

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the submission version of the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report

Ringstead Parish Council

February 2021

Quality information

Prepared by	Checked by	Verified by	Approved by
Rosie Cox, Environmental Planner	Chris McNulty, Senior Consultant	Alastair Peattie, Associate Director	Alastair Peattie, Associate Director
Lauren Egan, Graduate Environmental Planner			

Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorized	Name	Position
V1	November 2020	First draft for internal review	10/11/2020	Chris McNulty	Senior Consultant
V2	November 2020	Amended draft for review and comment by Ringstead Parish Council	24/11/2020	Alastair Peattie	Associate Director
V3	February 2021	Final version reflecting the final submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan, signed off by Locality.	08/02/2021	Alastair Peattie	Associate Director

Prepared for:

Ringstead Parish Council

Prepared by:

AECOM Limited
3rd Floor, Portwall Place
Portwall Lane
Bristol BS1 6NA
United Kingdom

T: +44 117 901 7000
aecom.com

© 2021 AECOM Limited. All Rights Reserved.

This document has been prepared by AECOM Limited (“AECOM”) in accordance with its contract with Locality (the “Client”) in accordance with generally accepted consultancy principles, the budget for fees and the terms of reference agreed between AECOM and the Client. Any information provided by third parties and referred to herein has not been checked or verified by AECOM, unless otherwise expressly stated in the document. AECOM shall have no liability to any third party that makes use of or relies upon this document.

Table of Contents

Non-Technical Summary	
1. Introduction	1
Background	1
SEA explained	3
2. Planning policy context	4
Relationship with local planning policy	4
Vision of the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan	6
3. What is the scope of the SEA?	7
SEA Scoping Report.....	7
Consultation	7
The SEA framework.....	7
4. What has plan making / SEA involved to this point?	9
Overview of plan making and SEA to date	9
Establishing the reasonable alternatives	9
Assessment of reasonable alternative growth scenarios	15
Selecting the preferred approach	17
5. What are the appraisal findings at this current stage?	18
Introduction	18
Appraisal method.....	18
Biodiversity	19
Climate change	21
Landscape.....	22
Historic environment.....	23
Land, soil and water resources	24
Population and communities	24
Health and wellbeing	25
Transportation	26
Conclusions and recommendations at this current stage.....	27
6. What are the next steps?	28
Monitoring	28
Appendix I Regulation requirements	29
Appendix II The scope of the SEA.....	33
Appendix III Assessment of reasonable alternative growth scenarios	39
Appendix IV Site assessment criteria and results	52

Non-Technical Summary (NTS)

Introduction

AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan (RNP).

SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely significant effects of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding or mitigating negative environmental effects and maximising positive effects. Through this approach, the SEA for the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan seeks to maximise the Neighbourhood Plan's contribution to sustainable development.

The Environmental Report will be submitted to East Northamptonshire District Council (ENDC) alongside the Neighbourhood Plan for subsequent Independent Examination.

Structure of the Environmental Report and this NTS

SEA reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:

1. What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
2. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
3. What happens next?

Each of these questions is answered in turn below. Before answering the first question however, two initial questions are answered in order to further set the scene – i) what is the Plan seeking to achieve?; and ii) what is the scope of the SEA?

What is the Plan seeking to achieve?

Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in the context of the adopted North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS), which serves as the Local Plan Part 1; the adopted Local Plan Part 2, which is not district-wide and does not cover Ringstead; and the emerging district-wide Replacement Local Plan Part 2 which will cover Ringstead.

The emerging Replacement LPP2 underwent Regulation 18 consultation in early 2017, followed by a further period of consultation on a full draft of the Plan between November 2018 and February 2019. A subsequent additional period of consultation on 'focused changes' was undertaken between February and March 2020. The Replacement LPP2 was approved by East Northamptonshire District Council's Planning Policy Committee for publication and submission to the Secretary of State in January 2021.

Policy **EN1** (Spatial development strategy) of the submission draft of the Replacement LPP2 identifies Rushden as the focus for growth in the district, occupying Tier 1 of the settlement hierarchy; five settlements are identified as 'Market Towns' at Tier 2 of the hierarchy (i.e. Higham Ferrers; Irthlingborough; Raunds; Thrapston, and Oundle). Collectively, these six urban areas are allocated around 7,580 dwellings, consistent with the JCS allocation for East Northamptonshire.

As per the JCS, this leaves a residual housing target of at least 820 dwellings to be met across the remainder of the district, i.e. the 'Rural Areas' comprising the district's 'Villages' and 'Open Countryside' – including Ringstead. However, Table 18 of the Replacement LPP2 (Rural areas residual housing requirement, as at 1 April 2018) notes that this housing target for the rural areas had **already been met in full** by April 2018.

Ringstead is identified as one of eight 'large villages', a typology defined as "*having a substantive range of services and facilities*" which "*serve a wider local cluster or network of rural settlements*". The

Replacement LPP2 is clear that the 'large villages' "*may have capacity to accommodate local growth where promoted through neighbourhood planning*".

Therefore, although the 820 dwelling target for the district's rural areas has already been met, the Replacement LPP2 is clear that where evidence indicates additional specific local housing needs then these should be met via preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Therefore, in this context the Neighbourhood Plan is seeking to deliver its identified local housing needs via site allocation (this is discussed further below).

What is the scope of the SEA?

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.¹ As such, the Scoping Report was released to these authorities for consultation during a five week consultation period from 27th July to 1st September 2020.

Comments received on the Scoping Report, and how they have been considered and addressed, are presented in **Appendix II** of this report. The issues identified through the Scoping process were then translated into an 'SEA framework'. This SEA framework provides a methodological framework for the appraisal of likely significant effects on the baseline. The framework is summarised in Table NTS1 below:

Table NTS1 The SEA framework for the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan

SEA theme	SEA objective
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance all biodiversity assets, including seeking a net gain where possible.
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Plan Area Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Plan Area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes within and surrounding the Neighbourhood Plan area
Historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Conserve, enhance and support the integrity of designated and non-designated buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, as well as their settings.
Land, soil and water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the efficient and effective use of land Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner
Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
Population and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve access to local, high-quality community services and facilities. Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel Maintain and improve the transport infrastructure within the Neighbourhood plan area.

¹ In line with Article 6(3) of the SEA Directive, 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*".

What has plan-making/ SEA involved up to this point?

Plan making has been underway in Ringstead since 2017, following the approval of Ringstead's Neighbourhood Area application by East Northamptonshire District Council (ENDC) in December 2017.² The scope, objectives and policies of the plan have evolved in response to extensive engagement with the local community by the Parish Council.

The draft Neighbourhood Plan was screened in as requiring SEA in April 2020 due to the potential for the Neighbourhood Plan to give rise to significant environmental effects, particularly in relation to the Upper Nene Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA). An SEA scoping report was prepared by AECOM in July 2020 and issued to Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency for the statutory five week consultation period between 27th July 2020 and 1st September 2020.

The pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan underwent Regulation 14 consultation between 17th July 2020 and 31st August 2020. An interim SEA Environmental Report was subsequently prepared in relation to the pre-submission draft of the Neighbourhood Plan. This final version of the SEA Environmental Report has been prepared to accompany the **submission** version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Housing target to delivered through the Neighbourhood Plan

The housing target established by the North Northamptonshire JCS for the rural areas of East Northamptonshire has already been achieved. However, the East Northamptonshire Replacement LPP2 states that ENDC intend to “provide an indicative [housing] figure if requested by the neighbourhood planning body”, as per the NPPF. ENDC therefore include indicative housing needs at parish/ward level in the Replacement LPP2, calculated using a methodology based on “rural population apportionment” – essentially, a proportionate figure based on the existing size of each rural settlement relative to the overall population of the rural area of the District as a whole.

Table 2 of the Replacement LPP2 identifies that on this basis, Ringstead's indicative housing need over the plan period is likely to be around 60 dwellings. Since the base date of the plan³, there have been 30 completions in Ringstead. This leaves a **residual indicative housing need of around 30 dwellings** to be met through allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Site options

A total of eight site options have been identified by the Parish Council which could potentially support housing to meet this residual need. These site options have been drawn from the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit's SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) and via East Northamptonshire District Council's continuous call for sites. A local call for sites yielded one additional site, though this was subsequently withdrawn by the landowner and is not considered further.

Therefore, an overall total of eight available site options were identified for further testing, as set out in Table NTS2 below.

Table NTS2 Site options considered through the SEA process

Option	Name	Size (ha)
Site 1	West of Raunds Road	1.95
Site 2	West of Carlow Road	0.60
Site 3	Off Denford Road (east)	1.05
Site 4	West Farm, Carlow Road	0.87

² https://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/info/200187/neighbourhood_planning/1511/neighbourhood_planning/20

³ i.e. 2011 to align the plan period with the JCS

Site 5	Carlow Road / Ham Lane	0.52
Site 6	Home Farm, Ham Lane	0.42
Site 7	Dodson & Horrell, Spencer Street	1.64
Site 8	Off Denford Road (west)	5.92

Summary of the Parish Council's site assessment

Methodology

Each site was assessed against a total of 53 assessment criteria, organised into 19 sections. These criteria were based on the Sustainability Appraisal of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, and individualised to be Ringstead-specific where appropriate.

Each site was considered in relation to a distance threshold from a range of constraints and opportunities. Proximity to opportunities was considered to be positive, whilst proximity to constraints was considered to be negative. All constraints and opportunity features were considered in 'silos', i.e. not in combination with other features. No specific weighting was attached to each feature.

The full detailed list of 53 assessment criteria is available in **Appendix IV** of this report.

Results

The sites were ranked in order of the total number of red scores they received in relation to each of the 19 sections, with the fewest red scores indicating a strong relative performance, and the most red scores indicating a weak relative performance. The results of the Parish Council's site assessment are summarised in Table NTS3 below:

Table NTS3 Summary of results of Ringstead Parish Council's site assessment

Site number	Site name	Area (ha)	Total Red	Total Amber	Total Green	Overall rank
Site 1	West of Raunds Road	1.95	5	10	4	2
Site 2	West of Carlow Road	0.6	11	7	1	8
Site 3	Off Denford Road (east)	1.05	7	9	3	4
Site 4	West Farm, Carlow Road	0.87	7	10	2	5
Site 5	Carlow Road / Ham Lane	0.52	8	8	3	6
Site 6	Home Farm, Ham Lane	0.42	6	10	3	3
Site 7	Dodson & Horrell	1.64	2	13	4	1
Site 8	Off Denford Road (west)	5.92	9	7	3	7

As per the above summary, **Site 7 (Dodson & Horrell) emerged as the most strongly performing site** overall, recording the fewest red scores and joint highest green scores. The second strongest performing site was Site 1 (West of Raunds Road), whilst Site 6 (Home Farm, Ham Lane) recorded the third strongest performance.

The reasonable alternative growth scenarios for the SEA

Based on the above, it is apparent that in addition to the most strongly performing site (Site 7), it is appropriate to test the next most strongly performing site, Site 1 as a reasonable alternative option for allocation.

As both of these sites are of a similar scale and would result in all development being directed to a single larger site, it is considered prudent to also test a different distribution option, i.e. a growth scenario which distributes development between two smaller sites. Sites 5 and 6 are appropriate to test as each site has indicative capacity for around half the total housing requirement and Site 6 is also the next most strongly performing site.

Therefore, the reasonable alternative growth scenarios for assessment are as follows:

- **Option A:** Direct all growth to Site 7 (Dodson & Horrell) (36 dwellings)
- **Option B:** Disperse growth between two smaller sites (Site 5 and Site 6) (30 dwellings)
- **Option C:** Direct all growth to Site 1 (West of Raunds Road) (36+ dwellings)

Assessment of reasonable alternatives

For each one of Options 1-4, the appraisal of reasonable alternatives examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the SEA objectives identified through scoping as a methodological framework. The intention is to distinguish between each of the alternative options in relative terms, i.e. test their performance under each SEA theme in relation to one another. Judgement must then be applied as to which option performs strongest overall.

Under each SEA theme (e.g. 'Biodiversity'), the appraisal looks to differentiate between the performance of the options in relation to the relevant SEA objectives. Where differentiation is possible, the options' relative performance is ranked in order of preference with '1' indicating strongest performance.

Where it is not possible to meaningfully differentiate between the options, their broadly equal performance is indicated with a '=' symbol.

Potential significant effects are indicated with coloured text. **Green** is used to indicate significant positive effects, whilst **Red** is used to indicate significant negative effects.

It is important to note that the assessment **does not assume** that each of the SEA themes are of equal weight. Therefore, establishing which option is strongest performing overall is not simply a question of tallying the individual scores achieved under each SEA theme. Judgement must be applied as to which SEA themes attract greatest weight in the context of Ringstead and therefore which of the reasonable alternative options is most suitable for consideration as the preferred approach.

A summary of the reasonable alternatives appraisal is presented in Table NTS4:

Table NTS4 Reasonable alternative site options – summary findings

SA theme		Option A (Site 7)	Option B (Sites 5 and 6)	Option C (Site 1)
Biodiversity	Rank	2	3	1
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Climate change	Rank	1	3	2

SA theme		Option A (Site 7)	Option B (Sites 5 and 6)	Option C (Site 1)
Landscape	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Uncertain
	Rank	1	2	3
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Yes - Negative
Historic environment	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Uncertain
Land, soil and water resources	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes - positive
Population and communities	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes - positive
Health and wellbeing	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Transportation	Rank	2	3	1
	Significant effect?	No	No	No

Selecting the preferred approach

Following a review of the evidence and consideration of community aspirations for the area, **the Parish Council has selected an approach consistent with Option A as its preferred approach.** This means that the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan proposes to allocate one site for residential development, i.e. Site 7 (Dodson & Horrell). A range of technical evidence as well as findings from community consultation support this approach as the most sustainable.

In terms of the *location* of development, the allocation is informed by the findings of the SEA and the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA), both of which find that development in closest proximity to the sensitive Upper Nene Gravel Pits SPA site at Kinewell Lake could have greatest potential for adverse effects on sensitive biodiversity receptors. Site 7 is furthest from the SPA and offers additional biodiversity benefits via habitat creation and enhancement through the redevelopment process of the existing industrial site.

Furthermore, by allocating a part-brownfield site the Neighbourhood Plan will make the most efficient use of the available land, avoiding greenfield land-take and minimising the impact of new development on Ringstead's landscape character and setting.

In terms of the *quantum* of development, the Neighbourhood Plan proposes allocation of 36 new dwellings at the site in relation to an indicative need of around 30 in the emerging Replacement LPP2. The site promoter has proposed a scheme comprising 36 dwellings, of which 14 are anticipated to be affordable if full policy compliance with the JCS is achieved. Delivery of 36 dwellings would meet and slightly exceed the indicative housing target for Ringstead and is therefore considered by the Parish Council to be an appropriate quantum of growth to meet Ringstead's housing needs over the plan period, including affordable housing.

When read as a whole, the Parish Council therefore considers that the available evidence indicates that Option A will deliver growth at the most suitable location for growth in Ringstead, making effective use of available land site whilst minimising, and avoiding where possible, harm to the settlement’s sensitive biodiversity assets, its character and its setting within the wider landscape. Option A will meet and slightly exceed indicative housing needs and will deliver growth at a location which benefits from the greatest community support and benefits from sustainable access to a range of services and facilities within the village.

What are the SEA findings at this stage?

This part of the report presents an assessment of the current pre-submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan, i.e. the likely effects of the proposed policies and allocations, including taking account of policy mitigation where potential for effects have been identified.

Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan Policies

The submission Neighbourhood Plan contains 24 policies, organised into six broad themes. These are presented in Table NTS5 below:

Table NTS5 List of policies in the submission Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan

Policy theme	Policy
Maintaining the Character of Ringstead	Policy R1: Features of Local Heritage Interest
	Policy R2: Design
	Policy R3: Eco Design
	Policy R4: Local Green Spaces
Services and Facilities	Policy R5: Community Services and Facilities
	Policy R6: Village Hall
	Policy R7: Infrastructure
Traffic and Parking	Policy R8: Parking
Countryside and Countryside Access	Policy R9: The Countryside
	Policy R10: Locally Important Views
	Policy R11: Ringstead Area of Separation
	Policy R12: Public Rights of Way Network
	Policy R13: SPA Mitigation Strategy
	Policy R14: Ecology and Biodiversity
	Policy R15: Trees and Hedges
Housing	Policy R16: Providing for Housing
	Policy R17: Land at Dodson & Horrell
	Policy R18: Residential Conversion of Rural Buildings
	Policy R19: Brownfield Land
	Policy R20: Housing Mix
	Policy R21: Affordable Housing
Employment	Policy R22: Gypsies and Travellers
	Policy R23: Blackthorn Marina
	Policy R24: Business Conversion of Rural Buildings

Assessment findings in relation to the submission version of the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan

The key findings are:

- Potential effects arising from plan implementation are predominately positive or neutral.
- Positive effects of note relate to the delivery of new housing to meeting local needs (including potential to meet specialist housing needs, including affordable housing), efficient use of available land via the redevelopment of a part-brownfield site, protection of village character, settlement identity, and the extensive green infrastructure resource, and support for a modal shift towards active travel where practicable.
- Collectively, these effects are likely to bring about benefits for the local community, resident health and wellbeing, and the built and natural environment.

