



Stowupland Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016 - 2036 Pre-Submission Draft

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA):

Screening Report – July 2018





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1. Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of This Report

This screening report is an assessment of whether or not the contents of the Stowupland Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2036 Pre-Submission Draft requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/ EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations. A SEA is required if the Neighbourhood Development Plan is deemed to have a likely significant effect on the environment.

This report will also screen to determine whether the Neighbourhood Development Plan requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Article 6(3) and (4) of the EU Habitats Directive and with Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. A HRA is required when it is deemed that likely adverse significant effects may occur on protected European Sites (Natura 2000 sites) as a result of the implementation of a plan/project.

1.2 The Stowupland Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2036 Pre-Submission Draft

The Neighbourhood Development Plan will set out planning policies for Stowupland and within the confines of the Stowupland Parish boundary. Once formally adopted, a Neighbourhood Development Plan carries the same legal weight as Local Development Plans adopted up by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), in this case Mid Suffolk District Council.

The Neighbourhood development Plan states that the Vision for the Plan is:

‘Our Vision is to conserve Stowupland as a traditional, attractive, tranquil Parish, with a strong, friendly community and a separate distinct village identity, retaining open and inspirational countryside views and habitats. Growth will be managed through environmental constraints.

To deliver this Vision, the following Objectives have been established for the Plan:

Objectives
Manage sustainable growth
Maintain open areas of countryside between the village and Stowmarket, and the village and Saxham Street and prevent coalescence.
Retain and enhance footpath links (public rights of way) within the village and out to the countryside
Enhance habitats
Encourage small houses and bungalows suitable for first time buyers and existing residents seeking to “downsize”/more suitable post-retirement accommodation
Encourage good design and layouts in keeping with the existing built form



Objectives

Maintain the village character and appearance

Ensure provision of sufficient amenity space, spaces between buildings and green space

Encourage sustainable buildings using whatever current ecological techniques are possible. This could be rainwater harvesting to minimise drainage problems, low CO2 building and energy production on site.

Retain hedgerows and trees especially around boundaries and enhance biodiversity

Manage traffic and reduce its impact on the village

1.3 The Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008) & Focused Review (2012)

The adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008) & Focused Review (2012) contain current strategic planning policy for the District and thus Stowupland. The Core Strategy was originally adopted in 2008 and includes a number of policies related to a strategy for growth in the District, the delivery of growth and the provision of infrastructure. A Sustainability Appraisal was carried out for the Core Strategy as well as 'Appropriate Assessment' in accordance with the Habitats Directive and Regulations.

The Core Strategy categorised the settlement of Stowupland as a 'Key Service Centre'. It establishes that towns should be the main focus for development in the District, and that Key Service Centres are the main focus for development outside of the towns. Policy CS1 Settlement Hierarchy of the Core Strategy states that,

'The majority of new development (including retail, employment and housing allocations) will be directed to towns and key service centres'.

Policy CS8 of the Core Strategy provides the outline for housing distribution across Mid-Suffolk. Housing numbers for the 2010-2025 period are provided within the policy table. A total of 3,830 homes were proposed for the 15 year period, with 500 of these being located within Key Service Centres.

1.4 The Emerging Mid Suffolk Local Plan

Work has been underway for a new Joint Local Plan with Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council. At the time of writing, a Regulation 18 stage consultation had most recently closed on the 10th November 2017. This was accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal.

The Regulation 18 stage Local Plan identifies Stowupland as a Core Village. A number of strategic options were explored relevant to Core Villages. These were:

- County Town Focus – 20% district growth in Core Villages
- Market town / rural area balance – 20%-25% district growth in Core Villages
- Transport corridor focus – 30% district growth in Core Villages
- New Settlement focus – 15% district growth in Core Villages

The emerging Local Plan has reviewed Settlement Boundaries. The Plan states that,



'The Councils have taken the approach that Urban Areas, Market Towns and Core Villages will have new growth identified and allocated in the new Local Plan through the allocation of new housing sites... Maps identifying 'committed boundaries' and potential SHELAA sites can be viewed in Appendix 3 and 4'

Within Appendix 4, there is included a map of Stowupland. The map shows two potential development sites adjacent to the existing settlement boundary of the village, and also illustrates a proposed extension to the settlement boundary unrelated to these two potential development sites.

