. This has knock on effects at the junction where North Marston Lane meets Oving Road. As the entrance to this site is close to this junction, development here will likely exacerbate congestion.</p>	

Key





Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)		Likely positive effect	
Neutral / no effect		Uncertain effect	

Figure 6.4 Location of Site F: Manor Farm North



Table 6.4 Summary of the likely effects of Site F: Manor Farm North

SEA theme	Commentary, Site F: Manor Farm North	
Air quality	<p>There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within Whitchurch. However, there are three AQMAs in Aylesbury, which is located approximately 5 kilometres south of Whitchurch and is directly connected to the village via the A413. Any growth in Whitchurch will add traffic to local roads and affect air quality, both locally, and potentially further afield at these three AQMAs. However, the scale of development proposed at this site is unlikely to lead to significant effects, and minor negative effects are concluded at this stage. The cumulative effects of development in Whitchurch in relation to air quality, including an increased reliance on accessing Aylesbury for a wider range of services and facilities, will be considered through the plan appraisal.</p>	
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<p>An allocation at this site is unlikely to adversely impact any internationally or nationally designated sites for biodiversity. Site F does not overlap with a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for the types of development potentially to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan (i.e., residential and rural residential). There are no National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) located in the vicinity of the site, nor are there any Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats within the site. Moreover, the site is not located within a Network Enhancement Zone. Whilst the site does not impact any designated sites for biodiversity or contain any BAP Priority Habitats, it is thought locally to contribute to biodiversity. In the absence of on-site ecological surveys, the potential effects of this site on biodiversity and geodiversity are uncertain at this stage, though unlikely to be significant in any case.</p>	
Climate change and flood risk	<p>Development of this site will lead to inevitable increases in greenhouse gas emissions from an increase in the built footprint of Whitchurch village and an intensification of uses at this location. As</p>	

SEA theme

Commentary, Site F: Manor Farm North

	<p>the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which has a greater variety of services and facilities. In this respect, development at this site will likely cause an increase in the number of residents travelling to Aylesbury via private vehicle, increasing greenhouse gas emissions. However, climate change is a global issue, and the scale of development at Whitchurch will not have a significant impact on global emissions. With reference to flood risk issues, this site falls within Flood Zone 1, with a very low risk of fluvial flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%). The site also has a very low risk of surface water flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%).</p>	
<p>Health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Site F is in reasonable proximity to Whitchurch Surgery on Oving Road, which is located approximately 900 metres away from the centre of the site by foot. The nearest major hospital is Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, which is accessible by car in approximately 20 minutes or by bus in approximately 30 minutes, although this requires one change at Aylesbury bus station. Site F is located approximately 1.2 kilometres away from the recreation ground off Ashgrove Gardens in Whitchurch, which has an outdoor gym and extensive children’s playground. It is less likely that residents will walk to access this facility. There are many Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) around Whitchurch, including footpath WHI/53/1 on the other side of the A413.</p>	
<p>Historic environment</p>	<p>Site F does not fall within the Conservation Area. However, the south western corner of the site borders the northern boundary of the Conservation Area. In this respect, the site falls within the setting of the Conservation Area. No nationally listed buildings, scheduled monuments or registered parks and gardens are present on the site, nor is the site within the direct setting of any of these heritage assets. No features listed on the Buckinghamshire HER are present on or adjacent to the site. A Heritage Appraisal for Site F was undertaken in March 2023, to provide high level information with regard to potential heritage and archaeology constraints. This concluded that development of Site F would not cause physical impacts on any designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, thus neutral effects are considered likely.</p>	
<p>Land, soil, and water resources</p>	<p>A recent ‘Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Assessment’ has not been undertaken for this location. However, the ALC assessment undertaken by Natural England in 2010 for South East England classified agricultural land on this site as Very Good¹⁴. The more recent ‘Predictive Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land Assessment’ for South East England indicates that the site has a high likelihood (>60%) of being underlain by BMV land¹⁵. In this respect, development of this site is likely to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land. However, according to local knowledge, this site is not actively farmed. In terms of the water environment, no watercourses pass through the site. The site does not fall within a Source Protection Zone (SPZ), but it does fall within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone (Surface Water). The site also falls within the Thame (Scotsgrove Brook to Thames) Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ).</p>	

¹⁴ Natural England (2010): ‘Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹⁵ Natural England (2017) ‘Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land – Strategic scale map London and the South East (ALC019)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA theme

Commentary, Site F: Manor Farm North

<p>Landscape</p>	<p>The site is not within or within proximity to a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or any Green Belt land. However, the site is located within an Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL) as identified by the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). An allocation at this site would result in the loss of a fairly substantial area of greenfield land at 1.78 hectares. The site has a relatively flat topography, sloping slightly towards the east, and sits at a lower elevation than the existing settlement to the west. The site borders the existing settlement to the south and the A413 to the west. In this respect, development at this site would not dominate the landscape or significantly impact existing views from nearby dwellings. The Preliminary Landscape and Visual Findings Assessment (March 2023) indicates that Site F itself would inevitably experience a change in character and would be visible from the wider area in the early years. However, there is a good opportunity for Site F to continue the linear form of the village, reflect local materials, and is configured to ensure the rooflines do not break the skyline from most wider viewpoints. In addition, there is ample room to incorporate robust belts of planting which would mature to soften and screen the development, and eventually form part of the skyline. With reference to locally important landscape features, the site does not contain any trees with Tree Preservation Order (TPO) designations. Minor negative effects are concluded as most likely resulting from the loss of greenfield land.</p>	
<p>Population and communities</p>	<p>Residential development at this site will contribute positively towards meeting local housing needs. Policy H1 in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) outlines that only residential developments of 11 or more dwellings gross or sites of 0.3 hectares or more will be required to provide affordable housing. As 25 to 35 dwellings are proposed for this site, it supports the delivery of affordable housing. As mentioned before, the village itself has limited services and facilities, and therefore it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury. However, development in Whitchurch will lead to an increase in population, which will likely lead to an increased demand for local amenities and potentially the provision of more local shops.</p>	
<p>Transportation and movement</p>	<p>Site F is located approximately 900 metres away from the service station on the High Street, which will increase the likelihood of residents walking to access this service. However, as the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which also has a train station. With reference to local public transport networks, the site is located approximately 500 metres from the closest bus stop, the Methodist Church on the High Street, which is serviced by Arriva X60. This route links Whitchurch to Aylesbury in the south and Buckingham / Milton Keynes in the north. Site F is located on the A413, where traffic follows a similar pattern to the bus route. Development at this site will increase traffic and congestion on the A413, particularly near the entrance to the site. To add to this, the A413 has no zebra crossings to allow for safe pedestrian crossing, which is a particular issue for dwellings on the east side of the road. There is also currently no footpath connecting this site to the top of the High Street.</p>	

Key



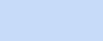
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)		Likely positive effect	
Neutral / no effect		Uncertain effect	