What are the next steps at this stage?

This Environmental Report accompanies the submission version of the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan.

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 adopted North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and the emerging East Northamptonshire Replacement Local Plan Part 2.

If Independent Examination is favourable, the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a referendum, organised by East Northamptonshire District Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Development Plan for East Northamptonshire, covering the defined Neighbourhood Plan area.

It is noted that on 1st April 2021 East Northamptonshire District Council, along with Northamptonshire County Council and the seven lower tier authorities will be replaced by two new unitary authorities.⁴ East Northamptonshire District, along with Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, will become part of the new North Northamptonshire unitary authority as a result of this change.

Therefore it is anticipated that, once adopted, the Replacement LPP2 will become part of the development plan for the new unitary authority.

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 RNP to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by East Northamptonshire District Council, and its successor authority after April 2021, as part of the process of preparing Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR)

⁴ https://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/info/100004/your_council/1833/local_government_reform_faqs

1. Introduction

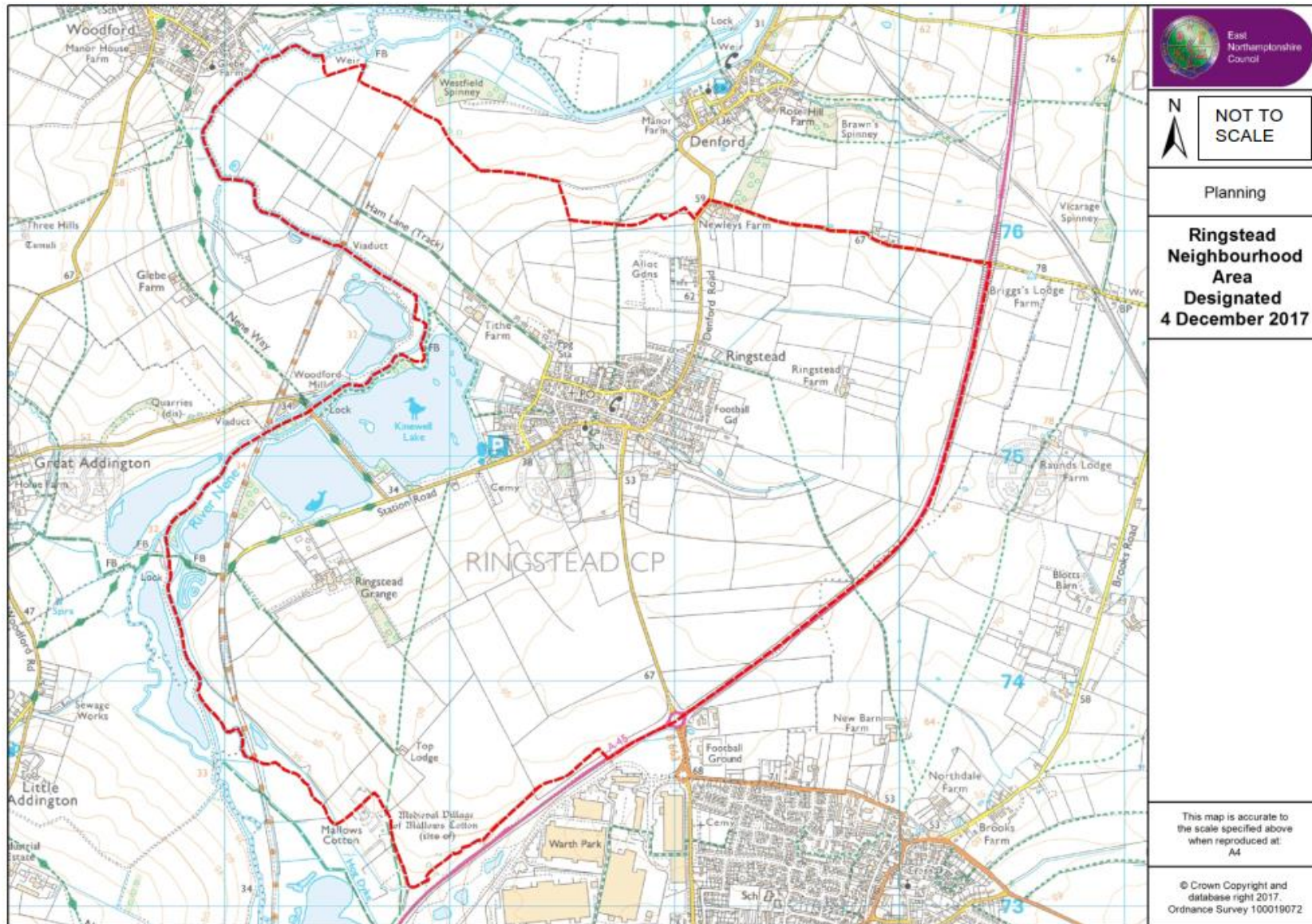
Background

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan (RNP). The RNP is being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011
- 1.2 The RNP is being prepared in the context of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (adopted 2016), which serves as the Part 1 Local Plan, and the adopted Part 2 Local Plan comprising the Rural North, Oundle and Thrapton Plan (RNOTP) (adopted 2011) and saved policies of the District Local Plan (DLP) (adopted 1996).
- 1.3 East Northamptonshire District Council is currently preparing a district-wide Replacement Local Plan Part 2 which will supersede the RNOTP and saved policies of the DLP once adopted.
- 1.4 The RNP will be submitted to East Northamptonshire District Council in early 2021. This Environmental Report accompanies the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.5 Key information relating to the RNP is presented in Table 1.1 below:

Table 1.1 Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan – Key Facts

Name of Responsible Authority	Ringstead Parish Council
Title of Plan	Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan
Subject	Neighbourhood planning
Purpose	<p>The Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan will be in general conformity with the adopted Local Plan Part 1 (North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy), adopted Local Plan Part 2 (comprising the RNOTP and saved policies of the DLP) and the emerging policies of the district-wide Replacement Local Plan Part 2.</p> <p>The Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan will inform decisions about development within the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan area over the plan period.</p>
Timescale	To 2031
Area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan	The Neighbourhood Plan area covers the administrative boundaries of the parish of Ringstead in Northamptonshire (see Figure 1.1)
Summary of content	The Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan will set out a vision, strategy and range of policies for the Neighbourhood Plan area.
Plan contact point	<p>Derrick Sims, Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group</p> <p>Email: DESims@gmx.com</p>

Figure 1.1 The Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan Area⁵



⁵ East Northamptonshire District Council (2017), available from: https://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/10519/regulation_7_notice_of_designation_4_december_2017

SEA explained

- 1.6 The Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan has been screened in as requiring Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) due to the potential for significant environmental effects from the policies and proposals of the Neighbourhood Plan, particularly in relation to the Upper Nene Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA), which is dual designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The screening opinion was provided by Plan-it X Consultancy with support from East Northamptonshire District Council, who undertook consultation with the three statutory bodies of Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency.⁶
- 1.7 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely significant effects of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding or mitigating negative environmental effects and maximising positive effects. Through this approach, the SEA for the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan seeks to maximise the emerging Neighbourhood Plan's contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.8 The SEA has been prepared in conformity with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations) which transpose into national law the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive. This has included an initial scoping stage to determine the scope of the SEA. The proposed scope was consulted upon with the statutory consultees of Natural England, Historic England and Environment Agency between July 27th and September 1st 2020. More details on this process can be found in **Chapter 3** and **Appendix II** of this report.
- 1.9 The SEA Regulations require that a report (known as the Environmental Report) is published for consultation alongside the draft plan that 'identifies, describes and evaluates' the likely significant effects of implementing 'the plan, and reasonable alternatives'. The report must then be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
- 1.10 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 appraisal findings at this stage?**
 - i.e. in relation to the plan.
 3. **What are the next steps at this stage?**
- 1.11 Therefore, this report essentially answers questions 1, 2 and 3 in turn in order to provide the required information.

⁶ <https://www.ringsteadpc.org.uk/uploads/final-ringstead-sea-screening-statement.pdf>

2. Planning policy context

Relationship with local planning policy

- 2.1 Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in the context of the adopted North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS), which serves as the Local Plan Part 1; the adopted Local Plan Part 2, which is not district-wide and does not cover Ringstead; and the emerging district-wide Replacement Local Plan Part 2 which will cover Ringstead.
- 2.2 These documents are explored in turn below:

North Northamptonshire JCS (Local Plan Part 1)

- 2.3 The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) was adopted in 2016 and serves as the Part 1 Local Plan for East Northamptonshire Council, Corby Borough Council, Kettering Borough Council and Wellingborough Borough Council for the period 2011 to 2031.⁷
- 2.4 As a Part 1 Local Plan, the JCS sets the overarching strategic framework for growth for all four Councils, including the quantum of housing growth to be delivered and the spatial strategy by which to distribute this growth.
- 2.5 **Policy 11** (The Network of Urban and Rural Areas) of the JCS establishes a four-tier settlement hierarchy for North Northamptonshire, comprising Growth Towns → Market Towns → Villages → Open Countryside.
- 2.6 New development is to be focussed at the Growth Towns, as these are the “*main locations for higher order facilities and infrastructure investment*” and represent the most sustainable locations for strategic new development.
- 2.7 The Market Towns, at tier two of the hierarchy, will deliver growth of a scale commensurate to their individual level of infrastructure, services and capacity, whilst growth in the Villages, at tier three, will be determined through the preparation of Part 2 Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. Development in the Open Countryside will be “*limited*”.
- 2.8 In the context of the above, JCS **Policy 28** (Housing Requirements) sets East Northamptonshire district a housing target of 8,400 dwellings over the plan period 2011-2031.
- 2.9 Of this total, **Policy 29** (Distribution of New Homes) states that around 3,285 dwellings are to be delivered at Rushden, around 4,295 dwellings dispersed between the district’s five Market Towns, with the remaining quantum of around 820 dwellings to be distributed across the district’s ‘Rural Areas’, which covers both the ‘Villages’ and ‘Open Countryside’ tiers of the hierarchy and includes Ringstead.
- 2.10 The policy is clear that the distribution of this housing target will be determined by “*Part 2 Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans*”. Therefore, the JCS does not establish a specific housing target for Ringstead.

Adopted East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2

- 2.11 The adopted LPP2 comprises the Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan (RNOTP), adopted in 2011, along with the saved policies of the East Northamptonshire District Local Plan (DLP), adopted in 1996, and the accompanying policies map.
- 2.12 The RNOTP does not cover the portion of the district in which Ringstead is located and as such the only LPP2 policies which apply to Ringstead directly are the small number of saved policies from the 1996 DLP. The DLP is long out of date and has very little remaining weight.

⁷ <http://www.nnjpd.org.uk/publications/adopted-north-northamptonshire-joint-core-strategy-2011-2031/>

Emerging district-wide Replacement LPP2

- 2.13 On 11 April 2016, the Council began the preparation of a new district-wide Local Plan Part 2, the East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2)⁸ to replace the 2011 Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan (RNOTP)⁹ and the saved policies of the 1996 East Northamptonshire District Local Plan¹⁰ (DLP).
- 2.14 The draft Replacement LPP2 underwent Regulation 18 consultation in early 2017, followed by a further period of consultation on a full draft of the Plan between November 2018 and February 2019. A subsequent additional period of consultation on ‘focused changes’ was undertaken between February and March 2020. The Replacement LPP2 was approved by East Northamptonshire District Council’s Planning Policy Committee for publication and submission to the Secretary of State in January 2021.
- 2.15 Policy **EN1** (Spatial development strategy) of the submission draft of the Replacement LPP2 adds granularity to the broad four-tier settlement hierarchy established by the JCS. Rushden is identified as the district’s only ‘Growth Town’ at Tier 1 of the hierarchy, whilst five settlements are identified as ‘Market Towns’ at Tier 2 of the hierarchy (i.e. Higham Ferrers; Irthlingborough; Raunds; Thrapston, and Oundle). Collectively, these six urban areas are allocated around 7,580 dwellings, consistent with the JCS allocation.
- 2.16 As per the JCS, this leaves a residual housing target of at least 820 dwellings to be met across the remainder of the district, i.e. the ‘Rural Areas’ comprising the district’s ‘Villages’ and ‘Open Countryside’. However, Table 18 of the Replacement LPP2 (Rural areas residual housing requirement, as at 1 April 2018) notes that this housing target for the rural areas had **already been met in full** by April 2018.
- 2.17 Policy EN1 seeks to “*enhance the rural spatial strategy set out in Policy 11 of the JCS by identifying a more detailed settlement hierarchy, based on local evidence*”. Consequently, Tier 3 of the JCS hierarchy (‘Villages’) is further subdivided into different typologies consisting of ‘large villages’, ‘small villages’ and ‘urban outliers’, with the remaining ‘restraint villages’ and ‘rural outliers’ comprising Tier 4 (Open Countryside).
- 2.18 Ringstead is identified as one of eight ‘large villages’, a typology defined as “*having a substantive range of services and facilities*” which “*serve a wider local cluster or network of rural settlements*”. The Replacement LPP2 is clear that the ‘large villages’ “*may have capacity to accommodate local growth where promoted through neighbourhood planning*”.
- 2.19 Therefore, although the 820 dwelling target for the district’s rural areas has already been met, the Replacement LPP2 is clear that where evidence indicates additional specific local housing needs then these should be met via preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Local Government re-organisation in Northamptonshire

- 2.20 On April 1st 2021 there will be a major re-organisation of local government in Northamptonshire. Northamptonshire County Council and the seven lower tier authorities will be replaced by two new unitary authorities.¹¹ East Northamptonshire, along with Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, will become part of the new North Northamptonshire unitary authority as a result of this change.
- 2.21 Therefore, it is anticipated that, once adopted, the Replacement LPP2 will become part of the development plan for the new authority. Similarly, it is anticipated that once ‘made’, the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the development plan for the new authority as well.

⁸ East Northamptonshire District Council (2017): Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2 [online] available from: https://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/11034/east_northamptonshire_local_plan_part_2_1st_consultation_draft

⁹ East Northamptonshire District Council (2011): 2011 Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan [online] available from: https://www.eastnorthamptonshire.gov.uk/info/200198/rural_north_ouundle_and_thrapston_plan/1244/rural_north_ouundle_and_t_hrapston_plan_-_adoption

¹⁰ East Northamptonshire District Council (1996): 1996 East Northamptonshire District Local Plan [online] https://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/info/200197/1996_district_local_plan/1676/1996_district_local_plan/2

¹¹ https://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/info/100004/your_council/1833/local_government_reform_faqs

Vision of the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan

2.22 The submission Neighbourhood Plan presents a broad vision of Ringstead at the end of the plan period in 2031 via an eight-segment 'vision statement'. The vision statement By 2031 sets out that by 2031 Ringstead will demonstrate the following key characteristics:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ringstead is a tranquil place to live• The unique character and heritage of Ringstead is preserved• Important green spaces are protected | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A prosperous local economy• The impact of on-street parking on village life is reduced• Local services and facilities are retained and, where possible, improved. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local housing needs are met• The character and beauty of the countryside and the natural environment are safeguarded |
|--|---|---|

3. What is the scope of the SEA?

3.1 The scope of the SEA comprises the sustainability issues and objectives that are a focus of, and provide a methodological framework for, the SEA.

SEA Scoping Report

3.2 The scope of the SEA was established through the SEA scoping report which set out:

- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional and local plans and strategies relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan;
- Baseline data against which the Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed;
- The key sustainability issues for the Neighbourhood Plan; and
- An 'SEA framework' of objectives against which the Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed.

3.3 Further information on the scope of the SEA is presented in **Appendix II**.

Consultation

3.4 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.¹² As such, the Scoping Report was released to these authorities for consultation during a five week consultation period from 27th July to 1st September 2020.

3.5 Comments received on the Scoping Report, and how they have been considered and addressed, are presented in **Appendix II**.

The SEA framework

3.6 The issues identified through the scoping process were then translated into an 'SEA Framework'. This SEA Framework provides a methodological framework for the appraisal of likely significant effects on the baseline. The SEA framework for the Neighbourhood Plan is summarised in Table 3.1 below and presented in full in **Appendix II**.