Since then, a further nine sites have been submitted for consideration as potential allocations within the emerging Local Plan (through the Regulation 18 consultation) in the Neighbourhood Development Plan area. A total of 11 sites have therefore been identified for development purposes within Stowupland Parish.

Of Neighbourhood Plans, the emerging Local Plan states that,

'Neighbourhood plans can be brought forward at any time and can be developed before or at the same time as the local planning authority is producing its Local Plan. It is for the local planning authority to work closely with neighbourhood planning groups to minimise any conflicts between policies in the neighbourhood plan and the emerging Local Plan.'

'There is an opportunity for local communities to bring forward sites for development in neighbourhood plans in parallel with the developing local plan process and in accordance with the emerging level of growth agreed with the local planning authority and share evidence the evidence being prepared by the Local Planning Authority and vice versa.'

The Local Plan at the current stage of process (at the time of writing) outlines high level options with initial preference for approaches included, however there is currently an absence of draft policy wording at this stage. With this in mind, the emerging Local Plan is unlikely to have any identifiable conflict with any of the content within the emerging Stowupland Neighbourhood Development Plan regarding the principle of development. Indeed, the Neighbourhood Development Plan is being prepared at a comparably advanced stage to that of the Local Plan and its evidence base.

2. Legislative Background

2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘the following P&P, and modifications to them, are covered when prepared and/or adopted by an authority[2] and required pursuant to legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions:

- P&P prepared for certain sectors and which set the framework for future development consent in respect of projects under the Environmental Impact Assessment-EIA-Directive.*
- P&P requiring an assessment under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).*
- P&P setting the framework for development consent in respect of projects (not limited to those listed in the EIA Directive; see above) and determined by "screening"*



as being likely to have significant environmental effects.'

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

2.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Under the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive and translated into English law by the Habitats Regulations (*The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017*), a competent authority must carry out an assessment of whether a plan or project will significantly affect the integrity of any European Site, in terms of impacting the site's conservation objectives.

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

This HRA Screening Report has been undertaken in order to support the Stowupland Neighbourhood Development Plan which is being produced by Stowupland Parish Council in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

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

In line with the recent Court judgement (CJEU *People Over Wind v Coillte Teoranta C-323/17*), mitigation measures cannot be taken into account when carrying out a screening assessment to decide whether a plan or project is likely to result in significant effects on a Natura 2000 site.



3. SEA Screening

3.1 When is SEA Required?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Articles 2 and 3 of the SEA Directive set out the circumstances in which an SEA is required. Table 1 sets out the assessment of whether the principle of the Stowupland Neighbourhood Development Plan will require a 'full SEA', culminating in a SEA Environmental Report.

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

Q	Criteria	Response	Outcome	Commentary
1	Is the Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative procedure by Parliament or Government	Yes	Go to question 2	The Neighbourhood Development Plan has been prepared for adoption through legislative procedure.
2	Is the Plan required by legislative, regulatory or <u>administrative provision</u> Typical characteristics of "administrative provisions" are that they are publicly available, prepared in a formal way, probably involving consultation with interested parties. The administrative provision must have sufficient formality such that it counts as a "provision" and it must also use language that plainly requires rather than just encourages a Plan to be prepared.	Yes	Go to question 3	The Neighbourhood Development Plan would be considered as falling within the category of an 'administrative provision'.
		No	DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA	
3	Is the Plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive?	Yes to both criteria	Go to question 5	The Neighbourhood Development Plan has been prepared for town and country planning and sets a framework for future development consent.
		No to either criteria	Go to question 4	
4	Will the Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive?	Yes	Go to question 5	N/A
		No	Go to question 6	
5	Does the Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a	Yes to either criteria	Go to question 8	The policies of the Neighbourhood Development Plan can be considered to

Q	Criteria	Response	Outcome	Commentary
	Plan likely to require assessment under the Habitats Directive?	No to both criteria	Go to question 7	determine the use of small areas at a local level commensurate with their status in determining local planning applications. The Neighbourhood Plan also allocates land for development purposes.
6	Does the Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in the Annexes of the EIA Directive)?	Yes	Go to question 8	N/A
		No	DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA	
7	Is the Plans sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget Plan, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7	Yes to any criteria	DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA	N/A
		No to all criteria	REQUIRES SEA	
8	Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?	Yes	REQUIRES SEA	Likely significant effects are explored in more detail elsewhere in this Screening Report.
		No	DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA	

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



3.2 Criteria for Assessing the Effects of the Neighbourhood Development Plan

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

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

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to
 - the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
 - the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
 - the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
 - environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,
 - the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to
 - the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
 - the cumulative nature of the effects,
 - the transboundary nature of the effects,
 - the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
 - the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
 - the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - * special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
 - * exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
 - * intensive land-use,
 - * the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.