Figure 6.5 Location of Site G: Kempson House North



Table 6.5 Summary of the likely effects of Site G: Kempson House North

SEA theme	Commentary, Site G: Kempson House North	
Air quality	<p>There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within Whitchurch. However, there are three AQMAs in Aylesbury, which is located approximately 5 kilometres south of Whitchurch and is directly connected to the village via the A413. Any growth in Whitchurch will add traffic to local roads and affect air quality, both locally, and potentially further afield at these three AQMAs. However, the scale of development proposed at this site is unlikely to lead to significant effects, and minor negative effects are concluded at this stage. The cumulative effects of development in Whitchurch in relation to air quality, including an increased reliance on accessing Aylesbury for a wider range of services and facilities, will be considered through the plan appraisal.</p>	
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<p>An allocation at this site is unlikely to adversely impact any internationally or nationally designated sites for biodiversity. Site G does not overlap with a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for the types of development potentially to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan (i.e., residential and rural residential). There are no National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) located in the vicinity of the site, nor are there any Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats within the site. Moreover, the site is not located within a Network Enhancement Zone. Whilst the site does not impact any designated sites for biodiversity or contain any BAP Priority Habitats, it is thought locally to contribute to biodiversity. In the absence of on-site ecological surveys, the potential effects of this site on biodiversity and geodiversity are uncertain at this stage, though unlikely to be significant in any case.</p>	
Climate change and flood risk	<p>Development of this site will lead to inevitable increases in greenhouse gas emissions from an increase in the built footprint of Whitchurch village and an intensification of uses at this location. As</p>	

SEA theme **Commentary, Site G: Kempson House North**

	<p>the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which has a greater variety of services and facilities. In this respect, development at this site will likely cause an increase in the number of residents travelling to Aylesbury via private vehicle, increasing greenhouse gas emissions. However, climate change is a global issue, and the scale of development at Whitchurch will not have a significant impact on global emissions. With reference to flood risk issues, this site falls within Flood Zone 1, with a very low risk of fluvial flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%). The site also has a very low risk of surface water flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%).</p>	
<p>Health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Site G is in reasonable proximity to Whitchurch Surgery on Oving Road, which is located approximately 800 metres away from the centre of the site by foot. The nearest major hospital is Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, which is accessible by car in approximately 20 minutes or by bus in approximately 30 minutes, although this requires one change at Aylesbury bus station. Site G is located approximately 1.1 kilometres away from the recreation ground off Ashgrove Gardens in Whitchurch, which has an outdoor gym and extensive children’s playground. It is unlikely that residents will walk to access this facility. There are many Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) around Whitchurch, including footpath WHI/35/1 which runs along the northern boundary of this site towards the countryside, where it connects with many other footpaths. According to local knowledge, this site is highly valued as a green space, and although development here would not directly impact the footpath, it would negatively impact the wellbeing benefits of the open green space that currently exists.</p>	
<p>Historic environment</p>	<p>Site G does not fall within the Conservation Area. However, the western boundary of the site borders the Conservation Area. In this respect, the site falls within the setting of the Conservation Area. No nationally listed buildings, scheduled monuments or registered parks and gardens are present on the site, nor is the site within the direct setting of any of these heritage assets. No features listed on the Buckinghamshire HER are present on or adjacent to the site. According to local knowledge, this site is of civil war archaeological interest, which has prevented development here in the past.</p>	
<p>Land, soil, and water resources</p>	<p>A recent ‘Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Assessment’ has not been undertaken for this location. However, the ALC assessment undertaken by Natural England in 2010 for South East England classified agricultural land on this site as Very Good¹⁶. The more recent ‘Predictive Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land Assessment’ for South East England indicates that the site has a high likelihood (>60%) of being underlain by BMV land¹⁷. In this respect, development of this site is likely to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land. However, according to local knowledge, this site is not actively farmed. In terms of the water environment, no watercourses pass through the site. The site does not fall within a Source Protection Zone (SPZ), but it does fall within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone (Surface Water). The site also falls within the Thame (Scotsgrove Brook to Thames) Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ).</p>	

¹⁶ Natural England (2010): ‘Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹⁷ Natural England (2017) ‘Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land – Strategic scale map London and the South East (ALC019)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA theme **Commentary, Site G: Kempson House North**

<p>Landscape</p>	<p>The site is not within or within proximity to a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or any Green Belt land. However, the site is located within an Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL) as identified by the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). An allocation at this site would result in the loss of a relatively small area of greenfield land at 1.09 hectares. The site has a relatively flat topography and sits at a lower elevation than the existing settlement. The site partially borders the existing settlement to the south and the A413 to the west. In this respect, development at this site would not dominate the landscape. However, as a highly valued green space, development at this site would negatively impact the landscape for those using the PRow network. Due to this, and due to the site's location within the AAL and loss of over 1 hectare of greenfield land, adverse effects are anticipated. With reference to locally important landscape features, the site does not contain any trees with Tree Preservation Order (TPO) designations.</p>	
<p>Population and communities</p>	<p>Residential development at this site will contribute positively towards meeting local housing needs. Policy H1 in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) outlines that only residential developments of 11 or more dwellings gross or sites of 0.3 hectares or more will be required to provide affordable housing. As 20 to 30 dwellings are proposed for this site, it supports the delivery of affordable housing. As mentioned before, the village itself has limited services and facilities, and therefore it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury. However, development in Whitchurch will lead to an increase in population, which will likely lead to an increased demand for local amenities and potentially the provision of more local shops.</p>	
<p>Transportation and movement</p>	<p>Site G is located approximately 800 metres away from the service station on the High Street, which will increase the likelihood of residents walking to access this service. However, as the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which also has a train station. With reference to local public transport networks, the site is located approximately 400 metres from the closest bus stop, the Methodist Church on the High Street, which is serviced by Arriva X60. This route links Whitchurch to Aylesbury in the south and Buckingham / Milton Keynes in the north. Site G is located on the A413, where traffic follows a similar pattern to the bus route. Development at this site will increase traffic and congestion on the A413, particularly near the entrance to the site. To add to this, the A413 has no zebra crossings to allow for safe pedestrian crossing, which is a particular issue for dwellings on the east side of the road. There is also currently no footpath connecting this site to the top of the High Street. Moreover, footpath WHI/35/1 which runs along the northern boundary of this site towards the countryside is heavily used, and although development here would not impact the footpath, it could potentially restrict movement due to the narrowness of the site.</p>	

Key




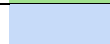
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)		Likely positive effect	
Neutral / no effect		Uncertain effect	

Figure 6.6 Location of Site H: Kempson House West



Table 6.6 Summary of constraints at Site H: Kempson House West

SEA theme	Commentary, Site H: Kempson House West	
Air quality	<p>There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within Whitchurch. However, there are three AQMAs in Aylesbury, which is located approximately 5 kilometres south of Whitchurch and is directly connected to the village via the A413. Any growth in Whitchurch will add traffic to local roads and affect air quality, both locally, and potentially further afield at these three AQMAs. However, the scale of development proposed at this site is unlikely to lead to significant effects, and minor negative effects are concluded at this stage. The cumulative effects of development in Whitchurch in relation to air quality, including an increased reliance on accessing Aylesbury for a wider range of services and facilities, will be considered through the plan appraisal.</p>	
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<p>An allocation at this site is unlikely to adversely impact any internationally or nationally designated sites for biodiversity. Site H does not overlap with a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for the types of development potentially to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan (i.e., residential and rural residential). There are no National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) located in the vicinity of the site, nor are there any Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats within the site. Moreover, the site is not located within a Network Enhancement Zone. Whilst the site does not impact any designated sites for biodiversity or contain any BAP Priority Habitats, in the absence of on-site ecological surveys, the potential effects of this site on biodiversity and geodiversity are uncertain at this stage, though unlikely to be significant in any case.</p>	
Climate change and flood risk	<p>Development of this site will lead to inevitable increases in greenhouse gas emissions from an increase in the built footprint of Whitchurch village and an intensification of uses at this location. As the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities,</p>	