Table 3.1 The SEA framework for the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan

SEA theme	SEA objective
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance all biodiversity assets, including seeking a net gain where possible.
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Plan Area • Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Plan Area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes within and surrounding the Neighbourhood Plan area
Historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the Neighbourhood Plan Area. • Conserve, enhance and support the integrity of designated and non-designated buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, as well as their settings.

¹² In line with Article 6(3) of the SEA Directive, 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 theme	SEA objective
Land, soil and water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the efficient and effective use of land• Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner
Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
Population and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve access to local, high-quality community services and facilities.• Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel• Maintain and improve the transport infrastructure within the Neighbourhood plan area.

4. What has plan making / SEA involved to this point?

Overview of plan making and SEA to date

- 4.1 Plan making has been underway in Ringstead since 2017, following the approval of Ringstead's Neighbourhood Area application by East Northamptonshire District Council (ENDC) in December 2017.¹³ The scope, objectives and policies of the plan have evolved in response to extensive engagement with the local community by the Parish Council.
- 4.2 The draft Neighbourhood Plan was screened in as requiring SEA in April 2020 due to the potential for the Neighbourhood Plan to give rise to significant environmental effects, particularly in relation to the Upper Nene Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA).¹⁴ The draft Neighbourhood Plan was also screened in as requiring Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) which is undertaken separately.
- 4.3 The pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan underwent Regulation 14 consultation between 17th July 2020 and 31st August 2020.
- 4.4 An SEA scoping report was prepared by AECOM in July 2020 and issued to Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency for the statutory five week consultation period between 27th July 2020 and 1st September 2020.
- 4.5 An interim SEA Environmental Report was subsequently prepared in relation to the pre-submission draft of the Neighbourhood Plan. When finalising the submission draft of the Neighbourhood Plan, recommendations from the interim Environmental Report were considered accordingly.
- 4.6 This final version of the SEA Environmental Report has been prepared to accompany the **submission** version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Establishing the reasonable alternatives

Housing numbers to be delivered through the plan

- 4.7 The housing target established by the North Northamptonshire JCS for the rural areas of East Northamptonshire has already been achieved. However, the East Northamptonshire Replacement LPP2 states that ENDC intend to "*provide an indicative [housing] figure if requested by the neighbourhood planning body*", as per the NPPF.
- 4.8 ENDC therefore include indicative housing needs at parish/ward level in the Replacement LPP2, calculated using a methodology based on "*rural population apportionment*" – essentially, a proportionate figure based on the existing size of each rural settlement relative to the overall population of the rural area of the District as a whole.
- 4.9 Table 2 of the Replacement LPP2 identifies that on this basis, Ringstead's indicative housing need over the plan period is likely to be around **60 dwellings**.
- 4.10 Since the base date of the plan¹⁵, there have been 30 completions in Ringstead. This leaves a **residual indicative housing need of around 30 dwellings**.
- 4.11 Affordable housing provision is anticipated to be compliant with Policy 30 of the JCS, which requires 40% of all developments of 11 or more dwellings to be delivered as affordable housing.

¹³ https://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/info/200187/neighbourhood_planning/1511/neighbourhood_planning/20

¹⁴ <https://www.ringsteadpc.org.uk/uploads/final-ringstead-sea-screening-statement.pdf>

¹⁵ i.e. 2011 to align the plan period with the JCS

Site options

- 4.12 In 2019 the Steering Group commissioned Plan-it X consultancy to prepare and undertake a Site Assessment to identify sites potentially suitable for allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.13 In order to identify sites for the assessment, the Joint North Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)¹⁶ was first reviewed for sites within the plan area. Several further site options were identified through a continuous call for sites process led by ENDC. Collectively, a total of eight site options were identified from the SHLAA or the ENDC continuous call for sites process.
- 4.14 An additional local call for sites exercise was undertaken between December 2019 and January 2020 in order to identify the maximum possible number of site options. One additional site option at Middlefield Farm came through this process, though was subsequently withdrawn and is not considered further on the basis that it is no longer available.
- 4.15 Therefore, overall a total of eight available site options were identified for testing, as set out in **Table 4.1** below.

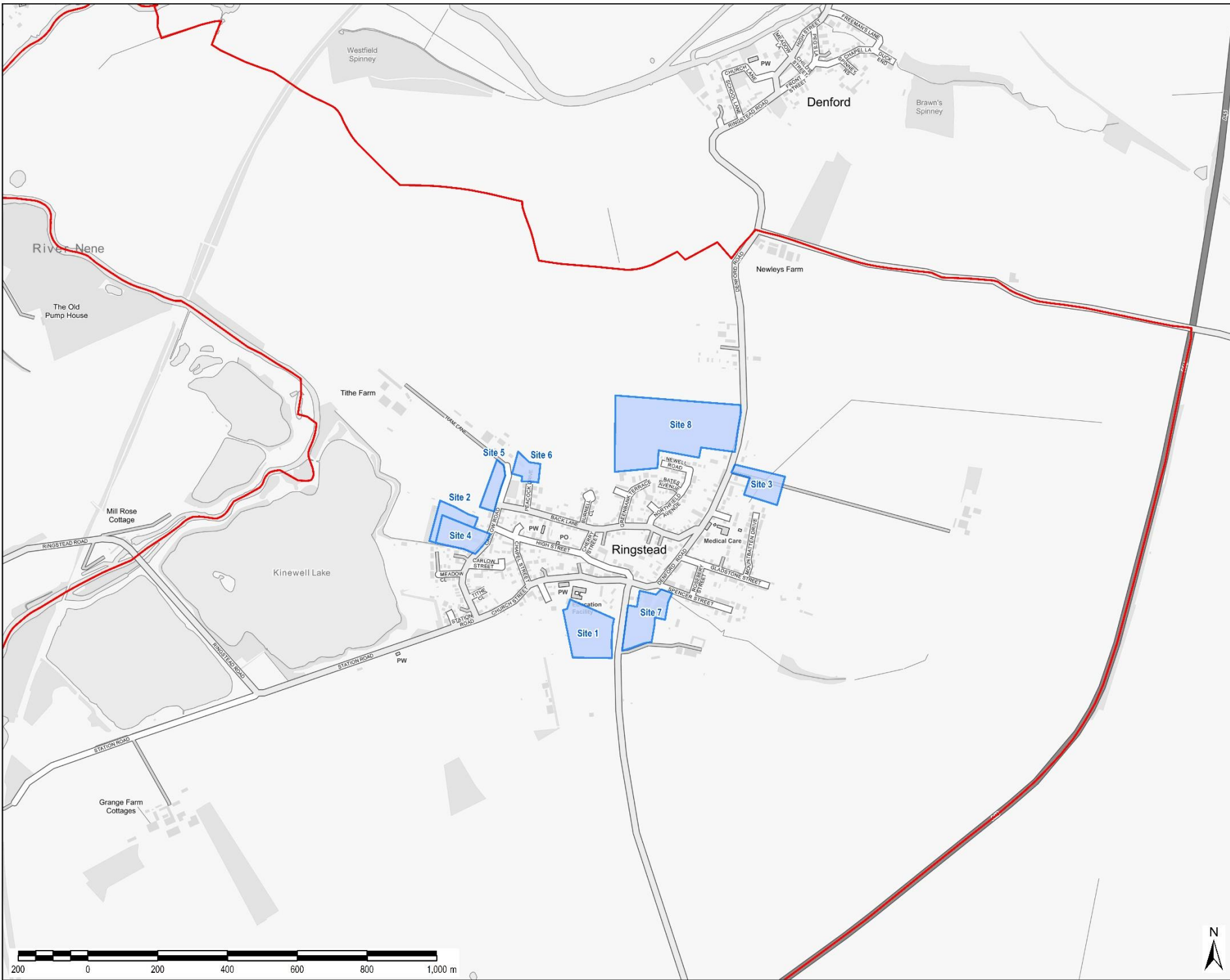
Table 4.1 Site options considered through the SEA process

Option	Name	Size (ha)
Site 1	West of Raunds Road	1.95
Site 2	West of Carlow Road	0.60
Site 3	Off Denford Road (east)	1.05
Site 4	West Farm, Carlow Road	0.87
Site 5	Carlow Road / Ham Lane	0.52
Site 6	Home Farm, Ham Lane	0.42
Site 7	Dodson & Horrell, Spencer Street	1.64
Site 8	Off Denford Road (west)	5.92

- 4.16 The locations of these sites are presented in **Figure 4.1** overleaf.

¹⁶ <http://www.nnjpdu.org.uk/site/assets/files/1240/ringstead.pdf>

File Name: I:\0004 - Information Systems\60571087_Neighbourhood_Plan_CRB_2018_2022\02_Images\Ringstead Parish Council\Figure 4.1 - Site Options.mxd



THIS DRAWING IS TO BE USED ONLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ISSUE THAT IT WAS ISSUED FOR AND IS SUBJECT TO AMENDMENT

LEGEND

- Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan Area
- Site Option

Site 1 - West of Raunds Road
 Site 2 - West of Carlow Road
 Site 3 - Off Denford Road (east)
 Site 4 - West Farm, Carlow Road
 Site 5 - Carlow Road/Ham Lane
 Site 6 - Home Farm, Ham Lane
 Site 7 - Dodson & Horrell, Spencer Street
 Site 8 - Off Denford Road (west)

Copyright
 Contains Ordnance Survey Data © Crown Copyright and database right 2020

Purpose of Issue: **DRAFT**

Client: **RINGSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL**

Project Title: **SEA OF THE RINGSTEAD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Drawing Title: **SEA REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES - SITE OPTIONS**

Drawn: CN	Checked: JW	Approved: RC	Date: 23/10/2020
AFCOM Internal Project No: 60571087		Scale @ A3: 1:10,000	

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN PREPARED PURSUANT TO AND IS SUBJECT TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE AECOM/CLIENT AGREEMENT FOR THE SUPPLY OF CONSULTING SERVICES. THE CLIENT'S RESPONSIBILITY IS TO VERIFY THE ACCURACY OF ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED TO AECOM AND TO OBTAIN NECESSARY CONSENTS FROM ANY THIRD PARTY. THE CLIENT'S RESPONSIBILITY IS TO OBTAIN NECESSARY CONSENTS FROM ANY THIRD PARTY.

AECOM
 Scott House
 Ringstead, Rutland
 Telephone: (01535) 312000
 Fax: (01535) 312021
 www.aecom.com

AECOM

Drawing Number: **FIGURE 4.1** Rev: **01**

Summary of the Parish Council's site assessment

Introduction

4.17 Plan-it X, on behalf of the Parish Council, undertook a site assessment exercise in early 2020 to identify which of the eight available site options was most suitable for delivering the identified housing target of 34 new dwellings.

Methodology

- 4.18 Each site was assessed against a total of 53 assessment criteria, organised into 19 sections. These criteria were based on the Sustainability Appraisal of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, and individualised to be Ringstead-specific where appropriate.
- 4.19 Each site was considered in relation to a distance threshold from a range of constraints and opportunities. Proximity to opportunities was considered to be positive, whilst proximity to constraints was considered to be negative.
- 4.20 All constraints and opportunity features were considered in 'silos', i.e. not in combination with other features. No specific weighting was attached to each feature.
- 4.21 The full detailed list of 53 assessment criteria is available in **Appendix IV** of this report. The 19 sections are listed below:
- Section 1 – Accessibility
 - Section 2 – Meeting housing needs
 - Section 3 – Health
 - Section 4 – Safety
 - Section 5 – Sense of belonging
 - Section 6 – Improve education
 - Section 7 – Health environments
 - Section 8 – Biodiversity
 - Section 9 – Local distinctiveness
 - Section 10 – Setting
 - Section 11 – Air quality
 - Section 12 – Water resources
 - Section 13 – Flood risk
 - Section 14 – Use of land
 - Section 15 – Efficient use of land
 - Section 16 – Recycling
 - Section 17 – Employment
 - Section 18 – Infrastructure
 - Section 19 – Vitality and viability

Results

4.22 The sites were ranked in order of the total number of red scores they received in relation to each of the 19 sections, with the fewest red scores indicating a strong relative performance, and the most red scores indicating a weak relative performance. The results of the Parish Council's site assessment are summarised in **Table 4.2** below:

Table 4.2 Summary of results of Ringstead Parish Council's site assessment

Site number	Site name	Area (ha)	Total Red	Total Amber	Total Green	Overall rank
Site 1	West of Raunds Road	1.95	5	10	4	2
Site 2	West of Carlow Road	0.6	11	7	1	8
Site 3	Off Denford Road (east)	1.05	7	9	3	4
Site 4	West Farm, Carlow Road	0.87	7	10	2	5
Site 5	Carlow Road / Ham Lane	0.52	8	8	3	6
Site 6	Home Farm, Ham Lane	0.42	6	10	3	3
Site 7	Dodson & Horrell	1.64	2	13	4	1
Site 8	Off Denford Road (west)	5.92	9	7	3	7

4.23 As per the above summary, Site 7 (Dodson & Horrell) emerged as the most strongly performing site overall, recording the fewest red scores and joint highest green scores. The second strongest performing site was Site 1 (West of Raunds Road), whilst Site 6 (Home Farm, Ham Lane) recorded the third strongest performance.

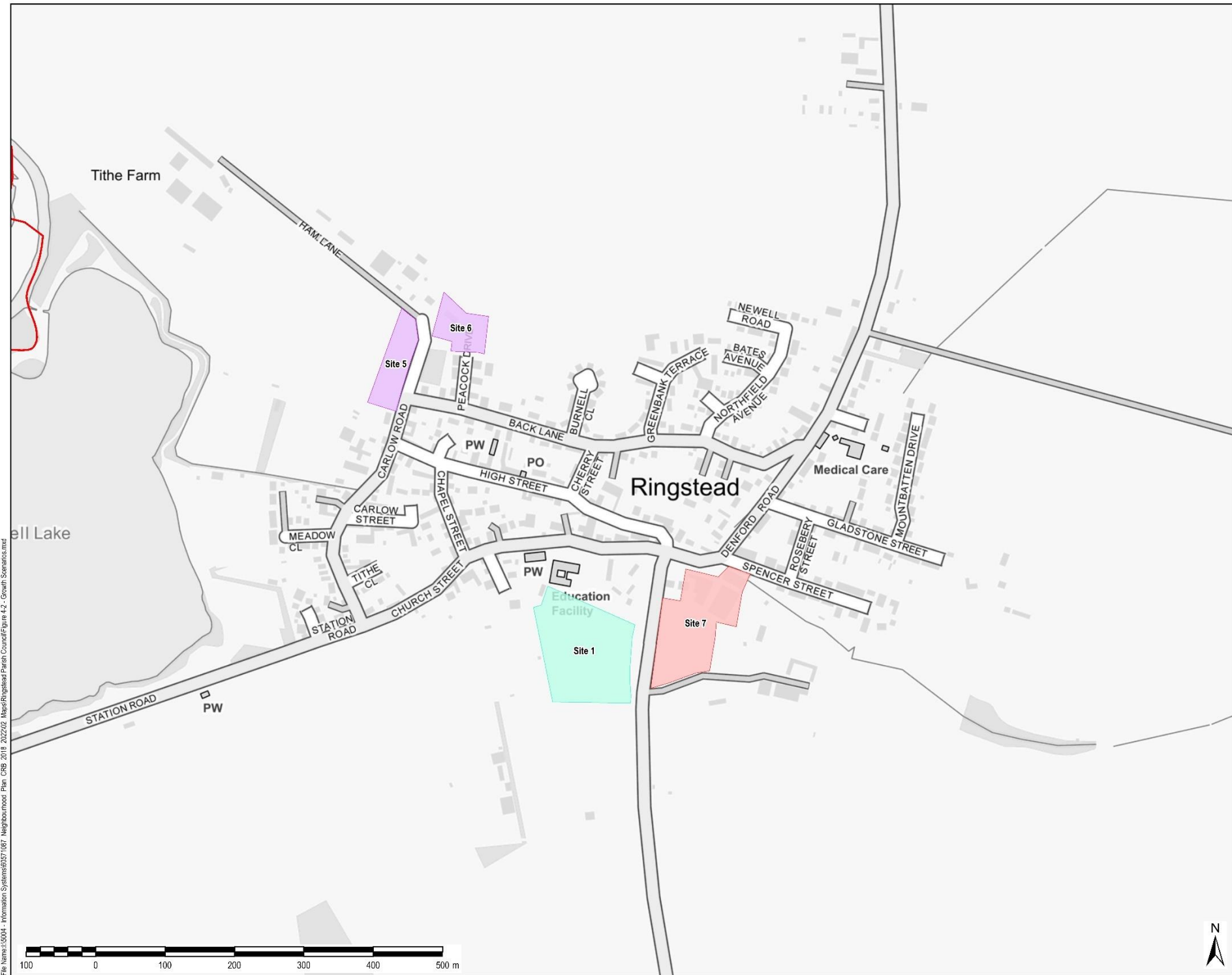
The reasonable alternative growth scenarios for the SEA

4.24 Based on the above, it is apparent that in addition to the most strongly performing site (Site 7), it is appropriate to test the next most strongly performing site, Site 1. As both of these sites are of a similar scale and would result in all development being directed to a single larger site, it is considered prudent to also test a different distribution option, i.e. a growth scenario which distributes development between two smaller sites. Sites 5 and 6 are appropriate to test as each site has indicative capacity for around half the total housing requirement and Site 6 is also the next most strongly performing site.

4.25 Therefore, the reasonable alternative growth scenarios for assessment are as follows:

- **Option A:** Direct all growth to Site 7 (Dodson & Horrell) (36 dwellings)
- **Option B:** Disperse growth between two smaller sites (Site 5 and Site 6) (30 dwellings)
- **Option C:** Direct all growth to Site 1 (West of Raunds Road) (36+ dwellings)

4.26 These options are mapped in **Figure 4.2** overleaf:



THIS DRAWING IS TO BE USED ONLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ISSUE THAT IT WAS ISSUED FOR AND IS SUBJECT TO AMENDMENT

LEGEND

Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan Area

Growth Option

- Option A
- Option B
- Option C

Copyright
Contains Ordnance Survey Data © Crown Copyright and database right 2020

Purpose of Issue **DRAFT**

Client
RINGSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Project Title
SEA OF THE RINGSTEAD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Drawing Title
SEA REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES - GROWTH SCENARIOS

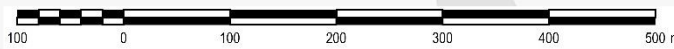
Drawn CN	Checked JW	Approved RC	Date 23/10/2020
AECOM/Item/Project No. 60571087		Scale @ A3 1:5,000	

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN PREPARED PURSUANT TO AN AGREEMENT SUBJECT TO THE TERMS OF A CLIENT APPOINTMENT BY ITS CLIENT. AECOM ACCEPTS NO LIABILITY FOR ANY AND ALL INFORMATION, WHETHER OR NOT INDICATED, OR FOR ANY AND ALL INFORMATION EXPRESSED OR IMPLIED TO SUCH USE, AND ONLY FOR THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH IT WAS PREPARED AND PROVIDED.

AECOM
Sally Hux
Atrop Ln, Bishops Cleeve, Shropshire, Sh2 9JF
Tel: 01273 835000
Fax: 01273 835001
www.aecom.com

Drawing Number **FIGURE 4.2** Rev **01**

File Name: I:\0004 - Information Systems\60571087 - Neighbourhood Plan - CRB 2018 - 2022\02 Maps\Ringstead Parish Council\Figure 4.2 - Growth Scenarios.mxd



Assessment of reasonable alternative growth scenarios

Methodology

- 4.27 For each of the options, the appraisal of reasonable alternatives examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the SEA objectives identified through scoping as a methodological framework. The intention is to distinguish between each of the alternative options in relative terms, i.e. test their performance under each SEA theme in relation to one another. Judgement must then be applied as to which options performs strongest overall.
- 4.28 Under each SEA theme (e.g. 'Biodiversity'), the appraisal looks to differentiate between the performance of the options in relation to the relevant SEA objectives. Where there is a distinction between the options, their relative performance is ranked in order of preference with '1' indicating strongest performance.
- 4.29 Where it is not possible to meaningfully differentiate between the options, their broadly equal performance is indicated with a '=' symbol.
- 4.30 Potential significant effects are indicated with coloured text. **Green** is used to indicate significant positive effects, whilst **Red** is used to indicate significant negative effects.
- 4.31 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high level nature of the options under consideration. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario). In light of this, there is a need to make certain assumptions regarding how options will be implemented 'on the ground' and what the effect on particular receptors would be. Where there is a need to rely on assumptions in order to reach a conclusion on a 'significant effect' this is made explicit in the appraisal text.
- 4.32 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking into account the criteria presented within the SEA Regulations. For example, account is taken of the duration, frequency and reversibility of effects.

Summary findings

- 4.33 **Table 4.3** (overleaf) presents summary assessment findings in relation to the growth scenario options, with the more detailed assessment findings presented within **Appendix III**.
- 4.34 It is important to note that the assessment does not assume that each of the SEA themes are of equal weight. Therefore, establishing which Option is strongest performing overall is not simply a question of tallying the individual ranks achieved under each SEA theme. Judgement must be applied as to which SEA themes attract greatest weight in the context of Ringstead and therefore which of the reasonable alternative options is most suitable for consideration as the preferred approach.

Table 4.3 Reasonable alternative site options – summary findings

SA theme		Option A (Site 7)	Option B (Sites 5 and 6)	Option C (Site 1)
Biodiversity	Rank	2	3	1
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Climate change	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Uncertain
Landscape	Rank	1	2	3
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Yes - Negative
Historic environment	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Uncertain
Land, soil and water resources	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes - positive
Population and communities	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes - positive
Health and wellbeing	Rank	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	No	No	No
Transportation	Rank	2	3	1
	Significant effect?	No	No	No

Summary of assessment

4.35 The assessment finds that **Option B** stands out as the weakest performing of the growth options against the SEA themes. Whilst the ranking under each SEA theme does not represent a tally, meaning the overall performance of each option is not the sum of its individual rankings under each theme, it is notable that Option B is found to be either the lowest ranking or equal lowest rank in relation to every theme other than historic environment (where it ranks second). Stand-out constraints for **Option B** include:

- Biodiversity - **Option B** is located within 300m of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/ Ramsar site with the potential to lead to significant adverse effects. It is noted that **Option A** and **Option C** are also constrained in this respect, however are located further from the European site, to the south of the settlement.
- Landscape – Development in the open countryside to the northwest of the settlement. Sensitive views have been identified by residents along the boundary of site 5 within **Option B**.
- Land, soil and water resources – Permeant loss of greenfield, and possible BMV agricultural land. Part of **Option B** (part of Site 5) located in a Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA) for sand and gravel.
- Population and Communities – **Option B** fails to meet the full affordable housing need in Ringstead and may face viability issues through dispersing growth over two smaller sites.

- 4.36 Through directing growth to one site, **Option A** and **Option C** have an increased opportunity to secure financial contributions for the parish, enhancing to the natural environment and delivering biodiversity net-gain. Benefits also include potential opportunities to achieve ambitious building emissions standards, deliver low carbon heat and power supply infrastructure and take a wide range of other steps in support of decarbonisation.
- 4.37 There is little to differentiate between **Option A** and **Option C** in terms of the socio-economic SEA themes. **Option A** performs marginally better than Option C given it seeks to deliver growth within the settlement boundary; however, both options are well located in terms of the village core, community facilities and local services and therefore support modal shift and active travel.
- 4.38 In terms of environmental themes, **Option C** is most constrained by designated historic assets located close-by, including the Grade I Listed Church. However the Historic Environment Records (HER) records archaeological activity to the south of **Option C** which has the potential to be adversely affected. **Option A** is considered to be less constrained in this respect given the part-brownfield nature of the site. Being predominately brownfield and within the settlement boundary, **Option A** also performs more positively than **Option C** in relation to the Landscape and Land, Soil and Water SEA theme.

Selecting the preferred approach

- 4.39 Following a review of the evidence and consideration of community aspirations for the area, **the Parish Council has selected an approach consistent with Option A as its preferred approach**. This means that the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan proposes to allocate one site for residential development, i.e. Site 7 (Dodson & Horrell). A range of technical evidence as well as findings from community consultation support this approach as the most sustainable.
- 4.40 In terms of the *location* of development, the allocation is informed by the findings of the SEA and the HRA, both of which find that development in closest proximity to the sensitive Upper Nene Gravel Pits SPA site at Kinewell Lake could have greatest potential for adverse effects on sensitive biodiversity receptors. Site 7 is furthest from the SPA and offers additional biodiversity benefits via habitat creation and enhancement through the redevelopment process of the existing industrial site.
- 4.41 Furthermore, by allocating a part-brownfield site the Neighbourhood Plan will make the most efficient use of the available land, avoiding greenfield land-take and minimising the impact of new development on Ringstead's landscape character and setting.
- 4.42 In terms of the *quantum* of development, the Neighbourhood Plan proposes allocation of 36 new dwellings at the site in relation to an indicative need of around 30 in the emerging Replacement LPP2. The site promoter has proposed a scheme comprising 36 dwellings, of which 14 are anticipated to be affordable if full policy compliance with the JCS is achieved. Delivery of 36 dwellings would meet and slightly exceed the indicative housing target for Ringstead and is therefore considered by the Parish Council to be an appropriate quantum of growth to meet Ringstead's housing needs over the plan period, including affordable housing.
- 4.43 When read as a whole, the Parish Council therefore considers that the available evidence indicates that Option A will deliver growth at the most suitable location for growth in Ringstead, making effective use of available land site whilst minimising, and avoiding where possible, harm to the settlement's sensitive biodiversity assets, its character and its setting within the wider landscape. Option A will meet and slightly exceed indicative housing needs and will deliver growth at a location which benefits from the greatest community support and benefits from sustainable access to a range of services and facilities within the village.

5. What are the appraisal findings at this current stage?

Introduction

- 5.1 This part of the report presents an assessment of the current pre-submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan, i.e. the likely effects of the proposed policies and allocations, including taking account of policy mitigation where potential for effects have been identified.

Appraisal method

- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 For each theme ‘significant effects’ of the current version of the plan on the baseline are predicted and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the Regulations.¹⁷ So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. These effect ‘characteristics’ are described within the assessment as appropriate.
- 5.4 Every effort is made to identify/ evaluate effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high level nature of the plan. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline and the nature of future planning applications. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects and ensure all assumptions are explained. In many instances it is not possible to predict significant effects, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) in more general terms.

Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 5.5 The submission Neighbourhood Plan contains 24 policies, organised into six broad themes. These are presented in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1 List of policies in the submission Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan

Policy theme	Policy
Maintaining the Character of Ringstead	Policy R1: Features of Local Heritage Interest
	Policy R2: Design
	Policy R3: Eco Design
	Policy R4: Local Green Spaces
Services and Facilities	Policy R5: Community Services and Facilities
	Policy R6: Village Hall
	Policy R7: Infrastructure
Traffic and Parking	Policy R8: Parking
Countryside and Countryside Access	Policy R9: The Countryside
	Policy R10: Locally Important Views
	Policy R11: Ringstead Area of Separation

¹⁷ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

Policy theme	Policy
Housing	Policy R12: Public Rights of Way Network
	Policy R13: SPA Mitigation Strategy
	Policy R14: Ecology and Biodiversity
	Policy R15: Trees and Hedges
	Policy R16: Providing for Housing
	Policy R17: Land at Dodson & Horrell
	Policy R18: Residential Conversion of Rural Buildings
	Policy R19: Brownfield Land
	Policy R20: Housing Mix
	Policy R21: Affordable Housing
Employment	Policy R22: Gypsies and Travellers
	Policy R23: Blackthorn Marina
	Policy R24: Business Conversion of Rural Buildings

5.6 The submission Neighbourhood Plan policies are assessed below under eight headings, one for each of the SEA themes identified through the scoping process:

Biodiversity

5.7 Ringstead is an area of notable biodiversity sensitivity, due to the presence of national and regional sites of ecological importance. In terms of European designated sites, part of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits (Kinewell Lake) Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site is located within Ringstead Parish. The site comprises a chain of extant and extinct gravel pits that follow alluvial deposits along the River Nene. It is dominated by a mix of shallow and deeper inland waterbodies, and contains internationally important populations of non-breeding wintering waterbirds.

5.8 The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) states that “*early consultation with Natural England is needed regarding proposals that could affect the SPA, including all new residential development proposed within 3km of the designated site where such schemes involve a net gain in residential units*”. **Policy R13:** ‘SPA Mitigation Strategy’ recognises this 3km buffer zone surrounding the SPA site. In accordance with **Policy R13**, development with the buffer will require suitable mitigation strategies to prevent ‘*significant effects*’ on the SPA. In particular, the policy notes the potential for increased footfall from development to ‘*increase the level of disturbance to the wintering waterbirds, particularly through dog walking*’.

5.9 **Policy R14** provides further detail for development standards with regards to the locally identified Kinewell Buffer Zone, which is noted to provide key refuge to water birds. Specifically, within the buffer zone: ‘*new development will only be supported where it can be demonstrated, to the satisfaction of Natural England (the statutory body), that this will not cause disturbance to waterbirds.*’

5.10 While **Policy R14** sets requirements for the wider plan area, in relation to the site allocation (Land at Dodson & Horrell); the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) (2020) carried out for the submission RNP concludes that “*the allocation of up to 36 residential dwellings within 600m of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar has the potential to lead to adverse effects, arising from:*

- *Water quality: treatment of sewage effluent*
- *Recreational pressure, and*

- *Loss of functionally linked habitat.”*
- 5.11 In this context, it is notable that the site allocation policy **Policy R17**: ‘Land at Dodson & Horrell incorporates the mitigation recommendations of the HRA and is considered to perform strongly as a result.
- 5.12 In terms of national designations, The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a nationally important site for its breeding bird assemblage of lowland open waters and their margins; coinciding with the SPA/ Ramsar site discussed above. The recommendations proposed through the HRA are also applicable to the SSSIs and help to mitigate any potential negative effects.
- 5.13 SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) are a GIS tool/dataset which maps zones around each SSSI according to the sensitivities of the features for which it is notified. They specify the types of development that have the potential to have adverse impacts (as bulleted out above) at a given location, including residential, rural-residential and rural non-residential. Natural England is a statutory consultee on development proposals that might impact on SSSIs. Due to the presence of the SSSI within the vicinity of the plan area, a significant proportion of the plan area (including site allocation ‘Land at Dodson & Horrell’) fall within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone for “*Any residential developments with a total net gain in residential units.*”
- 5.14 **Policy R14**: ‘Ecology and Biodiversity’ seeks to mitigate against potential adverse effects on designated sites; outlining the importance of the Plan in protecting and enhancing local ecological habitats, including the following four designated sites: The Upper Nene Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA) (discussed above), Kinewell Lake, Ringstead Grange Gravel Pits and Woodford Old Railway. Particular attention is given to the wetland habitat surrounding the River Nene corridor and the ecological interlinkages between these varied ecosystems. The policy is clear that new development should ‘*maintain and enhance these and other ecological corridors*’ whilst also setting out that the priority for enhancement is to ‘*link the wetland habitat reservoirs through the River Nene corridor*’. This recognises the potential for biodiversity net gain and habitat enhancement within the plan area as well as the potential to contribute to habitat enhancement at a more strategic scale across the Nene valley.
- 5.15 **Policy R9**: ‘The Countryside’ acknowledges the unique wetland features of the Plan area in the supporting policy text, including bird species such as ‘*wetland bird assemblage, which includes non-breeding great bittern, gadwall and European golden plover.*’ Other habitats are also noted in the supporting policy text, including ‘*Small pockets of improved pastures and calcareous grassland*’, further: ‘*woodland cover is limited to scattered broadleaved copses and areas of young tree planting in the northern section of the character area, north of Denford, and scattered hedgerow trees, including ash and stag headed ash. Distant views towards scattered woodlands within the Farmed Claylands create a greater sense of cover, however, despite the overall lack of woodland.*’ This suitably highlights the diversity and sensitivity of the non-designated habitats within the Plan area.
- 5.16 Local biodiversity assets are protected and enhanced through the submission RNP policies which seek to maintain and where possible enhance the highly valued, natural environment. Notably, **Policy R4**: ‘Local Green Spaces’ and **Policy R23**: ‘Blackthorn Marina’ are likely to lead to positive effects by virtue of protecting multifunctional green and blue infrastructure present within the Parish. Whilst the main policy intent relates to recreation and amenity, there are likely to be secondary effects in relation to biodiversity by virtue of maintaining natural spaces for wildlife. **Policy R23**: ‘Blackthorn Marina’ recognises the potential for water-based leisure activities to adversely impact the habitats associated with the SPA.
- 5.17 Overall, assuming the recommendations of the HRA are adopted, the submission RNP is predicted to have a residual **neutral effect** on biodiversity. It is recognised that there is the potential for positive effects to be delivered in the long term through, for example, securing measurable net gains for biodiversity. This however is uncertain at this stage.