SEA theme **Commentary, Site H: Kempson House West**

	<p>particularly to Aylesbury which has a greater variety of services and facilities. In this respect, development at this site will likely cause an increase in the number of residents travelling to Aylesbury via private vehicle, increasing greenhouse gas emissions. However, climate change is a global issue, and the scale of development at Whitchurch will not have a significant impact on global emissions.</p> <p>c</p>	
<p>Health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Site H is in good proximity to Whitchurch Surgery on Oving Road, which is located approximately 800 metres away from the centre of the site by foot. The nearest major hospital is Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, which is accessible by car in approximately 20 minutes or by bus in approximately 30 minutes, although this requires one change at Aylesbury bus station. Site H is located approximately 1.1 kilometres away from the recreation ground off Ashgrove Gardens in Whitchurch, which has an outdoor gym and extensive children’s playground. It is unlikely that residents will walk to access this facility. There are many Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) around Whitchurch, including footpath WHI/35/1 which is located just north of this site.</p>	
<p>Historic environment</p>	<p>Site H does not fall within the Conservation Area. However, the western, southern, and part of the eastern boundary of the site border the Conservation Area. In this respect, the site falls within the setting of the Conservation Area. No nationally listed buildings scheduled monuments or registered parks and gardens are present on the site, nor is the site within the direct setting of any of these heritage assets. No features listed on the Buckinghamshire HER are present on or adjacent to the site. The Grade II listed building, Kempson House, is located to the south east of Site H and should be sustained (and where possible enhanced). A Heritage Statement was undertaken in March 2023 which concludes that proposed allocation of Site H provides the opportunity to not only preserve but enhance the Conservation Area by reason of the quality of development and will thus fulfil both national and local planning policy objectives. It also concludes that the mature trees that line the north side of the drive, along with the additional planting that has already been installed, will continue to provide a visual and physical screen to the listed building. Based on consultation responses residual neutral effects are concluded as likely</p>	
<p>Land, soil, and water resources</p>	<p>A recent ‘Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Assessment’ has not been undertaken for this location. However, the ALC assessment undertaken by Natural England in 2010 for South East England classified agricultural land on this site as Very Good¹⁸. The more recent ‘Predictive Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land Assessment’ for South East England indicates that the site has a high likelihood (>60%) of being underlain by BMV land¹⁹. In this respect, development of this site is likely to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land. However, according to local knowledge, this site is not actively farmed. In terms of the water environment, no watercourses pass through the site. The site does not fall within a Source Protection Zone (SPZ), but it does fall within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone (Surface Water). The site also falls within the Thame (Scotsgrove Brook to Thames) Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ).</p>	

¹⁸ Natural England (2010): ‘Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹⁹ Natural England (2017) ‘Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land – Strategic scale map London and the South East (ALC019)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA theme **Commentary, Site H: Kempson House West**

<p>Landscape</p>	<p>The site is not within or within proximity to a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or any Green Belt land. However, the site is located within an Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL) as identified by the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). An allocation at this site would result in the loss of a relatively small area of greenfield land at 1.05 hectares. The site has a relatively flat topography and sits at a lower elevation than the existing settlement but the site is largely surrounded by existing vegetation which limits views into (and out of) the site. The site borders the existing settlement to the south east and the A413 to the west and is well screened by trees and hedgerows on all sides. In this respect, the site is relatively enclosed within the landscape. A Landscape Appraisal which was published in March 2023, concluded that development would not have 'undue harm to the surrounding landscape or the local landscape designations within the VALP. It also states that the site is visually contained and has the capacity to accept new residential buildings without causing any undue impact on the character of the surrounding area or on the locally designated Area of Attractive Landscape.d. With reference to locally important landscape features, the site does not contain any trees with Tree Preservation Order (TPO) designations. Design is considered likely to reduce impacts and residual minor negative effects are concluded as likely given the loss of greenfield land.</p>	
<p>Population and communities</p>	<p>Residential development at this site will contribute positively towards meeting local housing needs. Policy H1 in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) outlines that only residential developments of 11 or more dwellings gross or sites of 0.3 hectares or more will be required to provide affordable housing. As 18 dwellings are proposed for this site, it supports the delivery of affordable housing. As mentioned before, the village itself has limited services and facilities, and therefore it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury. However, development in Whitchurch will lead to an increase in population, which will likely lead to an increased demand for local amenities and potentially the provision of more local shops.</p>	
<p>Transportation and movement</p>	<p>Site H is located approximately 600 metres away from the service station on the High Street, which will increase the likelihood of residents walking to access this service. However, as the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which also has a train station. With reference to local public transport networks, the site is located approximately 200 metres from the closest bus stop, the Methodist Church on the High Street, which is serviced by Arriva X60 and the Developer has agreed to explore options to provide a footpath link to the local bus stop and/or a suitable pedestrian crossing across the A413. This route links Whitchurch to Aylesbury in the south and Buckingham / Milton Keynes in the north. Site H is located on the A413, where traffic follows a similar pattern to the bus route. Development at this site will increase traffic and congestion on the A413, particularly near the entrance to the site which is located adjacent the roundabout connecting the High Street to Oving Road. To add to this, the A413 has no zebra crossings to allow for safe pedestrian crossing, which is a particular issue for dwellings on the east side of the road.</p>	

Key




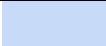
Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)		Likely positive effect	
Neutral / no effect		Uncertain effect	

Figure 6.7 Location of Site J: Little London North



Table 6.7 Summary of the likely effects of Site J: Little London North

SEA theme	Commentary, Site J: Little London North
Air quality	<p>There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within Whitchurch. However, there are three AQMAs in Aylesbury, which is located approximately 5 kilometres south of Whitchurch and is directly connected to the village via the A413. Any growth in Whitchurch will add traffic to local roads and affect air quality, both locally, and potentially further afield at these three AQMAs. However, the scale of development proposed at this site is unlikely to lead to significant effects, and minor negative effects are concluded at this stage. The cumulative effects of development in Whitchurch in relation to air quality, including an increased reliance on accessing Aylesbury for a wider range of services and facilities, will be considered through the plan appraisal.</p>
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<p>An allocation at this site is unlikely to adversely impact any internationally or nationally designated sites for biodiversity. Site J does not overlap with a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for the types of development potentially to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan (i.e., residential and rural residential). There are no National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) located in the vicinity of the site, nor are there any Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats within the site. However, the site is covered by Network Enhancement Zone 1, which forms a buffer around traditional orchard approximately 25 metres east of the site. Network Enhancement Zone 1 is land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitats which is likely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat. In this respect, development of this site could limit the potential of the land in this zone to be converted into primary habitat in the future. Moreover, this site is thought locally to contribute to biodiversity. Nevertheless, due to planning requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), development at this site could also contribute towards the creation of this habitat.</p>