Climate change

- 5.18 The climate change SEA objectives have a dual focus of reducing the contribution of the Neighbourhood Plan area to climate change and also supporting resilience to the potential effects of climate change, particularly flooding. In practice, development plans can contribute to mitigating the effects of climate change by minimising greenhouse gas emissions from the built environment, whilst adapting to the effects of climate change means ensuring development is directed away from areas at greatest risk of flooding.
- 5.19 The domestic sector is a contributing factor which can be influenced by plan policies, and in line with national and local targets, the submission RNP policy framework seeks to reduce emissions, contributing positively towards Northamptonshire's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030.¹⁸
- 5.20 In terms of climate change mitigation, several policies have the potential to indirectly reduce carbon emissions; for example **Policy R12**: 'Public Rights of Way network' seeks to protect the network of footpaths and cycleways, whilst also seeking to create new links within the network, notably, *'between the village and Raunds and between the village and the traveller site'*. Similarly, **Policy R17**: 'Land at Dodson & Horrell' specifies the construction of a footway/cycleway link between Raunds Road and Denford Road. A handful of policies also encourage greater connectivity between community services in the Plan area, which could encourage carbon-reduction methods such as sustainable transportation, such as **Policy R6**: 'Village Hall' ('accessible to those without access to a car'). Finally, **Policy R9**: 'The Countryside' identifies 'renewable energy production' as a use that would be supported outside of Ringstead Village boundary.
- 5.21 While the submission RNP policy framework does seek to address climate change indirectly through, for example, supporting green transport initiatives (as set out above), the submission RNP could be strengthened through acknowledging Northamptonshire's commitment to net zero emissions by 2030¹⁹, and setting out support for positive measures in new housing development to address climate change. This may include the addition of a new policy, which places an emphasis on high quality, sustainable design within new development. A sustainable design led policy could ensure development proposals, where possible, realise opportunities for integrated renewable energy technologies, rainwater harvesting, water efficiency measures, and integrated vehicle electric charging points. It is recognised that as the scale of development increases, so does the potential to deliver positive effects in this respect. Opportunities to respond to domestic sector emissions contributions could therefore be specifically supported at 'Land at Dodson & Horrell' through **Policy R17**.
- 5.22 In terms of adapting to the effect of climate change, the site allocation 'Land at Dodson & Horrell' is located in flood zone 1 which is of low risk of flooding. It is however noted that the north of the site contains areas at medium/ high risk of surface water flooding. The supporting text of **Policy R17**: 'Land at Dodson & Horrell' notes that a surface water sewer lies adjacent to site boundary, and a foul sewer crosses the site. Subsequently, surface water and foul water drainage strategies should be devised to incorporate an appropriately designed, constructed and maintained sustainable drainage system, following *'several crude sewage/grey water incidents'* which have occurred in the area. Similarly, **Policy R23**: 'Blackthorn Marina' indicates that development within the Marina should address flood risk.
- 5.23 Well planned green infrastructure can help an area adapt to and manage the risks of climate change (including flood risk). Enabling and providing for green infrastructure within the Neighbourhood Plan area is therefore a key way in which the Neighbourhood Plan can help to promote climate change adaptation measures. **Policy R4**: 'Local Green Spaces' and **Policy R14**: 'Ecology and Biodiversity' will likely lead positive effects in this respect, reinforcing the need for development to *"maintain and enhance these and other ecological corridors and landscape features (such as watercourses, hedgerows and tree-lines)."* Furthermore, **Policy**

¹⁸ Declare a Climate Emergency (2019) Northamptonshire [online] available at: <https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/northamptonshire/>

¹⁹ Declare a Climate Emergency (2019) Northamptonshire [online] available at: <https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/northamptonshire/>

R13: SPA Mitigation Strategy notes the importance of habitat connectivity to *'provide the space for wildlife to thrive and adapt to climate change'*. Maintaining and enhancing the wider network of rivers and associated habitats is anticipated to lead to long term positive effects in relation to climate change adaptation; providing regional ecosystem services, such as regulating water flow, quality and availability, and providing recreational and biodiversity resources for surrounding urban areas.

- 5.24 Overall, it is recognised that climate change is a global issue, and that the scale of the development proposed through the submission RNP is not anticipated to lead to significant effects. Nonetheless, the submission RNP policy framework supports local and national climate change targets, and is therefore predicted to have a residual **neutral effect** with an element of uncertainty on climate change.
- 5.25 As recommended above, there is scope for further commitment in terms of contributing positively towards minimising per capita CO₂ emissions via site specific and Neighbourhood Plan area wide interventions, either from the built environment or from transport. Residual effects are therefore uncertain at this stage; dependent on the implementation of planned measures and growth proposed through the submission RNP.

Landscape

- 5.26 The Neighbourhood Plan area has a rich valued landscape, lying in the Nene Valley. The rural setting to Ringstead village is highly valued by local people, as reflected through several of the submission RNP policies.
- 5.27 **Policy R9:** 'The Countryside' aims to prevent *'sprawl of development'* beyond the Plan area and into the wider countryside by restricting development beyond the bounds of the village boundary; unless it is *'compatible with its setting in the countryside'*. Similarly, **Policy R2:** 'Design' sets out the need to *'maintain and enhance the character of Ringstead'*. **Policy R2** highlights the importance of development being designed in line with the current characteristics of the natural and built environment, including being designed to accommodate the unique landscape setting of the village. This is further supplemented through **Policy R24:** 'Business conversion of rural buildings', which outlines measures to prevent *'material harm [to] the character of the surrounding rural area'*. Finally, **Policy R11:** 'Ringstead Area of Separation' acknowledges the need to preserve the integrity of both Ringstead village and the neighbouring market town of Raunds by preventing *'the construction of new buildings or inappropriate uses of land which adversely affect this open character or the character and setting of Ringstead village'*. The local significance of this settlement gap is evidenced by the 2018 resident questionnaire, where 95% of respondents expressed support for an area of separation between the two settlements.
- 5.28 **Policy R10:** 'Locally Important Views' recognises the importance of avoiding harm to the village's landscape setting, stating that development needs to be designed in a way that is *'sensitive to the open landscape [including] extensive vistas dominated by natural features that characterise the Neighbourhood Area'*. **Policy R10** identifies four key views, recognised for being *'highly characteristic'* of the area. Identification and protection of these view corridors will therefore help ensure new development avoids harm to the integrity of the countryside setting of Ringstead village.
- 5.29 With regards to the housing allocation site, Land at Dodson & Horrell, **Policy R17** specifies sensitive design measures; supplementing that of **Policy R2** to prevent detriment to the *'distinctive and traditional character of Ringstead'*. Specifically, hedge and tree planting measures are supported to retain the *'countryside character'* of the southern entrance to Ringstead village.
- 5.30 The submission RNP also requires that locally valued green spaces within housing areas and recreational spaces are adequately protected. Notably, **Policy R4:** 'Local Green Spaces' states that *"development that would harm the openness or special character of a Local Green Space [...] will not be permitted"*. It is considered that the wider green infrastructure improvements, in addition to new green spaces proposed through the submission RNP (notably **Policy R14:**

Ecology and Biodiversity), are likely to enhance local character with the potential for minor long-term positive effects.

- 5.31 Overall, the policies and proposals of the Neighbourhood Plan seek to minimise the effects on Ringstead's landscape setting and character through the protection of key views, the delivery of high quality design and through appropriate landscape and boundary treatment at new development. Although the village has a sensitive landscape setting from which it draws much of its settlement character, with mitigation measures proposed through the submission RNP, residual effects are expected to be **neutral**.

Historic environment

- 5.32 The Historic Environment theme focuses on the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the rich variety of cultural and built heritage within and surrounding the Neighbourhood Plan area. The submission RNP policy framework therefore seeks to maintain and enhance designated and non-designated assets and features of local importance.
- 5.33 Notably, **Policy R1**: 'Features of Local Heritage Interest' encourages a balance between preserving built features of public interest and required development for residents' benefit. **Policy R1**'s supporting text notes five listed buildings within the Plan area and acknowledges the list of sites compiled by Ringstead Heritage Group for their local historic value which '*make a positive contribution providing local character and sense of place*'. In addition, **Policy R4**: 'Local Green Spaces' notes a handful of historic sites with '*significance and value to the local community*' that require safeguarding from developmental pressures in usual circumstances.
- 5.34 **Policy R2**: 'Design' sets sensitive design principles for future development throughout the plan area, in line with the Government's National Design Guide (2018). This is with the intention of ensuring that development '*reflects the distinctive and traditional character of Ringstead*'. **Policy R2** is supplemented by a number of other submission RNP policies; notably **Policy R6**: Village Hall requires that the development of a new village hall is in keeping with '*the scale, form and character of its surroundings*'. Additionally, **Policy R18**: 'Residential Conversion of Rural Buildings' highlights that buildings with '*architectural and historical interest*' could be prioritised for adaptive use, so long as development retains important features that reveal the history of these structures. **Policy R9**: "The Countryside" acknowledges the features of the wider rural Northamptonshire setting which contribute to the unique history of Ringstead as a countryside village.
- 5.35 In terms of specific designated assets present within the village, the submission RNP seeks to ensure the preservation of the Mallows Cotton Deserted Medieval Village Scheduled Monument. **Policy R23**: 'Blackthorn Marina' indicates that development proposals must include an assessment of impact on the monument to prevent potential harm to the historic integrity of the site.
- 5.36 In terms of the site allocation, **Policy R17**: 'Land at Dodson & Horrell' acknowledges potential for development on site to have impacts on the Ringstead House and Slade Farmhouse (Grade II listed building), as well as the existing entrance of the site at the junction of Denford Road and Spencer Street which has been identified as a '*locally inspired landmark*'. Specifically, **Policy R17** requires that "*The design of the development should reflect the distinctive and traditional character of Ringstead in accordance with Policy R2 and take account of the setting of Ringstead House and Slade Farmhouse.*" This provides appropriate mitigation to avoid residual negative effects. .
- 5.37 Overall, it is considered that the submission RNP, alongside the higher-level policy suite, provides a robust framework for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment, with **neutral effects** anticipated overall. It is however noted that the any mitigation provided may result in a residual neutral effect; however, this is uncertain at this stage.

Land, soil and water resources

- 5.38 **Policy R17:** 'Land at Dodson & Horrell' seeks to deliver new housing development (around 36 dwellings) on a site which, at its full extent, is part brownfield and part greenfield land. A substantial part of the site is the location of structures and hardstanding associated with the Dodson & Horrell employment site, which will be vacated over the plan period. This represents a large brownfield opportunity and the greatest amount of available previously developed land (PDL) in the plan area. Although the developable area of the site extends beyond just the PDL portion, development brought forward under **Policy R17** would contribute to making best use of available land, and positive effects are therefore anticipated from **Policy R17**. This is further supported by **Policy R19:** 'Brownfield Land', which encourages the pursuit of development on previously development land where possible.
- 5.39 With regards to mineral safeguarding, while part of the parish falls within a Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) for sand and gravel, it is considered that any future development will be in accordance with requirements set out in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan²⁰ (Policy 28). Furthermore, any future proposals within the MSA would need to consult with Northamptonshire County Council to ensure the risk of this is minimised.
- 5.40 In terms of water resources Anglian Water have highlighted that a Foul Sewer crosses the site allocation (Land at Doston & Horrell) and there is a surface water sewer adjacent to the site boundary. Anglian Water expect landowner/ developers to consider the location of existing assets as part of site layout to ensure that access is maintained. Where it is not possible an application can be made to Anglian Water to divert the existing assets. In terms of water supply, Anglian have confirmed that the network has capacity. Furthermore, Anglian Water is responsible for any required investment to ensure sufficient sewage treatment capacity is made available in time to secure development.
- 5.41 In light of the above, on balance it is considered that **minor positive effects** are likely in relation to the land, soil and water resources SEA objectives.

Population and communities

- 5.42 The quantum of growth proposed through **Policy R17:** 'Land at Dodson & Horrell' performs positively in relation to the SEA objective to 'provide a mix of types and tenures of housing.' **Policy R17** seeks to deliver around 36 dwellings to the south of the settlement, meeting the housing needs of the parish in full; as defined by East Northamptonshire Council. **Policy R17** requires that "*development shall provide a mix of house types, sizes and tenures, in accordance with Policies R19 and R20*"; meeting the needs of specialist groups; notably the Parish's growing elderly population. **Policy R21:** 'Affordable Housing' seeks to ensure the identified need for local affordable housing is also met (as evidenced through the 2018 residents' questionnaire), in accordance with the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Policy 30(d)). In line with Policy 30(d), the development of the Dodson & Horrell site will provide around 14 affordable homes, including starter homes and a small number of bungalows for discounted sale. Delivering the right type and number of homes to meet local needs is anticipated to lead to positive effects in the long term.
- 5.43 Positive effects are also anticipated where the submission RNP seeks to deliver the right homes in the right place. 'Land at Dodson & Horrell' is sustainably located within the settlement boundary (in accordance with **Policy R16:** 'Providing for Housing'), to the south of the village centre. The site has excellent access to local services including '*the primary school, village hall, post office, general store, social club, recreation ground [and] open space*'. This is likely to facilitate integrated, safe access to the village centre; while maximising opportunities for active travel where possible.

²⁰ Northamptonshire County Council (2017): Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan [online] available from: <https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/minerals-and-waste-planning-policy/Documents/MWLP%20Update.Cabinet%20Report.Adoption.Appendix%202.May%2017.pdf>

- 5.44 With regards to improving wider access to services and facilities, **Policy R7**: 'Infrastructure' specifies *'community infrastructure improvements including the provision of parish notice boards, seats, children's play area equipment, bus shelters, litter bins'*. Additionally, **Policy R22**: 'Gypsies and Travellers' encourages bespoke solutions to the requirements brought about by the travelling community in Ringstead, including safe play spaces for children, increased natural surveillance and meeting accommodation needs.
- 5.45 Ringstead has a reasonable employment offer; with Blackthorn Marina plus shops and high street businesses supporting a number of local jobs. The submission RNP highlights that there is limited demand for new business space; however, it nonetheless seeks to support appropriate employment development, new businesses, enhanced tourism and economic growth in the Plan area (**Policy R23 – R24**). In accordance with **Policy R23**: 'Blackthorn Marina', the key local employment site will be safeguarded; which will positively support existing and new communities in accessing employment and income opportunities. Notably, the Nene Valley has the potential to support the growth of 'green employment', recreation and tourism. Tourism and the development of a higher value visitor economy is recognised a key economic opportunity for the area.
- 5.46 High-quality design, that maintains settlement identity and landscape character is also required throughout the policy framework including through the proposed allocation site policy, **Policy R2**: 'Design', **Policy R4**: 'Local Green Spaces', and **Policy R9**: 'The Countryside'. These policies, among others, will deliver community benefits, supporting high quality neighbourhoods and inclusive, attractive living spaces.
- 5.47 Overall, the submission RNP is considered likely to deliver high-quality new housing, meeting local needs and promoting sustainable growth of the village. **Significant long-term positive effects** are therefore anticipated in relation to this SEA theme.

Health and wellbeing

- 5.48 The health and wellbeing of residents will be supported by the submission RNP policies which support a high quality public realm, local distinctiveness and landscape/ village character. This has been discussed to some extent under the 'Landscape' and 'Historic Environment' SEA themes above. In this context maintaining and enhancing the attractiveness of the Neighbourhood Plan area will positively affect residents' quality of life, contributing to the satisfaction of residents with their neighbourhood as a place to live.
- 5.49 **Policies R1 – 4 and R9 – R11** are of particular relevance; notably **Policy R11**: 'Ringstead Area of Separation' requires that *"the construction of new buildings or inappropriate uses of land which adversely affect this open character or the character and setting of Ringstead village will not be supported."* Development will be supported where it *"reflects the distinctive and traditional character of Ringstead"* (Policy R2: 'Design'). The delivery of development that is sympathetic to Ringstead's sensitive built and rural environment is considered to lead to long term positive effects through supporting neighbourhood satisfaction and sense of place.
- 5.50 Neighbourhood Plans can also have a role to play in enhancing opportunities for residents to make healthy behaviour choices, particularly in terms of walking and cycling. In this regard, the supporting text for **Policy R12**: 'Public Rights of Way Network' establishes a requirement to extend and enhance the footpath, cycle and bridleway network in order to maintain and improve *'well-used community asset[s] [which] contribute[s] to health and wellbeing'*. Positioning healthy modes of travel as accessible, safe and convenient is a key pillar of any strategy to boost active travel. It is also notable that the Plan seeks to enhance wider networks beyond the bounds of the parish, specifically *'improved footpath/cycle links between the village and Raunds along the Raunds Road'*. This has the potential to lead to positive effects through delivering walking and cycling infrastructure that is well connected with the range of services and facilities in the village.
- 5.51 As touched upon under the 'Population and Communities' theme above, **Policy R20**: 'Housing Mix' proposes the provision of lifetime homes and bungalows, to support the ageing population as they *'experience changes to their health and social circumstances'*, whilst lessening the

strain on the current limited availability of care homes within the parish. This directly seeks to improve the quality of life of Ringstead's residents; meeting the needs of specialist groups that are particularly important to the community.

- 5.52 Several other policies in the submission RNP seek to enhance the wellbeing of residents through improving access to community facilities. **Policy R5:** 'Community Services and Facilities' proposes the protection of key services in the parish from invasive development; while **Policy R4:** 'Local Green Spaces' designates six local green spaces within the parish; to be safeguarded for their local amenity value. Green spaces provide residents and visitors with opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation and physical activity; in addition to access to the natural environment, which is important for the maintenance of both mental and physical wellbeing. This is further supported by **Policy R14:** 'Ecology and Biodiversity'; and is of particular importance in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and increased proportion of residents working from home, which in turn has increased the value of accessible green space
- 5.53 Also of note in this respect is **Policy R9:** 'The Countryside'. Specifically, "*Outdoor sport and recreation and associated buildings*" is identified as one of the minority uses that would be supported outside of Ringstead Village Boundary.
- 5.54 Overall, it is considered that the submission RNP is likely to have residual **minor long term positive effects** in relation to the Health and Wellbeing SEA theme.

Transportation

- 5.55 With regards to transportation, a number of the submission RNP policies seek to reduce road congestion within the plan area by improving accessibility and safeguarding against large volumes of traffic through development. **Policy R24:** 'Business conversion of rural buildings' requires that *'proposed development [will] not generate traffic of a type or amount harmful to local rural roads, or require improvements which would detrimentally affect the character of such roads or the area generally'*. Further, **Policy R23:** 'Blackthorn Marina' specifies that new development must *'improve highway access and address the impact of development on the local road network'*.
- 5.56 Sustainable transport infrastructure within the parish is notably poor, as indicated by the 2018 residents' questionnaire, which showed that over half of respondents would like to see better bus services in the area. The supporting text of **Policy R5:** 'Community Services and Facilities' recognises this and therefore restricts development that would result in the loss of key facilities, including local bus services. **Policy R22:** 'Gypsies and Travellers' makes provision for better cohesion between road vehicles and public transport by ensuring that *"the conflict between pedestrians / cyclists and vehicles on site are minimised"*.
- 5.57 In terms of the site allocation, the supporting text of **Policy R17:** 'Land at Dodson & Horrell' highlights that the site has *"good access"* to bus services. However, this is in the context of Ringstead village having infrequent services generally. High levels of car reliance are therefore likely to continue for access to services, facilities and employment outside of the parish.
- 5.58 While sustainable transport opportunities are relatively limited in the parish, concentrating growth within the settlement boundary, close to services and facilities at the village core, may support the uptake of active travel (walking and cycling). This will help reduce the need to travel by ensuring that many day-to-day needs can be fulfilled without having to travel to other service centres. **Policy R12:** 'Public Rights of Way Network' is of note in this respect; requiring that new development *"protect the Rights of Way and wherever possible create new links to the network including footpaths and cycle ways."* Furthermore, *"Improved footpath/cycle links between the village and Raunds and between the village and the traveller site are encouraged."* Of note in this respect is The Nene Way, Kinewell Lake footpath, the circular walk, and cycle route 71; which are valued locally.
- 5.59 The submission RNP highlights 'inconsiderate parking' as an issue for the parish; with problem areas identified along the High Street and Church Street. **Policy R8:** 'Parking' therefore requires that new development *'ensure that there is satisfactory provision for parking, servicing*

*and manoeuvring in accordance with Highway Authority Parking Standards*¹. This is likely to reduce on-street parking, reducing levels of congestion and improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

- 5.60 Overall, in light of the above it is considered that the submission RNP is likely to have an overall **neutral effect** in relation to the transport SEA theme.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 5.61 In conclusion, potential effects arising from plan implementation are predominately positive or neutral; assuming the recommendations set out below are suitably adopted. Positive effects of note relate to the delivery of new housing to meeting local needs (including potential to meet specialist housing needs, including affordable housing), efficient use of available land via the redevelopment of a part-brownfield site, protection of village character, settlement identity, and the extensive green infrastructure resource, and support for a modal shift towards active travel where possible. These are likely to bring about multiple benefits for the local community, resident health and wellbeing, and the built and natural environment.

Recommendations

- 5.62 Two overall recommendations were made following the assessment of the *pre*-submission draft of the RNP, as prudent measures to maximise sustainability performance.

- 5.63 These recommendations **have now been addressed** in the final submission draft of the RNP.

- 5.64 To recap, these recommendations were:

1. The SEA reiterates the following recommendations set out within the HRA (2020):

- **“Water quality** – *it is recommended that additional wording is included to Policy R15, to clarify that ‘it should also be ensured through consultation with Anglian Water that sufficient treatment capacity exists within the permit for the relevant Sewage Treatment Works to accept the additional growth’.*
- **Recreational disturbance** – *It is considered that to more fully reflect the SPD Mitigation Strategy²¹ this text should be amended to include the following ‘In line with the SPD requirements, consultation is required by Natural England in advance of submitting any planning application. As part of that consultation, further mitigation may be needed in exceptional circumstances and where Natural England advise. If a bespoke process is required, then a project level Appropriate Assessment will be required to accompany any planning application’.*
- **Loss of functionally linked habitat** – *it is recommended that additional policy wording is included to Policy R13 or R17, that includes the requirement ‘any development proposals at greenfield land should consult with the RSPB and Natural England to ensure no loss of functionally linked habitat to the Upper Nene Valley SPA/Ramsar’.”*

2. The submission RNP could be strengthened through acknowledging Northamptonshire’s commitment to net zero emissions by 2030 , and setting out support for positive measures in new housing development to address climate change.

- 5.65 Both recommendations have been addressed in the submission draft of the RNP as below:

- Recommendation 1 has been addressed via the updated policy text of Policy **R17** (Land at Dodson & Horrell);
- Recommendation 2 has been addressed via the updated supporting text of Policy **R2** (Design).

²¹ East Northamptonshire District Council (2016) The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document Addendum to the SPA SPD: Mitigation Strategy Adopted Borough Council of Wellingborough – 20 December 2016 East Northamptonshire Council – 21st November 2016 [online] available from: http://www.nnjpd.org.uk/site/assets/files/1108/spa_spd_addendum_adopted_version.pdf

6. What are the next steps?

- 6.1 This Environmental Report accompanies the submission version of the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.2 Representations made during the Regulation 14 consultation held in 2020 have been considered by the Neighbourhood Plan Group, and the Environmental Report has been updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report now accompanies the Neighbourhood Plan for submission to the Local Planning Authority, East Northamptonshire District Council, for subsequent Independent Examination.
- 6.3 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 adopted North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and the emerging East Northamptonshire Replacement Local Plan Part 2.
- 6.4 If Independent Examination is favourable, the Ringstead Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a referendum, organised by East Northamptonshire District Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Development Plan for East Northamptonshire, covering the defined Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 6.5 It is noted that on 1st April 2021 East Northamptonshire District Council, along with Northamptonshire County Council and the seven lower tier authorities will be replaced by two new unitary authorities.²² East Northamptonshire District, along with Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, will become part of the new North Northamptonshire unitary authority as a result of this change.
- 6.6 Therefore it is anticipated that, once adopted, the Replacement LPP2 will become part of the development plan for the new unitary authority.

Monitoring

- 6.7 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 RNP to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.
- 6.8 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by East Northamptonshire District Council, and its successor authority after April 2021, as part of the process of preparing Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR).

²² https://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/info/100004/your_council/1833/local_government_reform_faqs

Appendix I Regulation 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 AI.1 links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst Table AI.2 explains this interpretation. Table AI.3 identifies how and where within the Environmental Report the regulatory requirements have/ will be met.

Table AI.1: Questions answered by this Environmental Report, in-line with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

		Questions answered	As per regulations... the Environmental Report must include...
Introduction		What's the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes
		What's the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance
	What's the SEA scope?	What's the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 that should be a focus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment
Part 1		What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach) The likely significant effects associated with alternatives Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives assessment / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the submission plan
Part 2		What are the SEA findings at this current stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likely significant effects associated with the submission plan The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the submission plan
Part 3		What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A description of the monitoring measures envisaged

Table AI.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 AI.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 ('Planning policy context) 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 II 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, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.;	
5. The environmental protection, objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The SA framework is presented within Chapter 3 ('What is the scope of the SEA'). Also, Appendix II presents key messages from the context review. With regards to explaining " <i>how...considerations have been taken into account</i> ", Chapter 4 explains the Steering Group's 'reasons for supporting the preferred approach', i.e. explains how/ why the preferred approach is justified in light of alternatives appraisal.
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 4 presents alternatives appraisal findings (in relation to housing growth, which is a 'stand-out' plan policy area). Chapter 5 presents an appraisal of the submission version of the plan. With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 5 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.
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.
9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10;	Chapter 6 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 Neighbourhood 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 'submission' version of the Neighbourhood Plan, with a view to informing Regulation 16 consultation.

Regulatory requirement

Discussion of how requirement is met

The SA Report must be taken into account, 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 II The scope of the SEA

Introduction

This appendix provides an overview of the responses to the scoping consultation, summarises the baseline and context review identified through the scoping process and presents the full SEA framework.

Scoping consultation responses

The draft SEA scoping report was shared with the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England for formal consultation.

The responses received and how they have been considered and addressed are presented in **Table All.1** below.

Table All.1 Summary of responses to the statutory scoping consultation

Consultee	Consultation response summary	How the response was considered and addressed
Environment Agency	No comments were received.	n/a
Historic England	Historic England have no comments to make in this instance.	n/a
Natural England	A draft of the HRA was requested by NE before making a comment on the SEA scope. No further comments were subsequently received.	n/a

Context and baseline review

Drawing on the review of the context and baseline, the scoping report process identified a range of sustainability issues that should be focus of SEA. These issues are presented below under eight environmental themes.

Biodiversity

- There is one Ramsar site within the Plan area: The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Ramsar site.
- There is one SPA within the Plan area: The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA. There is a 3km development buffer zone around the SPA within which all development proposals for a net gain in dwellings must consult early with Natural England and will be required to implement mitigation measures to avoid adverse effects on the SPA from additional recreational pressure. The entire Neighbourhood Plan area falls within the 3km buffer.
- There is one SSSI within the Plan area: The Upper Nene Valley (SSSI). There are an additional two SSSIs within the vicinity of the Plan area: Thrapston Station Quarry SSSI and Twywell Gullet SSSI.
- Kinewell Lake LNR is situated in the central east part of the Plan area.
- Additionally, the Plan area is home to a variety of priority habitats, including deciduous woodland, good quality semi-improved grassland and Broadleaved woodland

Climate change

- The total CO2 emissions per capita within East Northamptonshire have decreased by broadly the same percentage as the borough-level, regional and national levels. The largest contributor to CO2 emissions in the district s the transport sector, specifically, emissions from A-roads.
- Ringstead Parish is partially affected by areas of high fluvial flood risk, particularly along the Parish boundary, coinciding with the River Nene. However, most of the area of Ringstead village is not within areas of fluvial flood risk. Surface water flood risk affects a slightly broader extent of the Plan area and development proposals will need to deliver sufficient mitigation or direct growth elsewhere to minimise the risk of flooding from all sources.
- The SFRA Level 1 indicated past sewer flooding events in Ringstead.
- Northamptonshire County Council declared a climate emergency in June 2019, and has resolved to support local authorities (and, by extension, neighbourhood groups) to help tackle climate change through plan-making where possible. The Neighbourhood Plan should seek to maximise opportunities to support Council actions in tackling climate change. This may include through encouraging renewable energy technologies in small-scale developments in the Parish; i.e. solar PV and water heating.

Landscape

- The River Nene and its river valley are key landscape features within the Plan area which contribute to the wider landscape character of the area and it's environmental, leisure, economic functions.
- Kinewell Lake is a distinctive and characterful landscape feature within the plan area and development should seek to preserve or enhance its contribution to the setting and character of Ringstead.

Historic environment

- The Mallows Cotton deserted medieval village scheduled monument is a notable historic feature in the Neighbourhood Plan area, though this is located away from the built area of the modern village and is unlikely to be the focus for new development. Nevertheless, Ringstead's rural landscape contributes to the historic character of Mallows Cotton and it is therefore potentially susceptible to insensitive design and layout from the development of new housing, employment and infrastructure within Ringstead.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area contains four Grade II listed buildings and one Grade I listed building, though Ringstead does not have a conservation area.

- As of November 2019, there are no identified 'at risk' structures designated within the Plan area under the 'Heritage at Risk' register

Land, soil and water resources

- The Provisional Agricultural Land Quality dataset shows that the Neighbourhood Plan area is predominantly underlain by Grade 3 agricultural land. Results of the 'Predictive Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land Assessment' for the East Midlands provided by Natural England indicates that the majority of the Plan area has a 60% chance of being underlain by BMV agricultural land.
- Ringstead Parish is located within the Anglian River Basin District, River Nene Management Catchment and Nene Middle Operational Catchment.
- There are 25 water bodies located within the Nene Middle Operational Catchment Area. All demonstrate at least 'good' chemical status, and 13 out of 25 demonstrate 'poor' ecological status. The largest water body running through the Plan area is the River Nene in the west, which demonstrates 'good' ecological quality and 'moderate' chemical status.
- The entirety of the Plan area is located within an Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ).
- The Plan area falls within MSAs for sand and gravel. Ringstead Grange Quarry (currently operational and located in the south west part of the Plan area) also conducts inert aggregate recycling activities.

Population and communities

- Ringstead has a good range of facilities for a settlement of its size (i.e. around 1,500 people) including a pre-school and a primary school, pub, post office and village shops.
- The majority of residents fall within the 60+ age category in the Plan area, potentially indicating an ageing population.
- A large majority of residents within the Plan area own their own home, more so than district-level, regional and national figures. This is consistent with the finding that a greater proportion of Ringstead residents are well qualified and employed in professional and managerial occupations than is evident at regional or national levels

Health and wellbeing

- General health within the Plan area is good, with a large proportion of residents indicating at least 'good' general health (82.1%).
- Long-term health within the Plan area is also good, with a large proportion of residents indicating that their health does not impact activities (81.9%).
- There are no GPs or hospitals within the Plan area.
- The East Northamptonshire Open Space Study identifies three areas of green open space in the Plan area and there is good potential for many residents to walk and cycle to local facilities within the village

Transportation

- The majority of residents travel to work by car or van (53.5%), greater than comparative figures for the district, region and country as a whole.
- The majority of residents in the Plan area own at least 1 car or van (90.9%), greater than comparative figures for the district, region and country as a whole, indicating high car dependency.
- The Greenway is a green infrastructure route that runs through the west of the Neighbourhood Plan area. The Greenway will provide an alternative means of transport, predominantly for walkers and cyclists, and provide opportunities for informal recreation
- Regional Cycle route 71 runs through the northwesternmost part of the Plan area.
- There are no rail stations within the Plan area. The closest rail station is Wellington Station (10km).