SEA theme **Commentary, Site J: Little London North**

Climate change and flood risk	Development of this site will lead to inevitable increases in greenhouse gas emissions from an increase in the built footprint of Whitchurch village and an intensification of uses at this location. As the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which has a greater variety of services and facilities. In this respect, development at this site will likely cause an increase in the number of residents travelling to Aylesbury via private vehicle, increasing greenhouse gas emissions. However, climate change is a global issue, and the scale of development at Whitchurch will not have a significant impact on global emissions. With reference to flood risk issues, this site falls within Flood Zone 1, with a very low risk of fluvial flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%). The site also has a very low risk of surface water flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%).	
Health and wellbeing	Site J is in poor proximity to Whitchurch Surgery on Oving Road, which is located approximately 1.4 kilometres away from the centre of the site by foot. The nearest major hospital is Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, which is accessible by car in approximately 20 minutes or by bus in approximately 30 minutes, although this requires one change at Aylesbury bus station. Site J is located approximately 1.7 kilometres away from the recreation ground off Ashgrove Gardens in Whitchurch, which has an outdoor gym and extensive children’s playground. It is highly unlikely that residents will walk to access this facility. There are many Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) around Whitchurch, including footpath WHI/5/1 which runs along the southern boundary of this site.	
Historic environment	The eastern half of Site J falls within the Conservation Area. In this respect, the western half of the site falls within the setting of the Conservation Area. No nationally listed buildings, scheduled monuments or registered parks and gardens are present on the site, nor is the site within the direct setting of any of these heritage assets. No features listed on the Buckinghamshire HER are present on or adjacent to the site.	
Land, soil, and water resources	A recent ‘Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Assessment’ has not been undertaken for this location. However, the ALC assessment undertaken by Natural England in 2010 for South East England classified agricultural land on this site as Good to Moderate ²⁰ . The more recent ‘Predictive Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land Assessment’ for South East England indicates that the site has a low likelihood (<20%) of being underlain by BMV land ²¹ . In this respect, development of this site is unlikely to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land. However, according to local knowledge, this site is not actively farmed. In terms of the water environment, no watercourses pass through the site. The site does not fall within a Source Protection Zone (SPZ), but it does fall within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone (Surface Water). The site also falls within the Thame (Scotsgrove Brook to Thames) Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ).	
Landscape	The site is not within or within proximity to a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or any Green Belt land. However, the site is located within an Area of Attractive Landscape	

²⁰ Natural England (2010): ‘Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

²¹ Natural England (2017) ‘Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land – Strategic scale map London and the South East (ALC019)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA theme

Commentary, Site J: Little London North

	<p>(AAL) as identified by the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). An allocation at this site would result in the loss of a very small area of greenfield land at 0.36 hectares. The site has a sloped topography towards the west and sits at a lower elevation than the existing settlement. The site borders the existing settlement to the east but is otherwise relatively exposed with agricultural fields bordering the north, south and west of the site. Whilst mitigation measures could reduce landscape impacts, uncertainty remains prior to the detailed design stage of development due to the site's exposure. With reference to locally important landscape features, the site does not contain any trees with Tree Preservation Order (TPO) designations.</p>	
<p>Population and communities</p>	<p>Residential development at this site will contribute positively towards meeting local housing needs. Policy H1 in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) outlines that only residential developments of 11 or more dwellings gross or sites of 0.3 hectares or more will be required to provide affordable housing. Although only eight to ten dwellings are proposed for this site, it is 0.36 hectares in size, and therefore supports the delivery of affordable housing. As mentioned before, the village itself has limited services and facilities, and therefore it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury. However, development in Whitchurch will lead to an increase in population, which will likely lead to an increased demand for local amenities and potentially the provision of more local shops.</p>	
<p>Transportation and movement</p>	<p>Site J is located approximately 200 metres away from the service station on the High Street, which will increase the likelihood of residents walking to access this service. However, as the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which also has a train station. With reference to local public transport networks, the site is located approximately 200 metres from the closest bus stop, the White Swan on the High Street, which is serviced by Arriva X60. This route links Whitchurch to Aylesbury in the south and Buckingham / Milton Keynes in the north. Site J is located on the A413, where traffic follows a similar pattern to the bus route. Development at this site will increase traffic and congestion on the A413, particularly near the entrance to the site which is accessed via Little London. Notably, this street is a difficult area to exit and enter as visibility onto the A413 is very poor and on a semi-blind bend for traffic exiting the area heading towards Aylesbury. The local community have raised this as a particular concern regarding this site. To add to this, the A413 has no zebra crossings to allow for safe pedestrian crossing.</p>	

Key

<p>Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)</p>		<p>Likely positive effect</p>	
<p>Neutral / no effect</p>		<p>Uncertain effect</p>	

Figure 6.8 Location of Site L: Greenacres Stables



Table 6.8 Summary of the likely effects of Site L: Greenacres Stables

SEA theme	Commentary, Site L: Greenacres Stables	
Air quality	<p>There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within Whitchurch. However, there are three AQMAs in Aylesbury, which is located approximately 5 kilometres south of Whitchurch and is directly connected to the village via the A413. Any growth in Whitchurch will add traffic to local roads and affect air quality, both locally, and potentially further afield at these three AQMAs. However, the scale of development proposed at this site is unlikely to lead to significant effects, and minor negative effects are concluded at this stage. The cumulative effects of development in Whitchurch in relation to air quality, including an increased reliance on accessing Aylesbury for a wider range of services and facilities, will be considered through the plan appraisal.</p>	
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<p>An allocation at this site is unlikely to adversely impact any internationally or nationally designated sites for biodiversity. Site L does not overlap with a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for the types of development potentially to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan (i.e., residential and rural residential). There are no National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) located in the vicinity of the site, nor are there any Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats within the site. Moreover, the site is not located within a Network Enhancement Zone. Whilst the site does not impact any designated sites for biodiversity or contain any BAP Priority Habitats, it is thought locally to contribute to biodiversity. In the absence of on-site ecological surveys, the potential effects of this site on biodiversity and geodiversity are uncertain at this stage, though unlikely to be significant in any case.</p>	
Climate change and flood risk	<p>Development of this site will lead to inevitable increases in greenhouse gas emissions from an increase in the built footprint of Whitchurch village and an intensification of uses at this location. As</p>	

SEA theme **Commentary, Site L: Greenacres Stables**

	<p>the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which has a greater variety of services and facilities. In this respect, development at this site will likely cause an increase in the number of residents travelling to Aylesbury via private vehicle, increasing greenhouse gas emissions. However, climate change is a global issue, and the scale of development at Whitchurch will not have a significant impact on global emissions. With reference to flood risk issues, this site falls within Flood Zone 1, with a very low risk of fluvial flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%). The site also has a very low risk of surface water flooding (meaning that each year this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%).</p>	
<p>Health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Site L is in good proximity to Whitchurch Surgery on Oving Road, which is located approximately 500 metres away from the centre of the site by foot. The nearest major hospital is Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, which is accessible by car in approximately 20 minutes or by bus in approximately 30 minutes, although this requires one change at Aylesbury bus station. Site L is located approximately 800 metres away from the recreation ground off Ashgrove Gardens in Whitchurch, which has an outdoor gym and extensive children’s playground. It is likely that residents will walk to access this facility. There are many Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) around Whitchurch, including footpath WHI/31/1 which runs along the eastern boundary of this site.</p>	
<p>Historic environment</p>	<p>Site L does not fall within the Conservation Area, nor is it considered to fall within the setting of the Conservation Area. No nationally listed buildings, scheduled monuments or registered parks and gardens are present on the site, nor is the site within the direct setting of any of these heritage assets. No features listed on the Buckinghamshire HER are present on or adjacent to the site.</p>	
<p>Land, soil, and water resources</p>	<p>A recent ‘Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Assessment’ has not been undertaken for this location. However, the ALC assessment undertaken by Natural England in 2010 for South East England classified agricultural land on this site as Very Good²². The more recent ‘Predictive Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land Assessment’ for South East England indicates that the site has a high likelihood (>60%) of being underlain by BMV land²³. In this respect, development of this site is likely to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land. However, according to local knowledge, this site is utilised by an equestrian business and is therefore not actively farmed. In terms of the water environment, no watercourses pass through the site. The site does not fall within a Source Protection Zone (SPZ), but it does fall within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone (Surface Water). The site also falls within the Great Ouse Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ).</p>	
<p>Landscape</p>	<p>The site is not within or within proximity to a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or any Green Belt land. However, the site is located within an Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL) as identified by the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). An allocation at this site would result in the loss of a substantial area of greenfield land at 2.8 hectares. The site borders the boundary of the WNP area to the west. The site has a sloped</p>	

²² Natural England (2010): ‘Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

²³ Natural England (2017) ‘Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land – Strategic scale map London and the South East (ALC019)’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

SEA theme

Commentary, Site L: Greenacres Stables

	<p>topography, sloping towards the north, and is bordered by existing settlements to the south and east, and North Marston Lane to the north. However, the west of the site borders agricultural land and is therefore relatively exposed and overlooked by Oving. With reference to locally important landscape features, the site contains two trees with Tree Preservation Order (TPO) designations in the South East where access to the site is planned. According to local knowledge, planned access to the site is very narrow and may require trees and buildings to be cleared. In this respect, adverse effects are anticipated.</p>	
<p>Population and communities</p>	<p>An allocation at this site will contribute positively towards meeting local housing needs. Policy H1 in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) outlines that only residential developments of 11 or more dwellings gross or sites of 0.3 hectares or more will be required to provide affordable housing. As 32 dwellings are proposed for this site, it supports the delivery of affordable housing. As mentioned before, the village itself has limited services and facilities, and therefore it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury. However, development in Whitchurch will lead to an increase in population, which will likely lead to an increased demand for local amenities and potentially the provision of more local shops.</p>	
<p>Transportation and movement</p>	<p>Site L is located approximately 1.7 kilometres away from the service station on the High Street, which will increase the likelihood of residents driving to access this service. As the village itself has limited services and facilities, it is likely that residents will travel further afield to access certain amenities, particularly to Aylesbury which also has a train station. With reference to local public transport networks, the site is located approximately 1.3 kilometres from the closest bus stop, the Methodist Church on the High Street, which is serviced by Arriva X60. This route links Whitchurch to Aylesbury in the south and Buckingham / Milton Keynes in the north. Site L is located on Oving Road, which forms part of a 'rat run' east to west between Waddesdon and Leighton Buzzard / Milton Keynes. In this respect, development at this site will increase traffic and congestion on Oving Road.</p>	

Key

<p>Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)</p>		<p>Likely positive effect</p>	
<p>Neutral / no effect</p>		<p>Uncertain effect</p>	

Summary of findings

6.4 **Table 6.9** below summarises the findings of the assessment, indicating the relative strengths and weaknesses of each site.

Table 6.9 Summary of the likely effects of each site

SEA theme	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site F	Site G	Site H	Site J	Site L
Air quality	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
Climate change and flood risk	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Blue	Yellow	Yellow
Health and wellbeing	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red	Green
Historic environment	Yellow	Yellow	Blue	Yellow	Blue	Yellow	Red	Yellow
Land, soil, and water resources	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
Landscape	Blue	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Blue	Red
Population and communities	Blue	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green
Transportation and movement	Red	Red	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Red

Key

Likely adverse effect (without mitigation measures)	Red	Likely positive effect	Green
Neutral / no effect	Yellow	Uncertain effect	Blue

6.5 Overall, there are no likely adverse effects identified in relation to the population and communities theme for any sites. Residential development at each site could contribute to the provision of affordable housing. Only site A is a possible concern due to the potential for the developable area of the site to be reduced below the 0.3 hectares threshold for affordable housing.

6.6 Sites A and F perform most favourably overall, with likely positive effects on health and wellbeing and population and communities respectively. The main weakness of site A, other than air quality, is its position on Oving Road. The main weakness of site F is its value as greenfield land.

6.7 Site H also performs relatively well compared to the other sites, with only two likely adverse effect identified in relation to air quality and landscape, which is the same across all sites for air quality and the majority of sites for landscape (reflecting greenfield development).

6.8 Sites B, C, G and L perform slightly less favourably, with all sites having likely adverse effects on transportation and movement and landscape. Regarding transportation and movement, for sites B, C and L, this is related to their

position on Oving Road, and for site G, this is related to its position on the A413 and value as a footpath along open green space. Regarding landscape, this is due to the loss of a significant amount of greenfield land.

- 6.9 Site J performs least favourably overall due to concerns around health and wellbeing (the site is furthest from the recreation ground), the historic environment (the site falls within the Conservation Area), and transport and movement (poor visibility out of Little London onto the A413).

7. Establishing the preferred approach

7.1 The Parish Council's reasons for developed the preferred approach in light of the alternatives assessment are identified below:

“A reasonable approach to housing growth for a large village with environmental constraints was established in coming to a final view on site selection, as detailed in Section 5 of the Site Assessment Report published alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.

The findings of the site assessments undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan in this report were considered alongside community preferences following consultation events in July 2021 and November 2021. The consultation events highlighted that there were two sites, Sites F and H, that attracted substantially less concern from the community than others.

When balancing the outcome of these tests and taking into consideration the approach to housing growth the Neighbourhood Plan allocates Site H and reserves Site F.”

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

8. Introduction (to Part 2)

- 8.1 The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the current 'submission' version of the WNP. This chapter presents:
- An appraisal of the current version of the WNP under the nine SEA theme heading (established through Scoping); and
 - The overall conclusions at this current stage and any recommendations for the next stage of plan-making.

Methodology

- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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.
- 8.4 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.

Whitchurch NP policies

8.5 The WNP proposes the following ten policies:

Table 8.1 Whitchurch NP policies

Policy reference	Policy name
W1	Settlement Boundary
W2	Housing Allocation – Land at Kempson House West
W3	Reserve Site – Land at Manor Farm North
W4	Design Codes
W5	Managing Traffic
W6	Essential Commercial, Business, and Service Uses
W7	Local Community Uses and Pubs
W8	Local Green Spaces
W9	Important Views
W10	Green Infrastructure

9. Appraisal of the ‘submission version’ of the Whitchurch NP

9.1 A discussion is presented under each of the thematic headings that together comprise the core of the SEA framework (see Section 3).

Air quality

9.2 Of key concern is the potential for development in Whitchurch to affect nearby declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Aylesbury. In this respect, the WNP only seeks to deliver a modest level of development (around 23 homes), that is well connected locally and supportive of active travel opportunities and connected to the existing bus services (Policy W2). Bus services provide a more sustainable means of accessing Aylesbury without adding to existing baseline NO₂ emissions. Whilst some new residents are still likely to drive to Aylesbury, the anticipated effects in relation to declared AQMAs are considered likely to be minor.