The SEA framework

The full scope of the SEA, including a range of appraisal questions which help guide and structure the appraisal process, is presented in Table All.2, below:

Table All.2 The full SEA framework

SEA theme	SEA objective	Assessment questions – will the policy or proposal..:
Biodiversity	Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the integrity of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA, including avoiding additional recreational pressure from new development? • Support the integrity of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Ramsar site? • Support the status of the nationally and locally designated sites within and within proximity to the Neighbourhood Plan area, including the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SSSI, Thrapston Station Quarry SSSI and Twywell Gullet SSSI? • Protect and support the local value of the Kinewell Lake LNR? • Protect and enhance priority habitats and associated species within the Plan area, including woodland and grassland habitats and the species within them? • Achieve a net gain in biodiversity? • Support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?
Climate change	Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Plan Area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid development in areas at risk of flooding, taking into account the likely future effects of climate change? • Increase resilience of the built and natural environment to the effects of climate change? • Ensure that the potential risks associated with climate change are considered in new development in the plan area? • Sustainably manage water run-off, reducing surface water runoff (either within the plan area or downstream)? • Enable the provision of resilience water networks for residences to prevent sewer flooding?
	Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Plan Area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? • Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources? • Reduce the need to travel or the number of journeys made? • Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport?
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance designated buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest and their setting?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Assessment questions – will the policy or proposal..:
	landscapes and townscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of locally important features and their settings? • Support the integrity of the historic setting of key buildings of cultural heritage interest as listed on the Northamptonshire HER? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the environment? • Conserve and enhance archaeological remains, including historic landscapes? • Support the undertaking of archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies?
Historic environment	Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the Neighbourhood Plan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance designated buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest and their setting? • Conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of locally important features and their settings? • Support the integrity of the historic setting of key buildings of cultural heritage interest as listed on the Northamptonshire HER? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the environment? • Conserve and enhance archaeological remains, including historic landscapes? • Support the undertaking of archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies?
Land, soil and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of previously developed land? • Avoid the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land, which in the parish may comprise Grade 3 (a-b) 'best and most versatile' agricultural land? • Protect the integrity of Mineral Safeguarding Areas in the Neighbourhood Plan area, including sand and gravel aggregate sites?
	Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the amount of waste produced? • Support the minimisation, reuse and recycling of waste? • Encourage recycling of materials and minimise consumption of resources during construction?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Assessment questions – will the policy or proposal..:
Population and community	Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve access to local, high-quality community services and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the delivery of new and improved community facilities and amenities? • Support and contribute to the improvement of employment offer and associated infrastructure within the Plan area, such as high quality broadband for remote working? • Encourage and promote social cohesion and encourage active involvement of local people in community activities? • Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing residents, including residents with specialist needs?
	Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes? • Support enhancements to the current housing stock? • Meet the needs of all sectors of the community? • Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction? • Provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities?
Health and wellbeing	Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the Neighbourhood Plan Area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility to a range of leisure, health and community facilities, for all age groups? • Provide and enhance the provision of community access to green infrastructure and open spaces, in accordance with Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards? • Promote the use of healthier modes of travel, including active travel networks? • Improve access to the countryside for recreational use? • Avoiding any negative impacts to the quality and extent of existing recreational assets, such as Kinewell Lake, the village playground and any formal or informal footpaths?
Transport	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the key objectives within the Northamptonshire Local Transport Plan to encourage more sustainable transport? • Enhance and encourage resident use of the Northamptonshire Greenway? • Enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements? • Ensure sufficient road capacity to accommodate new development and promote improved local connectivity and pedestrian movement? • Facilitate home and remote working and improve parking facilities? • Improve road safety? • Reduce the impact on residents from the road network?

Appendix III Assessment of reasonable alternative growth scenarios

Reasonable alternative growth scenario options to deliver the short-term housing need for Ringstead are established in **Chapter 4** of the main report. Three options are identified for assessment and this appendix presents the detailed assessment of those options. Summary findings are also presented in **Chapter 4** of the main report.

Methodology

For each of the options, the appraisal of reasonable alternatives examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the SEA objectives identified through scoping as a methodological framework. The intention is to distinguish between each of the alternative options in relative terms, i.e. test their performance under each SEA theme in relation to one another. Judgement must then be applied as to which options performs strongest overall.

Under each SEA theme (e.g. 'Biodiversity'), the appraisal looks to differentiate between the performance of the options in relation to the relevant SEA objectives. Where there is a distinction between the options, their relative performance is ranked in order of preference with '1' indicating strongest performance.

Where it is not possible to meaningfully differentiate between the options, their broadly equal performance is indicated with a '=' symbol.

Potential significant effects are indicated with highlighted text. **Green** is used to indicate significant positive effects, whilst **Red** is used to indicate significant negative effects.

Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high level nature of the options under consideration. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario). In light of this, there is a need to make certain assumptions regarding how options will be implemented 'on the ground' and what the effect on particular receptors would be. Where there is a need to rely on assumptions in order to reach a conclusion on a 'significant effect' this is made explicit in the appraisal text.

Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking into account the criteria presented within the SEA Regulations. For example, account is taken of the duration, frequency and reversibility of effects.

Assessment of reasonable alternative growth scenarios

The options established for assessment are set out in **Table AIII.1** below:

Table AIII.1 Growth scenario options considered through the SEA process

Option	Description	Dwelling capacity
A	Direct all growth to Site 7 (Dodson & Horrell)	36
B	Disperse growth between two smaller sites (Site 5 and Site 6)	30
C	Direct all growth to Site 1 (West of Raunds Road)	36+

Table AIII.2 overleaf presents the detailed findings for the assessment of these options.

Table AIII.2 Assessment of alternative growth scenario options for Ringstead

Biodiversity			
Option	A	B	C
	Site 7	Site 5 and Site 6	Site 1
Rank	1	3	2
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain

Discussion In terms of European designated sites, part of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits (Kinewell Lake) Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site is located within Ringstead Parish. The site comprises a chain of extant and extinct gravel pits that follow alluvial deposits along the River Nene. It is dominated by a mix of shallow and deeper inland waterbodies, and contains internationally important populations of non-breeding wintering waterbirds. The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) states that “early consultation with Natural England is needed regarding proposals that could affect the SPA, including all new residential development proposed within 3km of the designated site where such schemes involve a net gain in residential units”. The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPD Mitigation Strategy (2016)²³ further states that measures for mitigation will depend on the scale of the proposed development for the Plan area.

The entirety of the Neighbourhood Plan area falls within the 3km buffer zone, which will affect all future development under all options. In terms of specific distance to the SPA/Ramsar site from the options, **Option B** is within 300m, **Option C** is within 400m, and **Option A** is 600m from the designated site. The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) (2020) carried out for the submission RNP concludes that “the allocation of up to 36 residential dwellings within 600m of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar has the potential to lead to adverse effects, arising from:

- Water quality: treatment of sewage effluent
- Recreational pressure, and
- Loss of functionally linked habitat.

Due to the distance of 590m impacts from surface water runoff is considered highly unlikely. Therefore, impacts of water quality from surface water runoff only, are screened out.”

It is therefore considered that all options have the potential to lead to negative effects on the SPA/ Ramsar site through one or more of the above pathways. As the difference in capacity of sites is negligible, options are therefore ranked in relation to distance from the site, with the option closest to the site (Option B) having potential to lead to adverse effects of greatest significance. **Option A** subsequently performs most positively in this respect. It is noted that mitigation for potential impacts is likely to be secured via a financial contribution towards a strategy mitigation project. This is in accordance with guidance set out in the SPA SPD: Mitigation Strategy²⁴.

In terms of national designations, The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a nationally important site for its breeding bird assemblage of lowland open waters and their margins; coinciding with the SPA/ Ramsar site discussed above. SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) are a GIS tool/dataset which maps

²³ East Northamptonshire District Council (2016) The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document Addendum to the SPA SPD: Mitigation Strategy Adopted Borough Council of Wellingborough – 20 December 2016 East Northamptonshire Council – 21st November 2016 [online] available from: http://www.nnjpd.org.uk/site/assets/files/1108/spa_spd_addendum_adopted_version.pdf

²⁴ East Northamptonshire District Council (2016) The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document Addendum to the SPA SPD: Mitigation Strategy Adopted Borough Council of Wellingborough – 20 December 2016 East Northamptonshire Council – 21st November 2016 [online] available from: http://www.nnjpd.org.uk/site/assets/files/1108/spa_spd_addendum_adopted_version.pdf

Biodiversity

zones around each SSSI according to the sensitivities of the features for which it is notified. They specify the types of development that have the potential to have adverse impacts (as bulleted out above) at a given location, including residential, rural-residential and rural non-residential. Natural England is a statutory consultee on development proposals that might impact on SSSIs. Due to the presence of the SSSI within the vicinity of the plan area, a significant proportion of the Plan area (including all options) fall within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone for “*Any residential developments with a total net gain in residential units.*” As above, all options have the potential to lead to adverse effects, and are therefore ranked in relation to distance from the site. **Option B**, closest to the site (within 300m), has the potential to lead to adverse effects of greatest significance, while **Option A** performs most positively.

It is also noted that the area between the SPA/ Ramsar Site (Kinewell Lake) and the existing built settlement is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Further to this, a significant proportion of the parish, to the west of Ham Lane, is identified as a Nature Improvement Area (NIA). **Option B** adjoins the eastern boundary of the NIA, which is also within 50m of **Option C**, with the potential for development to lead to indirect negative effects.

It is considered that there is the potential for options to deliver biodiversity enhancements, through green infrastructure enhancements and habitat creation, which may lead to minor positive effects on the local biodiversity resource. For example, development proposals could set deliver biodiversity net gain requirements, creating ecological corridors and increasing habitat connectivity within and surrounding the site option. Opportunities are likely to be greatest in this respect through **Option A** and **Option C** as growth would be concentrated at one site. This would offer potential to secure financial contributions towards enhancing Kinewell Lakes or potentially providing alternative open space within the development. Furthermore, Landscape-led masterplanning could ensure a holistic approach is taken to planning for green infrastructure.

In terms of the biodiversity value of individual options, all growth scenario options include sites which are either previously developed land or in agricultural use, neither of which are land uses which generally support significant potential for biodiversity sensitivity in their own right. There is a level of vegetation surrounding site boundaries (mature trees, hedgerows etc.) however this is not considered significant.

Overall, it is considered that **Option A**, followed by **Option C**, perform most strongly in relation to the Biodiversity SEA theme, with **Option B** performing least strongly.

Climate change			
Option	A	B	C
	Site 7	Site 5 and Site 6	Site 1
Rank	2	3	1
Significant effect?	No	No	No

Discussion In terms of climate change adaptation, all options are located in flood zone 1 which is of low risk of flooding. It is however noted that **Option A** contains areas at medium/ high risk of surface water flooding, extending north of the option. Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) could be delivered alongside development at Option A to help reduce the potential residual negative effects. **Option B** and **Option C** are less constrained by flood risk although SuDS are still recommended to manage surface water run-off in new development.

A significant bearing on per capita emissions relates to transport and accessibility. All options are reasonably well located in terms of access to Ringstead village; however, **Option B** performs least positively of the options in this respect given the location of the sites on the northwestern extent of the village, most distant from the village core. **Option A** and **Option C** perform particularly well due to their location adjoining the village core and local services, providing suitable access. As such these options are considered to best promote active travel and minimise car dependency where possible. **Option B** distributes growth between two smaller sites to the northwest of the village, both of which may have limited potential to minimise car dependency.

In terms of emissions from the built environment, it is recognised that moderate scale development at any of the options presents an opportunity to achieve ambitious building emissions standards, deliver low carbon heat and power supply infrastructure and take a wide range of other steps in support of decarbonisation. Furthermore, as the scale of development increases, so does the potential to enable delivery of new or upgraded infrastructure (community, low carbon heat/power, green etc). In this context, **Option A** and **Option C**, as the options which direct growth to larger sites, are considered to have greater potential to incorporate measures/ features through the development process. It is however recognised that, in practice, competing policy and funding priorities can present a barrier.

In light of the above, it is considered that all options have the potential to lead to minor positive effects in relation to climate change, by minimising per capita CO₂ emissions either from the built environment or from transport. The ranking of the options reflects a) the accessibility of options, and b) the surface water flood risk constraint at **Option A** requiring a greater need for mitigation in this respect.

Landscape			
Option	A	B	C
	Site 7	Site 5 and Site 6	Site 1
Rank	1	3	2
Significant effect?	No	No	Uncertain

Discussion The rural setting of Ringstead village is highly valued by local residents, expressing the need to limit new development to within the settlement boundary. In terms of the options, only **Option A** falls within the settlement boundary, with **Option B** and **Option C** adjoining the boundary. It is therefore considered that **Option B** and **Option C** have the potential to facilitate urban sprawl to the northeast and south of the village respectively; impacting upon the landscape character and setting. Notably, **Option C**, to the south of the village, would extend the settlement towards Raunds, which is a growing market town just 1km from Ringstead. The community wish to maintain the rural identity of Ringstead, avoiding potential coalescence with neighbouring settlements such as Raunds.

Taking each option in turn, **Option A** is a mix of greenfield and brownfield land, currently under employment use. **Option A** is adjoined to the north, east, and west by existing built form, and has been extensively developed with buildings and hardstanding. The site also holds a level of vegetative screening to the south, reducing the potential for impact on local views. As such it is considered that the redevelopment of the site would have limited impact on the landscape overall, and may lead to positive effects if a landscape-led masterplanning scheme were adopted.

Option B includes Site 5 (greenfield) and Site 6 (a mixture of greenfield and brownfield land) located to the northwest of the settlement. **Option B** has the potential to lead to adverse effects on landscape due to the topography and prominence of sites, located on the edge of the settlement. Notably, Site 5 would extend built form to the west of Ham Lane into the open landscape, which may set precedent for further development to the north west of the parish. It is however recognised that hedgerows and trees present along site boundaries may limit potential impact on views to some extent; although given the sloping nature of sites this screening may only be partial. However, effects are considered unlikely to be significant in nature.

Option C is a wholly greenfield site, and may have potential for effects on villagescape and rural setting, extending the existing built form into the open landscape to the south. Furthermore, **Option C** has challenging topography, sloping from north to south. While existing vegetation provides a level of screening for the site, development may lead to adverse effects on local views; though it is considered that effects will depend on detailed design, layout and massing of any scheme.

Several trees within **Option A** and **Option C** are protected under Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). TPOs are used to protect selected trees and woodlands if their removal would have a significant negative impact on the local environment and its enjoyment by the public.²⁵ Development therefore has the potential to lead to residual negative effects, impacting upon the scenic, aesthetic value of the site. However it is considered that landscape-led masterplanning and sensitive design could minimise the potential for adverse effects overall.

It is also noted that there are many scenic views of the village from the surrounding countryside that local people value, the most important are set out in the submission

²⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2014) Guidance: Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas>

Landscape

RNP. In terms of the options, a sensitive view has been identified from Ham Lane, along the north east boundary of Site 5 and north west boundary of Site 6. As such, development at **Option B** has the potential to lead to residual negative effects, though these are unlikely to be significant.

In light of the above, it is considered that **Option B** performs poorly in relation to the landscape SEA theme. **Option A** is best performing, although there is the potential for development to lead to minor adverse effects overall dependant on the final design, massing and layout of a future scheme.

Historic environment			
Option	A	B	C
	Site 7	Site 5 and Site 6	Site 1
Rank	1	2	3
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes - Negative

Discussion In terms of designated heritage assets, all options are constrained to some degree by Grade II Listed Buildings in the vicinity of the village core. There is a Grade II Listed Building at 5-9 Denford Road opposite **Option A**, 19m to the north; and Slade Farm (also Grade II) is to the south. In relation to **Option B**, the Grade II Listed Manor House is located 260m to the south east of Site 5, and the Grade II Ringstead War Memorial is 290m to the south of Site 6. **Option C** is located 40m to the south east of the Grade I Listed 'Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary'; however, it is noted that mature trees/ woodland screen the option from the Church, which could reduce the potential for significant adverse effects. There are also a number of listed buildings within close proximity of **Option C**; Grade II Ringstead War Memorial 62m to the north, Grade II Manor House 120m to the north west, Grade II Slade Farmhouse 130m to the east and the Grade II Listed Buildings at 5-9 Denford Road, 150m to the north east.

Development at all options therefore has the potential to impact upon the intrinsic qualities, character and setting of heritage assets, with the potential for residual adverse effects. **Option C** is worst performing in this respect given the abundance of listed buildings within close proximity of the site; including the Grade I Listed Church. **Option B** also performs poorly due to the close proximity of assets, with **Option A** marginally best performing in this respect. It is however noted that there is an element of uncertainty at this stage for all options, as the nature and significance of the residual effect will be dependent on the design and layout of development.

In terms of non-designated assets, the Historic Environment Records (HER) records activity to the south of **Option C** in the form of cropmarks indicating pits and unstratified prehistoric flints. The southern area also contains possible undated industrial activity. No fieldwork has been undertaken within the area and as such the archaeological potential is unknown; however, due to the undisturbed nature of the site and the location the potential for archaeological activity is high. Development at **Option C** therefore has the potential to affect the preservation of archaeological remains. In line with Historic England's guidance (2018), an archaeological statement will likely be required to demonstrate if there is a risk to the deliverability of proposed development due to the archaeology present.²⁶ In terms of **Option B**, while no activity has been recorded, there is the potential for archaeological interest (notably at Site 5) given its location along the settlement boundary. As such, an archaeological statement is also likely to be required. Archaeological potential should not be entirely discounted at **Option A**, however any remains are likely to have been reduced by previous use.

In light of the above, it is considered that all options have the potential to lead to adverse effects on the historic environment. **Option C** performs most poorly with the potential for significant negative effects, while **Option A** is best performing overall.

²⁶ Historic England (2018) Site allocations [online] available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/planning/site-allocations-information-sheet-v2pdf/>

Land, soil and water resources			
Option	A	B	C
	Site 7	Site 5 and Site 6	Site 1
Rank	1	3	2
Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Uncertain

Discussion A key tenet of ensuring the most efficient use of available land is ensuring that new development is directed away from the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land where possible. The Agricultural Land Classification groups land into six tiers of quality, with Grades 1 to 3a recognised as BMV land, whilst Grades 3b to 5 are of poorer quality. No detailed classification of the Neighbourhood Plan area has been undertaken to date. As such, there is a need to rely on the national ‘Provisional Agricultural Land Quality’ dataset.