9.3 Whilst a small-scale reserve site is identified under Policy W3, this site is not anticipated to be developed over the plan period, unless the new Local Plan identifies a strategic need for more homes in the Plan area. Should the site be released within the plan period, the cumulative effects associated with development of both sites is still considered likely to be minor in relation to air quality.

9.4 More locally, the WNP (Policy W5) identifies traffic mitigation measures at key locations in the Parish that would improve the flow of traffic and enhance active travel opportunities, both of which would positively affect air quality locally. New development that generates an increase in traffic will be expected to contribute to delivering the identified traffic mitigation measures and public realm improvements.

9.5 Considering these points, both **minor positive and minor negative effects** are anticipated overall in relation to air quality.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

9.6 The Parish is not constrained by nationally or internationally designated biodiversity sites, and the potential impacts of development predominantly relate to a network of priority woodland and orchard habitats across the Plan area. The proposed development site under Policy W2 does not intersect priority habitats or areas surrounding them which have been identified as suitable for habitat restoration, enhancement, or expansion. On this basis, no negative effects are considered likely because of the spatial strategy of the WNP.

9.7 Policy W3 identifies a reserve site, that would only come forward within the plan period in the instance that there is an identified need, by the emerging Local Plan or in future reviews of the neighbourhood plan. The reserve site similarly does not intersect priority habitats or areas surrounding them which have been identified as suitable for habitat restoration, enhancement, or expansion. On this basis no negative effects or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

- 9.8 Furthermore, Policies W2 and W3 contain site specific criteria which require that development minimises impacts on boundary trees and hedgerow and requires the preparation of a biodiversity strategy which delivers a minimum of 10% net gains in development at the sites. Additionally, the policy protection provided for Local Green Spaces (Policy W8) and green infrastructure (Policy W10) will provide long-term support for ecological networks.
- 9.9 Considering the above, the policy provisions of the WNP, particularly the expectation for a biodiversity strategy in development and on-site net gains in biodiversity are considered likely to support long-term **minor positive effects** overall.

Climate change and flood risk

- 9.10 In relation to flood risk, the proposed allocation site under Policy W2 is considered at low fluvial and surface water flood risk, whereby no significant effects in development are anticipated. Despite this, it is recognised that surface water flooding at Oving Road can flow down to affect the High Street adjacent to the site. However, the site-specific criteria require the preparation of a sustainable drainage strategy, which should ensure development does not impact upon this issue. The proposed reserve site under Policy W3 is also at low risk of fluvial and surface water flood risk, whereby no significant effects are anticipated in development. On this basis, **neutral effects** are concluded as likely in relation to flood risk.
- 9.11 With regards to mitigation, the proposed allocation site is relatively well connected to the settlement area, which contains key facilities, such as a school, healthcare facilities, and a shop. Whilst wider vehicles movements are anticipated, there are existing sustainable transport connections within a proximity (bus services in the Plan area, and rail connections nearby). Development has good potential to support low emission lifestyles in this respect.
- 9.12 AECOM was appointed to prepare a Design Guidance and Codes²⁴ report for Whitchurch, which supports high-quality development and seeks to maximises efficiency standards. Policy W4 ensures that development considers this evidence. Additional support is provided for improved active travel opportunities under Policy W5, as well as traffic mitigation measures at key locations to improve the flow of traffic. These measures are likely to support reduced per capita emissions and reduce emissions from transport. Furthermore, policies which seek to protect and enhance a network of local green spaces and green infrastructure (Policies W8 and W10) will support climate resilience. On this basis, **minor positive effects** are concluded as likely to relation to climate mitigation.

Health and wellbeing

- 9.13 There is a network of connected open spaces (afforded long-term protection through Policy W8) that provide access to nature and recreational opportunities within the Parish, further supported by a network of footpaths that connect with the surrounding countryside. Additionally, residents are supported by healthcare facilities within the settlement area, which have been afforded long-

²⁴ AECOM (2022): 'Whitchurch Design Guidance and Codes Final Report'

term protection under the provisions of Policy W6. Active travel enhancement opportunities are identified which support the priorities to improve this mode of travel outlined in Policy W5. Furthermore, the proposed site allocation (Policy W2) as well as the reserve site (Policy W3) are both expected to provide for safe and convenient access routes to key services and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

- 9.14 Ensuring access to a range of high-quality housing (as intended by the delivery of new homes at the allocation site under Policy W2) and maintaining access to key local employment opportunities and businesses (protected under Policy W6) are also likely to support positive health outcomes.
- 9.15 With existing residents predominantly reporting good health, new residents could be considered likely to experience and report similar outcomes, and considering the above, a continuation of the baseline is anticipated. On this basis, broadly **neutral effects** are considered most likely to in relation to health and wellbeing.

Historic environment

- 9.16 The neighbourhood area has a rich historic environment, recognised through the diversity of features and areas that are nationally and locally valued for their heritage interest. The sensitivities are reflected by WNP policies and proposals which focus on the conservation and enhancement of both designated and non-designated heritage assets, and their settings.
- 9.17 At the proposed site allocation (Policy W2) there is recognised potential to impact upon the setting of the nearby listed Kempson House, and the site lies in the immediate setting of the conservation area. Policy W3 includes provisions which seek to not just preserve but also enhance the significance of assets and ensure development responds sensitively and sympathetically to its location in a heritage setting. The policy further requires a landscape strategy, whereby building heights and site layout have full regard to historic character and additional planting has already been installed, will provide a visual and physical screen to the listed building.
- 9.18 The reserve site proposed under Policy W3 similarly lies within the setting of the conservation, and similar policy provisions are provided (as outlined above under Policy W2).
- 9.19 Furthermore, Policy W4, seeks to ensure that the historic environment, particularly the special architectural and historic significance of the designated Whitchurch Conservation Area, is sustained and enhanced in the design of new development. Policy W4 provides design codes which identify features considered to be positive characteristics of the conservation area and its immediate setting. Additionally, the identification of important views under Policy W9 seeks to preserve local character. Positive effects are considered likely because of these extra provisions.
- 9.20 The site-specific provisions are considered likely to ensure that development does not adversely impact upon the historic environment. Supported by additional policy provisions which identify and protect the key characteristics associated with heritage settings, **minor positive effects** are concluded as most likely.

Land, soil, and water resources

- 9.21 At the proposed allocation site under Policy W2, national datasets indicate that the land has a high likelihood of being underlain by Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. However, locally the site is not known to be in active farm use. The site does not intersect a mineral safeguarding area, and small-scale development is proposed which will minimise the use and transport of natural resources. No significant effects are anticipated in relation to water quality, as the site does not intersect a waterbody or its associated floodplain. The increased demand for water resources is considered minor in scale and unlikely to lead to significant effects, with resources managed at a much larger, catchment scale.
- 9.22 Similar findings are also reported in relation to the reserve site under Policy W3. This greenfield site also has a high likelihood of being underlain by BMV agricultural land and this site is also known to be in active farm use. However, effects are likely to still be minor in nature due to the small-scale development proposed (should the site be released within the plan period).
- 9.23 Overall, the loss of greenfield land and potentially high-quality agricultural land is considered likely to lead to long-term **minor negative effects**. However, these effects are considered largely unavoidable in the absence of suitable brownfield alternatives.

Landscape

- 9.24 Whitchurch is a village surrounded by rural hinterland. The relationship between the neighbourhood area, and the locally designated Area of Attractive Landscape (AAL), is a defining feature and contributes strongly to the neighbourhood area's sense of place and quality of its environment.
- 9.25 The site allocation proposed under Policy W2 is located within the AAL, and the policy provisions reflect this sensitivity (as is the case for the reserve site proposed under Policy W3). The policies require the preparation of a landscape strategy whereby the layout and heights of buildings have full regard to Local Plan policy requirements on conserving and enhancing the landscape character of the AAL.
- 9.26 Identifying a settlement boundary of the neighbourhood area also provides a clear distinction as to what constitutes development in the countryside (Policy W1). Important viewpoints emerging from the evidence base have also been identified and protected through Policy W9, these views are defined as especially important in defining the relationship between the village and its rural hinterland. As such, positive effects are anticipated by means of the new policy provisions seeking to retain such features in future development.
- 9.27 Further contributing to the quality of the natural and built environment, are the design codes proposed under Policy W4. This policy ensures that any new development demonstrates a connection with local character and place making. This will, in turn, facilitate opportunities for high quality design and layout to be incorporated within new development areas which are sensitive to the character of the surrounding environment.

- 9.28 More broadly, delivering net gains in biodiversity and facilitating green infrastructure enhancements can have beneficial impacts in terms of the built environment and public realm, as can the facilitation of improved transport flows. Key policies in this regard include W2, W3, W5 and W10. This will be further supported by the Policy W8, which aims to conserve a network of identified green spaces.
- 9.29 Overall, the WNP policies have a strong focus on protecting and enhancing landscape and townscape character, the quality of the public realm, sense of place, and local distinctiveness. The proposed greenfield development and settlement expansion is considered likely to lead to residual negative effects, but these are not considered likely to be significant. **Minor negative effects** are therefore concluded.

Population and communities

- 9.30 The quality of development is a key influence on the quality of life of residents. In this respect, several policies provide criteria and guidance for potential proposals, with a view to implementing high quality design and layout within new development areas. Key policies in this regard include W1 and W4. These provisions primarily focus on ensuring that appropriate mitigation measures are incorporated to address any potential constraints to development, in addition to ensuring that new development is safe, attractive, inclusive, and accessible, and in keeping with the surrounding environment.
- 9.31 Through consultation, the residents of Whitchurch identified several green and open areas they value. Policy W8 seeks to prevent development that would harm the open character of these areas, designating them as Local Green Spaces. Furthermore, growth at the allocation site (and at the reserve site) is required through the policy framework to deliver a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain, in addition to enhancing the landscape, and green infrastructure. Positive effects could be anticipated from these provisions.
- 9.32 More broadly, WNP policies and proposals have a strong emphasis on delivering public realm improvements (including through green infrastructure provision) and active travel opportunities. Key policies in this respect include W5 and W10. The site-specific policies W2 and W3 (reserve site) also set out a range of provisions which will support and enhance residents' quality of life. For example, by providing safe and convenient access routes for pedestrians and cyclists to the school, shops, and other village amenities off the A413, placing an emphasis on small to mid-sized homes which are suitable for first time buyers, and providing a 'new village gateway'.
- 9.33 Identifying a reserve site (Policy W3) could also provide greater certainty for residents, identifying where any additional development needs are likely to be directed; considered important in the context of an emerging Local Plan.
- 9.34 The WNP also seeks to ensure that the provision of community services and facilities are maintained and continue to reflect the needs of residents, and that these facilities are accessible to all. Key policies in this respect include W2, W3, W6 and W7.
- 9.35 Considering these points, **significant positive effects** are considered a likely outcome in relation to this theme.

Transportation and movement

- 9.36 In the absence of strategic transport interventions, growth in the Plan area is likely to continue prevalent trends in which residents' favour private vehicles as the transport modes of choice/ necessity.
- 9.37 The WNP proactively responds to this context by seeking to locate growth in areas which can provide pedestrian and cycle route connections both within the settlement (particularly to key services and facilities such as the school and shop, and to bus services) and beyond (connecting with the extensive footpath network in the surrounding rural hinterland). Additional protective policies such as W6 and W7, seek to maintain or improve the level of self-containment experienced in Whitchurch.
- 9.38 The WNP provides additional supporting in managing the flow of traffic through the Parish, identifying key locations that would benefit from intervention, as well as measures to improve safety. New development that generates an increase in traffic will be expected under Policy W5 to provide direct and proportionate contributions to the outlined measures at key locations.
- 9.39 Considering the above, the additional provisions of the WNP are considered likely to lead to long-term **minor positive effects**.

Cumulative effects

- 9.40 Cumulatively, the WNP will support the wider Bucks local housing strategy and supply of sites for development. In particular, the provision of a reserve site in the eventuality that the emerging Local Plan identifies additional development needs will boost supply and provide greater clarity for residents both within and surrounding the Parish. On this basis, **positive cumulative effects** are considered most likely.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- 10.1 Overall, **no significant negative effects** are considered likely in the implementation of the WNP. **Significant positive effects** are anticipated in relation to the population and communities theme, predominantly reflecting the potential provision of high-quality and accessible housing of a range of tenures, connected to the existing settlement area.
- 10.2 **Minor negative effects** are predicted as likely in relation to the SEA themes of air quality, land, soil, and water resources, and landscape. This predominantly reflects greenfield development, potentially resulting in the loss of high-quality agricultural land, and likely minor increases in traffic in and nearby the Aylesbury AQMAs.
- 10.3 **Minor positive effects** are concluded as most likely in relation to the SEA themes of biodiversity, climate change and flood risk, historic environment, and transportation and movement. The allocation and reserve sites are not significantly constrained in relation to biodiversity and flood risk. Whilst there are heritage constraints, the provisions of the WNP seek to ensure no residual impacts in relation to the significance of assets or their settings. Additional policy provisions which identify positive characteristics which contribute to heritage settings, design codes, important local views, and traffic mitigation measures at key locations are notable benefits of the plan.
- 10.4 **Neutral effects** are concluded as most likely in relation the health and wellbeing SEA theme, with no significant deviations from the baseline predicted.

Recommendations

- 10.5 At this stage, no significant negative effects are considered likely that would require more stringent mitigation. The minor negative effects identified are largely unavoidable with a lack of suitable alternative brownfield sites and in the context of a rural village environment. On this basis **no recommendations** are identified. Despite this, it is recognised that the views of statutory consultees are being sought at consultation and will be considered in the next iteration of plan-making and SEA.

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 plan-making and SEA.

Plan finalisation

11.2 The submission version WNP and this SEA Environmental Report will now be submitted to Buckinghamshire Council. Following submission, the plan and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation, and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

11.3 Assuming that 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 WNP will become part of the Development Plan for Buckinghamshire Council, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

Monitoring

11.4 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.

11.5 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the WNP that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council.

11.6 However, a Heritage Appraisal was undertaken in March 2023 in respect of the Manor Farm site allocation, which suggested that further investigation is likely to be required, such as geophysical surveys, before any determination of a planning application can be made. A detailed settings assessment will also be required to inform any future development plans and planning application. It is recommended that the progression of development proposals at site allocations is monitored alongside the effectiveness of NDP policies in this respect.