The Provisional Agricultural Land Quality dataset shows that the entirety of the Neighbourhood Plan area is underlain by Grade 3 agricultural land. However, without the subset grading (3a or 3b) it is not possible to tell at this stage whether all of the Grade 3 agricultural land is considered to be BMV. As such, all options have the potential to lead to loss of BMV land, although effects are uncertain at this stage. In terms of ranking, **Option C** is worst performing given the site is wholly greenfield, while **Option A** is best performing as it is predominately brownfield (with some greenfield areas). **Option B** includes a wholly greenfield site at Site 5, and is part greenfield/part brownfield at Site 6.

While **Option A** may lead to a small loss of BMV land, it is noted that the redevelopment of partial-brownfield land is considered to be an efficient use of land, leading to positive effects against the land, soil and water SEA theme. To a lesser extent, positive effects are also attributed to **Option B** given the brownfield land present at Site 5.

In terms of water resources, Anglian Water have highlighted that a Foul Sewer crosses **Option A** and **Option B** (Site 5 and Site 6); water mains cross **Option B** (Site 6), and there is a surface water sewer adjacent to the site boundary of **Option A**. Anglian Water expect landowner/ developers to consider the location of existing assets as part of site layout to ensure that access is maintained. Where it is not possible an application can be made to Anglian Water to divert the existing assets. It is noted that there is no existing water main in Raunds Road (**Option C**); though this can be addressed through payment to Anglian Water.

In terms of water supply, for all options, Anglian have confirmed that the network has capacity. Furthermore, Anglian Water is responsible for any required investment to ensure sufficient sewage treatment capacity is made available in time to secure development.

As set out in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan²⁷, part of **Option B** (part of Site 5), and a small part of **Option C** are located in a Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA) for sand and gravel. It is essential that new development avoids sterilising or obstructing future access to potentially winnable deposits of sand and deposits. Therefore, any future proposals at either option would need to consult with Northamptonshire County Council to ensure the risk of this is minimised.

²⁷ Northamptonshire County Council (2017): Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan [online] available from: <https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/minerals-and-waste-planning-policy/Documents/MWLP%20Update.Cabinet%20Report.Adoption.Appendix%202.May%2017.pdf>

Land, soil and water resources

In light of the above it is considered that **Option A** performs most strongly in relation to the land, soil and water resources SEA theme. This is because it focuses growth to a predominately brownfield site, making efficient use of the available land and avoiding potential significant loss of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. **Option C** is considered to perform less well compared to **Option B**, although both have the potential to lead to significant long term negative effects on the basis that they each have potential to result in the loss of BMV land. While effects on BMV land are uncertain, is considered that the substantial loss of greenfield land will lead to long term negative effects overall.

Population and communities			
Option	A	B	C
	Site 7	Site 5 and Site 6	Site 1
Rank	1	3	2
Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive

Discussion All options are anticipated to lead to significant long term positive effects through providing housing to meet local needs. **Option C** followed by **Option A** however perform more positively than **Option B** in this respect, given the indicative quantum of growth is greater for **Option A** and **Option C**.

A key consideration is the delivery of new homes to meet identified housing needs, including the needs of different groups within the community. In terms of affordable housing, the North Northamptonshire JCS (Policy 30(d)) requires that on private sector developments of 11 or more dwellings (or 0.3 hectares or more of land), 40% of total dwellings should be affordable. **Option A** and **Option C** have an indicative capacity of 36 and 36+ dwellings, respectively. As such, options would be able to deliver the 14 affordable homes in full, in accordance with the JCS policy requirement, leading to significant positive effects.

Option B, at an indicative capacity of 30 dwellings, has the potential to deliver 12 affordable homes, and will therefore also lead to positive effects in the long term. It is however noted that delivering growth over two smaller sites, in comparison to directing all growth to one larger site, may be less likely to achieve full 40% affordable housing compliance. This is given that there may be additional development costs and viability issues at smaller sites; however this is uncertain at this stage.

It is also important to consider whether new development will be directed to locations from which key services and facilities can be readily accessed. In this respect, **Option A** and **Option C** could give rise to opportunities to deliver community infrastructure, through focusing growth towards one larger site with capacity to provide facilities on site, and with potential to secure greater financial contributions. These opportunities are likely to be reduced under **Option B** where development is split over two smaller sites.

In terms of the local offer, all options are considered to be reasonably well located in relation to the village core; however only **Option A** is located within the settlement boundary, to the south of the village centre. **Option A** is in easy reach of local services and facilities; being within 400m of the village hall, post office, convenience store, social club, and primary school. **Option C** is also considered to perform strongly as, while adjacent to the settlement boundary, is also in easy reach of local services and facilities; being within 550m of the amenities discussed above. **Option B** performs least positively of the options in terms of access to the village core, although it is noted that the option is still relatively well connected; being within 800m of amenities discussed above.

It is considered that on balance **Option A** performs most strongly in relation to the Population and Communities SEA theme as it has potential to meet local housing needs where they arise (including affordable housing). Furthermore, growth is focussed on a single, predominately brownfield, site in a central location near to village services.

Health and wellbeing			
Option	A	B	C
	Site 7	Site 5 and Site 6	Site 1
Rank	1	3	2
Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive

Discussion All options have access to Ringstead’s extensive network of footpaths and bridleways both within the village and outside, connecting with the surrounding countryside. Notably, there is a Public Right of Way (PRoW) along the northern boundary of **Option B** (Site 5) and bisecting **Option C** (extending through the centre of the site). There is also a footpath crossing **Option A**. PRoW can make a meaningful contribution to both health and wellbeing through regular exercise and access to the natural environment. This is of particular importance in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and increased proportion of residents working from home, which in turn has increased the value of accessible green space. Positive effects in this respect are increased where options have access to recreation and sports facilities. In terms of the options, all are within walking distance (800m) of either the Recreation Ground to the south of the parish, or Kinewell Lake to the west. It is therefore considered that all options can make a meaningful contribution to both physical and mental health and wellbeing through the benefits gained from regular exercise and access to the natural environment.

In terms of access to health facilities, the closest GP surgery is south of the parish in Raunds (The Cottons Medical Centre). **Option A** and **Option C** are approximately 2km from the medical centre, while **Option B** is approximately 2.7km away. While **Option A** and **Option C** are best placed to access the medical centre, it is considered that residents would likely rely on the private vehicle for access from all options.

As has been noted in relation to other SEA themes, all options are reasonably well placed for walking (and cycling) to the village centre, including the village school; to which a large number of regular journeys would likely be made. This could encourage residents to make healthy choices in relation to many of their key journeys within the village. **Option A** performs most positively in this respect, given its particularly central location inside the settlement boundary. **Option C** also focusses growth adjacent to the village core, while **Option B** is slightly further from the village centre, to the northeast of the settlement. Where growth is focussed at one single site (**Option A** and **Option C**) It is considered that there could be potential to enhance walking and cycling links with the village centre, to further incentivise healthy travel choices. While these opportunities may exist at smaller sites within **Option B**, it is considered that the potential to deliver benefits increase with the scale of growth.

Overall, **Option A** is identified as best performing given it is most well integrated with the existing village core, has good access to the PRoW network and recreational facilities/ open space, and would likely encourage the uptake of active travel for short journeys. **Option C** only performs marginally less positively than **Option A**; being outside the settlement boundary and slightly further from recreational opportunities. **Option B** is worst performing of the options; however, is also likely to support healthy lifestyles, with residual effects also positive overall.

Transportation			
Option	A	B	C
	Site 7	Site 5 and Site 6	Site 1
Rank	1	3	2
Significant effect?	No	No	No

Discussion As noted in relation to several SEA themes, all three options are likely to provide a reasonable level of support for active travel (walking and cycling). **Option A** is considered to perform marginally more strongly than other options in this regard on the basis of concentrating growth within the settlement boundary, close to services and facilities at the village core. This will help reduce the need to travel by ensuring that many day-to-day needs can be fulfilled without having to travel to other service centres. **Option C** performs similarly to **Option A**, concentrating growth adjacent to the settlement boundary, to the south of the village core. **Option B** focusses growth at two sites to the northwest of the settlement, from which there is walking and cycling connections to the village centre, though the option is less well connected than **Option A** and **Option C**.

All options benefit from proximity to bus services, providing access to wider village services in Raunds village, and higher tier service centres such as Kettering. **Option A** is best performing in this respect being within 50m of a bus stop, followed by **Option C** which is within 300m, and **Option B** which is within 700m. It is however noted that services are not frequent, and therefore there is likely to remain a reliance on the private vehicle for travel. Furthermore, the closest railway station is Wellington Station, approximately 11.3 miles from the Plan area.

Overall, **Option B** is worst performing in relation to promoting sustainable transport and reducing the need to travel. This is on the basis that it focusses the greatest proportion of growth at sites furthest from the village centre and is furthest from bus services than other options. **Option A** is best performing overall, supporting modal shift where possible.

Summary of assessment:

6.17 The assessment finds that **Option B** stands out as the weakest performing of the growth options in relation to the SEA themes. Whilst the ranking under each SEA theme does not represent a tally, meaning the overall performance of each option is not the sum of its individual rankings under each theme, it is notable that Option B is found to be either the lowest ranking or equal lowest rank in relation to every theme other than historic environment (where it ranks second). Stand-out constraints for **Option B** include:

- Biodiversity - **Option B** is located within 300m of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar site with the potential to lead to significant adverse effects. It is noted that **Option A** and **Option C** are also constrained in this respect, however are located further from the European site, to the south of the settlement.
- Landscape – Development in the open countryside to the northwest of the settlement. Sensitive views have been identified by residents along the boundary of site 5 within **Option B**.
- Land, soil and water resources – Permeant loss of greenfield, and possible BMV agricultural land. Part of **Option B** (part of Site 5) located in a Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA) for sand and gravel.

- Population and Communities – **Option B** fails to meet the full affordable housing need in Ringstead and may face viability issues through dispersing growth over two smaller sites.
- 6.18 Through directing growth to one site, **Option A** and **Option C** have an increased opportunity to secure financial contributions for the parish, enhancing to the natural environment and delivering biodiversity net-gain. Benefits also include potential opportunities to achieve ambitious building emissions standards, deliver low carbon heat and power supply infrastructure and take a wide range of other steps in support of decarbonisation.
- 6.19 There is little to differentiate between **Option A** and **Option C** in terms of the socio-economic SEA themes. **Option A** performs marginally better than Option C given it seeks to deliver growth within the settlement boundary; however, both options are well located in terms of the village core, community facilities and local services and therefore support modal shift and active travel.
- 6.20 In terms of environmental themes, **Option C** is most constrained by designated historic assets located close-by, including the Grade I Listed Church. However the Historic Environment Records (HER) records archaeological activity to the south of **Option C** which has the potential to be adversely affected. **Option A** is considered to be less constrained in this respect given the predominantly brownfield nature of the site. Being predominately brownfield and within the settlement boundary, **Option A** also performs more positively than **Option C** in relation to the Landscape and Land, Soil and Water SEA theme.

Appendix IV Site assessment criteria and results

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		West of Raunds Road	West of Carlow Road	Off Denford Road (east)	West Farm, Carlow Road	Carlow Road/Ham Lane	Home Farm, Ham Lane	Dodson & Horrell, Spencer Street	Off Denford Road (west)
	Section 1. To improve accessibility and transport links from residential areas to key services, facilities and employment areas and enhance access to recreational opportunities	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	R
1A	Access to public transport	G	R	R	R	R	R	G	R
1B	Access to convenience store (Ringstead Stores)	A	A	R	A	A	A	A	R
1C	Access to Ringstead Village Hall/Ringstead Social Club	A	A	R	A	A	A	A	R
1D	Access to Ringstead Recreation Ground/Peace Park	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	R
1E	Access to Ringstead Primary School	G	A	A	A	A	A	G	A
1F	Access to Axe and Compass PH	R	A	R	A	A	A	A	R
1G	Access to Ringstead Post Office	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	R
1H	Access to Countryside	A	A	G	G	G	G	A	G
1I	Public Rights of Way	R	G	A	G	G	G	G	G
	Section 2. Meets Housing Needs	R	R	A	A	A	A	A	R
2A	Supply	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
2B	Availability	A	G	A	G	G	G	G	G
2C	Viability	G	A	G	A	A	A	A	A
2D	Site Capacity	R	R	G	G	G	G	G	R
	Section 3. Health	A	R	R	R	R	R	A	R
3A	Access to Ringstead Recreation Ground/Peace Park	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	R
3B	Loss of open space, sports or recreational buildings or land	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
3C	Access to public transport	G	R	R	R	R	R	G	R
	Section 4. Safety	A	R	R	R	A	A	A	A
4A	Anti-social behaviour and vandalism	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
4B	Public safety	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
4C	Highways	A	R	R	R	A	G	A	A
4D	Footways	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	A
	Section 5. Sense of Belonging	A	R	R	A	R	A	A	R
5A	Links	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
5B	Neighbourliness	G	R	G	A	R	G	G	G
5C	Access to Ringstead Village Hall/Ringstead Social Club	A	A	R	A	A	A	A	R
	Section 6. Improve Education	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
6A	Access to Ringstead Primary School	G	A	A	A	A	A	G	A
6B	Access to Manor School Sports College	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
	Section 7. Healthy Environments	R	R	G	G	R	R	G	G
7A	Noise	R	R	G	G	R	R	G	G
	Section 8. Biodiversity	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
8A	Site of Special Scientific Interest	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
8B	Tree Preservation Order	A	G	G	A	G	G	A	G
8C	Important Hedgerow	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
8D	Local Wildlife Site/ Local Nature Reserve	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
	Section 9. Local Distinctiveness	R	R	R	R	R	R	A	R
9A	Scenic quality	R	G	R	G	R	G	G	G
9B	Character	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
9C	Working with the site and its context	G	R	A	R	R	R	G	R
9D	Green Infrastructure	A	G	A	G	G	A	A	A
9E	Area of Separation	A	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
9F	Settlement Character	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	R
	Section 10. Setting	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
10A	Listed Building	A	G	G	G	G	G	A	G
10B	Scheduled Monument	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
10C	Non-designated heritage	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
	Section 11. Air Quality	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
11A	Air	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
	Section 12. Water Resources	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
12A	Drinking Water Protected Area	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
12B	Groundwater Protection	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
	Section 13. Flood Risk	G	R	A	R	G	G	A	A
13A	Flood risk	G	A	G	A	G	G	G	G
13B	Surface water	G	R	A	R	G	G	A	A
	Section 14. Use of Land	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
14A	Agricultural Land Quality	A	A	A	A	A	A	G	A
14B	Contamination	G	G	G	A	G	G	A	G
	Section 15. Efficient Use of Land	R	R	A	A	R	A	G	R
15A	Minerals safeguarding	A	G	A	G	A	G	G	R
15B	Make the most efficient use of land	R	R	A	A	R	A	G	R
	Section 16. Recycling	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
16A	Reduce waste generation and promote re-use and recycling	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
	Section 17. Employment	G	R	R	R	R	R	G	R
17A	Access to employment	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
17B	Access to public transport	G	R	R	R	R	R	G	R
	Section 18. Infrastructure	G	A	G	A	G	G	R	G
18A	Loss of employment land	G	A	G	A	G	G	R	G
	Section 19. Vitality and Viability	A	R	R	R	R	R	A	R
19A	Enhance the vitality and viability of Ringstead village centre	A	A	R	A	A	A	A	R
19B	Impact of traffic on village centre	G	R	A	R	R	R	A	A

Section 1. To improve accessibility and t	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	R
Section 2. Meets Housing Needs	R	R	A	A	A	A	A	R
Section 3. Health	A	R	R	R	R	R	A	R
Section 4. Safety	A	R	R	R	A	A	A	A
Section 5. Sense of Belonging	A	R	R	A	R	A	A	R
Section 6.Improve Education	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Section 7. Healthy Environments	R	R	G	G	R	R	G	G
Section 8. Biodiversity	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Section 9. Local Distinctiveness	R	R	R	R	R	R	A	R
Section 10. Setting	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Section 11. Air Quality	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
Section 12. Water Resources	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Section 13. Flood Risk	G	R	A	R	G	G	A	A
Section 14. Use of Land	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Section 15. Efficient Use of Land	R	R	A	A	R	A	G	R
Section 16. Recycling	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Section 17. Employment	G	R	R	R	R	R	G	R
Section 18. Infrastructure	G	A	G	A	G	G	R	G
Section 19. Vitality and Viability	A	R	R	R	R	R	A	R

Red	5	11	7	7	8	6	2	9
Amber	10	7	9	10	8	10	13	7
Green	4	1	3	2	3	3	4	3
Rank (based on red)	2	8	4	5	6	3	1	7