Appendix A Regulatory requirements

As discussed in **Chapter 1** above, 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** overleaf 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 this Environmental Report, in-line with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

Environmental Report question	In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include... ²⁵
What is the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan.
What is the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship with other relevant plans and programmes. The 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.
What's the scope of the SEA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 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. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
What is the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 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. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
What are the key issues and objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key problems/issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment.
What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with. The likely significant effects associated with alternatives. Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives appraisal/a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the current version of the plan.
What are the assessment findings at this stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likely significant effects associated with the Regulation 14 version of the plan. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the Regulation 14 version of the plan.
What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The next steps for the plan making /SEA process.

²⁵ NB this column does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation.

Table AA-2: Questions answered by this Environmental Report, in-line 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>	
(a) 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>
(b) 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	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'context'?</i>
(c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;		
(d) 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 environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>
(e) 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 relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan'	
(f) 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;	The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	
(g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing 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	i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues & objectives?</i>
(h) 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	Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal	
(i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	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]
	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 (within this report) regulatory requirements have been, are and will be met.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
Schedule 2 of the regulations lists the information to be provided within the SA Report	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	Chapter 2 (‘What is the plan seeking to achieve’) presents this information.
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 have been considered in detail through scoping work, which has involved dedicated consultation on a Scoping Report. The ‘SEA framework’ – the outcome of scoping – is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA?’). More detailed messages, established through a context and baseline review are also presented in Appendix B of this Environmental Report.
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 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, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been considered during its preparation;	
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 secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects);	Chapter 6 presents alternatives appraisal findings (in relation to housing growth, which is a ‘stand-out’ plan policy area). Chapters 9 presents an appraisal of the plan. With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 8 explains the role of the SEA framework/scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions, e.g., timescale.
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;	The assessment highlights certain tensions between competing objectives, which might potentially be actioned by the Examiner, when finalising the plan. Also, specific recommendations are made in Chapter 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;	Chapters 4 and 5 deal with ‘Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with’, in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues and options. Also, Chapter 7 explains the Parish Council’s ‘reasons for selecting the preferred option’ (in-light of alternatives assessment).

9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10;

Chapter 11 presents measures envisaged concerning monitoring.

10.A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings

The NTS is provided at the beginning of this Environmental 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 environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2)

At the current time, this Environmental Report is published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Whitchurch Neighbourhood Plan, with a view to informing Regulation 14 consultation.

The SA must be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.

The environmental 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 Scoping information

B.1 Air quality

Key issues

Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and/ or opportunities) are identified in relation to air quality:

- Future growth in Whitchurch could impact road capacity and contribute to increased traffic and congestion on both local roads and roads within the nearby main town, Aylesbury. Increased traffic and congestion in Aylesbury have implications for air quality, particularly within areas that currently exceed mean annual objectives for NO₂.

B.2 Biodiversity and geodiversity

Key issues

Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and/ or opportunities) are identified in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity:

- Growth in the WNP area should seek to avoid the loss or fragmentation of Priority Habitat. The WNP provides an opportunity to develop a spatial strategy that minimises impacts on the local habitat network and delivers development gains in respect of biodiversity net gain, habitat expansion, and new green infrastructure.

B.3 Climate change and flood risk

Key issues

Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and/ or opportunities) are identified in relation to climate change and flood risk:

- The WNP settlement area and its immediate surroundings are partially affected by areas of high and medium surface water flood risk. Development should ensure appropriate mitigation (e.g., sustainable drainage systems) and seek opportunities to improve drainage and reduce flood risk where they exist.
- The transport sector continues to be a key challenge in terms of reducing emissions. The WNP provides opportunities to guide development towards the most accessible available locations in the Plan area and require local infrastructure (including walking and cycling) improvements where appropriate.
- The WNP should seek to maximise opportunities for local renewable energy and electric vehicle infrastructure development, as well as new green infrastructure and improved ecological links, to support climate resilience.

B.4 Health and wellbeing

Key issues

Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and/ or opportunities) are identified in relation to health and wellbeing:

- Although some green spaces in Whitchurch is inaccessible, including the Whitchurch Cricket Club, the village has a good quality recreation ground and is surrounded by green space, including numerous public footpaths and bridleways. Still, the WNP provides the opportunity to require appropriate development contributions to address any shortfalls. Planning can also support the interconnectivity of open and recreational spaces, maximising their access by sustainable modes (e.g., walking and cycling).
- The WNP could also seek improvements to the public realm which maximise social inclusion and address any existing infrastructure/ mobility issues for more vulnerable residents.

B.5 Historic environment

Key issues

Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and/ or opportunities) are identified in relation to the historic environment:

- With a variety of designated assets and archaeological finds in the Plan area, it will be important to ensure that future development avoids/ minimises impacts upon the historic environment and maximises opportunities to improve the public realm and green infrastructure to the indirect benefit of heritage settings.
- With the Conservation Area Appraisal undertaken in 2008, the WNP provides an opportunity to bolster evidence in relation to the significance of Whitchurch Conservation Area, its key features and values derived locally, and implement local controls where appropriate.

B.6 Land, soil, and water resources

Key issues

Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and/ or opportunities) are identified in relation to land, soil, and water resources:

- It is predicted that higher quality agricultural land immediately surrounds the A413, giving way to significant potential for the loss of BMV land. The WNP provides opportunities to avoid/ minimise the loss of agricultural land in these areas.
- It will be important for future development to ensure that it avoids any detrimental impacts on water quality both on and off-site. Furthermore, the WNP should seek to capitalise on any potential opportunities to improve water quality, particularly chemical quality.

- The WNP could also seek to support extended measures to improve the resilience of water supplies, including through local water recycling schemes and opportunities to increase efficiency in water use.

B.7 Landscape

Key issues

Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and/ or opportunities) are identified in relation to landscape:

- Despite its proximity to Aylesbury, Whitchurch retains a rural character and provides residents with good access to the surrounding countryside. It will be important to retain this character in future development, and take advantage of key connections, delivering, where possible, targeted landscape/ green infrastructure improvements.
- The Plan area is partially set in rising topography that affords good views across the surrounding countryside in areas. Key views could be identified through the Plan process and provided policy protections.
- The growth strategy for the WNP should seek to minimise landscape impacts, including through avoidance/ protection of key landscape features such as trees and hedgerows.

B.8 Population and communities

Key issues

Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and/ or opportunities) are identified in relation to population and communities:

- The WNP provides the opportunity for enhanced policy provisions which seek to deliver the right mix of housing types, tenures and sizes according to local needs, in suitably connected places; and reduce deprivation in this respect.
- The WNP provides the opportunities to plan for development which accommodates for changing working patterns and lifestyles, and places greater emphasis on high levels of accessibility.

B.9 Transport and movement

Key issues

Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and/ or opportunities) are identified in relation to transportation and movement:

- In the absence of strategic transport interventions, growth in the Plan area is likely to continue prevalent trends in which residents' favour private vehicles as the transport mode of choice/ necessity. It will therefore be important to locate any additional growth in areas which maximise pedestrian and cycle route

connections within the settlement and beyond and support higher levels of self-containment.

- A relatively high proportion of residents in the Plan area work from home when compared to England and the South East averages and this trend is forecast to become more prevalent when considering the ongoing pandemic. Opportunities to capitalise on this positive trend should be maximised.
- Whilst bus services serve the Plan area, there is no direct rail access. Future development should seek to ensure appropriate connections to existing infrastructure and improve access to the extensive PROW network within the Plan area to encourage more sustainable modes of transportation.

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