3.3 Likely Significant Effects on the Environment resulting from the Neighbourhood Development Plan

The following assessment will consider the likelihood of the Stowupland Neighbourhood Development Plan Pre-Submission Draft (at the time of writing) to have significant effects on the environment.

Table 2: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects on the Environment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.</p>	<p>The Plan sets out relevant policies which will be used to determine proposals for development within the Neighbourhood Plan area once adopted. Policies SNP2, SNP3 and SNP4 respond to housing allocations within the Plan area, including housing quantum potential for each allocation and further policy criteria specific to these sites. The combined quantum of these allocations is up to 203 dwellings.</p> <p>Paragraph 8.3 of the Pre-Submission Plan states that, <i>'the Neighbourhood Plan sub-committee invited expressions of interest from all the landowners in the parish in November 2015 and received one letter and a telephone call from two landowners. The main questionnaire carried out in November 2015 asked residents to rank areas of the parish that they considered most suitable for development. A Character Assessment of the parish was carried out by members of the Neighbourhood Plan sub-committee in early 2016, and a Landscape Appraisal was carried out by Alison Farmer Associates (Landscape Architect) and published in early 2017. Results from this work were used to consider which sites should be allocated for development. However, planning permissions had been granted for a total of up to 188 dwellings since April 2016. None of these dwellings have been constructed at the time of preparing the plan for consultation (although work has commenced on the largest of the sites), and together with the site of a planning application these three sites provide for up to 203 dwellings. With the three dwellings on individual sites this totals at least 206 homes to be delivered over the twenty-year period of the plan. As local plans will need to be reviewed every five years so this plan will also need to be reviewed and additional site(s) may be allocated at that time.'</i></p> <p>It should be noted that the Local Plan has not yet formally included the assessments of the above mentioned within an emerging Sustainability Appraisal, encompassing the requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment. As the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to allocate sites in advance of the emerging Local Plan process of the District Council, any subsequent significant effects on the environment from development of these sites have not yet been formally identified in a manner which is consistent with the requirements of the SEA Directive.</p> <p>As such, the allocation of these sites within the Plan would normally</p>



Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
<p>The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans or programmes including those in a hierarchy.</p>	<p>ensure that significant effects on the environment could not be ruled out; however there should be strong consideration of the fact that the Plan’s allocations all have full planning permission. This means that their development would be forthcoming with or without their status as allocations within the Plan. As such the principle of the eventual development of the Plan’s allocations is already established and beyond the influence of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and its evidence base. Additionally, any significant effects on the environment resulting from these proposals would have already been identified at the planning application stage and mitigated as part their determination in compliance with LPA and national policy requirements. For this reason it has been determined that the allocation of these sites alone would not warrant the full application of the SEA Directive in the form of a SEA Environmental Report.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan provides policies for the Plan area, relevant to a local level only. The Plan is in general conformity to policies CS1, CS5 and CS9 of the Mid Suffolk adopted Core Strategy.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan allocates land for development purposes outside of the established Stowupland Settlement Boundary identified within the adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy, albeit on land that is adjacent to the Settlement Boundary. This land, as defined in the adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy, is within the ‘countryside’ as defined. The Plan’s allocations all have planning permission however, so the extension of the development boundary would be in response to these permissions.</p> <p>To this extent, the Neighbourhood Plan does influence the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Local Plan, which is currently at the Regulation 18 stage, in so far as it supports a deviation from the approach of Policy CS2 in the adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy, which outlines that within the ‘countryside’ development will be restricted to defined categories that the sites within the Neighbourhood Development Plan cannot reasonably be seen to fall within.</p> <p>The emerging Babergh and Mid-Suffolk Local Plan recognises however that many of the settlements (within Babergh Mid Suffolk) have already expanded beyond defined settlement boundaries and that these have been / are being reviewed through the plan-making process. Further, the Councils have taken the approach that Core Villages will have new growth identified and allocated in the new Local Plan through the allocation of new housing sites. The allocation of land for housing purposes within the Neighbourhood Plan can be seen as contributing to that process.</p>



Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Plans are required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Neighbourhood Plan policies seek to ensure environmental considerations are taken into account. The Neighbourhood Development Plan is compatible and does not conflict with adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy policies CS5 and CS9 which have been subject to a thorough process of plan preparation and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal.</p> <p>The following policies exist within the Neighbourhood Plan relevant to environmental protection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy SNP8: Landscape Character – important gaps, views and features; and • Policy SNP10: Protecting the natural environment and biodiversity – strengthening green/blue infrastructure. <p>In addition, Policy SNP14: Quality of development, resource efficiency and design considerations is consistent with aspirations in regard to the protection and enhancement of local features of landscape, ecological and historic importance. The policies contained within the Plan are considered to be sufficient to ensure that effects on the environment are minimised.</p>
<p>Environmental problems relevant to the plan.</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan reflects a small area.</p> <p>The policy content of the adopted MSDC Core Strategy will additionally apply to any proposals within the Neighbourhood Development Plan area. These policies have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal And Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening within the context of the Core Strategy. The potential environmental problems relevant to the Neighbourhood development Plan area include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are approximately 35-40 listed buildings within the Plan area, including the Grade II* listed Columbine Hall. • The Gipping Great Wood SSSI lies just north of the Plan area, and the majority of the Plan area is within the Impact Risk Zones of this designation. • The plan area contains a number of scattered priority habitats. These include Woodpasture and Parkland BAP Priority Habitat, traditional orchard, deciduous woodland and mixed (mainly conifer) woodland. • The Neighbourhood Plan Area is within a Groundwater Source Protection Zone – Total Catchment (Zone 3). • Parts of the parish are Grade 2 and 3a agricultural land which is defined as “best and most versatile agricultural land” within the wider District. • The southern part of the Plan area up to and including elements of the development boundary are within areas



Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)		Likelihood and summary of significant effects
Sustainability Theme	<p>The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).</p>	<p>identified as experiencing noise from the A14 at 55-59.9dB (based on a 24 hour annual average noise level in decibels with weightings applied for the evening and night periods).</p> <p>The content of the Neighbourhood Plan is not in conflict with those relevant planning documents within the wider district and county area related to waste management or water protection.</p>
	<p>The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects on the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biodiversity 	<p>The following impacts have been identified within this Screening Assessment:</p> <p>There are no wildlife designations within the Plan area. The plan area contains a number of scattered priority habitats; however none are adjacent to the development boundary or any of the Plan's site allocations. The Gipping Great Wood SSSI lies just north of the Plan area, and the majority of the Plan area is within the Impact Risk Zones of this designation; however there are no identified incompatibilities with residential development in and around the settlement of Stowupland identified by Natural England. Significant effects that would warrant the application of the SEA Directive can be ruled out. The HRA Screening element of this Report determines that no European Sites lie within 13km of Stowupland parish, which is the largest Zone of Influence for any N2k site in Suffolk and the distance recently confirmed by Natural England as the zone of influence to identify potential recreational impacts on coastal statutory sites in Suffolk.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Population 	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan identifies and allocates 3 sites which are considered suitable for residential development. The combined quantum of these allocations, as allocated, is up to 203 dwellings. There are therefore likely to be a degree of impact on the current population and also in general as a result of new development. This is likely to be realised in relation to infrastructure capacities such as schools and utilities. As this information is not available, general effects can not be ruled out however they are not considered significant in light of the fact that all of the allocations have planning permission and have been determined against relevant infrastructure related policy / requirements at the MSDC and SCC level.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human health 	<p>The Plan does not allocate any land for development purposes that could have any implications regarding human health. The Plan seeks to safeguard all local green spaces within the Plan area in Policy SNP12 in order to ensure that this space is preserved for the</p>	



Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
- Fauna	<p>purposes of health and well-being.</p> <p>It can be considered that no significant effects will occur upon Human health in the Neighbourhood development Plan area. Any potential impacts regarding contamination of any future proposals are best addressed at the 'project level', through the development management process and in adherence to relevant policies at the LPA level.</p> <p>The impacts of the Neighbourhood Development Plan on fauna are not considered significant. It is possible that developments that could be forthcoming within the Plan area could have negative impacts on protected species; however these cannot be identified as strategically significant to warrant Strategic Environmental Assessment at the Plan level. Such issues are more appropriate to be considered on a case-by-case application basis at the development management stage in consideration of the Neighbourhood Plan policies and relevant policies contained within Mid Suffolk's adopted Core Strategy and emerging Local Plan (commensurate the level of weight those policies would have at the time of application).</p>
- Flora	<p>No areas of Priority Habitat exist adjacent to any of the proposed site allocations. No such areas are likely to be lost as a result of development or any other element of the Plan. There will be no likely effects on Flora that can be significant to warrant the application of the SEA Directive.</p>
- Soil	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan area is within Grade 2 and Grade 3 Agricultural Land ('very good' and 'good to moderate' respectively). Grade 2 Agricultural Land represents the best and most versatile agricultural land within the wider District. Such losses can be expected through the Plan's site allocations and as such negative effects can be expected. Despite this, the Plan's allocations all have planning permission and Policy SNP9: Protecting best and most versatile agricultural land states that, <i>'proposals for development on sites of 0.5ha or more affecting the best and most versatile agricultural land in the parish will not be supported to protect opportunities for food production and the continuance of the agricultural economy.'</i> As such, no significant effects on soil can be expected as a result of the Plan content.</p>
- Water	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan Area is within a Groundwater (Source) Protection Zone – Total Catchment (Zone 3). Source Protection Zones (SPZs) respond to sources such as wells, boreholes and springs used for public drinking water supply. These zones show the risk of contamination from any activities that might cause pollution in the area. The Neighbourhood Plan allocates land for residential development purposes. Residential land uses are not considered to</p>



Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Air - Climatic factors - Material assets - Cultural heritage 	<p>give rise to ground water pollutants (e.g. give rise to hazardous substances such as pesticides, oils, petrol and diesel, solvents, arsenic, mercury or chromium VI; or non-hazardous substances such as ammonia or nitrates).</p> <p>The HRA Screening element of this report determines that Stowupland is outside the Zone of Influence of any N2k sites regarding impacts on water quantity and quality.</p> <p>No AQMAs or other identified air quality issues exist within or in close proximity to the Neighbourhood Plan area. The Plan does allocate land for development purposes, but these have planning permission in line with adopted MSDC policy and are not considered to contribute to any cumulative air quality impacts. As such, no significant effects on air quality have been deemed likely.</p> <p>The majority of the Neighbourhood Plan area is within Flood Zone 1 and this is true of all land in and around the settlement boundary area. The Plan’s allocations are not within any land identified within Flood Risk Zones 2 or 3. As such, no significant effects have been identified.</p> <p>The content of the Neighbourhood Plan is not considered to have any significant impacts on material assets due to the extent / size of the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Such issues are more appropriate to be considered on a case-by-case basis at the development management stage and in accordance with relevant development management policies contained within Mid Suffolk’s adopted Core Strategy.</p> <p>A number of Listed Buildings exist within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The Plan allocates 3 sites for development. Although no allocation contained within these policies is within the immediate curtilage of a Listed Building, site SNP4 is within close proximity to the Grade II listed Holy Trinity Church and site SNP3 is within close proximity to both the Grade II listed Crown Farmhouse and the Grade II listed The Croft. It should be noted however that both of these site allocations have planning permission and have been found to adhere to relevant policies regarding the historic environment at the LPA level. Detail on any individual impacts of schemes would be a development management matter, on a case-by-case basis, and not strategic in scope to warrant the application of SEA at the plan-level. There is considered to be no likely significant effect on cultural heritage / the historic environment that would specifically warrant the application of the SEA Directive and a commitment to undertake a SEA Environmental Report.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landscape 	<p>The Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment includes the parish of</p>



Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
	<p>Stowupland within the Ancient Plateau Claylands, Plateau Claylands and Rolling Valley Farmlands landscape types. The majority of the parish falls within the Ancient Plateau Claylands character type where the key characteristics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat or gently rolling arable landscape dissected by streams at its edges • Field pattern of ancient enclosure • Dispersed settlement pattern • Pairing of medieval churches and manorial halls (often moated) usually in valley side locations • Villages often associated with medieval greens or tyes • Farmstead buildings are timber framed, houses are colour-washed with peg-tiled or thatched roofs and barns blackened with tar • Scattered ancient woodland parcels • Occasional landscaped parks • Moats and ponds are commonplace • Hawthorn hedges with oak, ash and field maple as hedgerow trees • Network of winding lanes and paths creating visual intimacy • Open and occasional feelings of exposure. <p>The northeastern part of the parish, including the area around Saxham Street, falls within the Plateau Claylands character type, and the Rolling Valley Farmland character type forms the northern fringes of the parish along the River Gipping where it forms the parish boundary. Policies within the Plan ensure that dwellings on the edge of the development area provide suitable landscaping options to assimilate into the character area. To this extent, the Plan ensures that potential landscape implications of proposals are suitably considered and significant effects minimised.</p>
The cumulative nature of the effects.	The Plan allocates land for development purposes which has not been subject to any cumulative assessment of impacts through any formal or legally required purpose. Nevertheless, the allocations all have planning permission and environmental protection policies exist within the Plan for the purpose of ensuring that any forthcoming individual schemes within the plan period are unlikely to result in inappropriate development.
The trans boundary nature of the effects.	The findings of the HRA Screening element of this Report do not indicate any trans boundary effects.
The risks to human health or the	There is limited risk to human health or the environment as a result of



Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Likelihood and summary of significant effects
<p>environment (e.g. due to accidents).</p>	<p>the Neighbourhood Plan. This is in consideration of the above screening requirements related to sustainability themes. The Neighbourhood Plan is primarily focused on housing, whilst retaining the character of Stowupland. This land use is unlikely to give rise to any accidents that can be considered to have a significant risk to human health or the environment.</p>
<p>The magnitude spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).</p>	<p>The spatial extent of development resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan is identified within policies SNP2, SNP3 and SNP4 as up to 203 dwellings. The magnitude of effects can be considered small in the wider District context, proportionately the scale and location of development proposed (in relation to one another and the existing village of Stowupland) and development can be considered proportionate in line with the Plan's formula for identifying housing needs. Additionally all of the Plan's allocations have planning permission and the Plan does not seek to ensure any more growth above the level already established.</p>
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage - exceeded environmental quality standards - intensive land use 	<p>As highlighted above in the screening of the Plan per sustainability theme, the Neighbourhood Development Plan has been assessed as not having any potential significant effects on environmental quality standards as a result of intensive land use that would warrant further assessment through SEA.</p>
<p>The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.</p>	<p>As highlighted above in the screening of the Plan per sustainability theme, the Neighbourhood Plan has been assessed as not having any significant effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.</p>



4. HRA Screening

4.1 Habitat Regulations Assessment of Development Plans

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

Under the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive and translated into English law by the Habitats Regulations (The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017), a competent authority must carry out an assessment of whether a plan or project will significantly affect the integrity of any European Site, in terms of impacting the site's conservation objectives.

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

This HRA Screening Report has been undertaken in order to support the Stowupland Neighbourhood Plan which is being produced by Stowupland Parish Council in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The area covered by the Plan is shown in Appendix 1.

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

This section of this Report aims to:

- Identify the European sites within 20km of Stowupland.
- Summarise the reasons for designation and Conservation Objectives for each site to be considered in this assessment.
- Screen the Stowupland Neighbourhood Plan for its potential to impact upon a European (or Natura 2000) site (N2k).
- Assess the potential for in combination effects from other projects and plans in the area.
- Identify if there are any outstanding issues that need further investigation.



4.2 Natura 2000 Sites

Natura 2000 is the centrepiece of EU nature and biodiversity policy. It is an EU wide network of nature protection areas. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

The sites are designated under the European Union (EU) Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds) and the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora).

The Birds Directive requires the establishment of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds. The Habitats Directive similarly requires Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to be designated for other species, and for habitats. Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) are also part of the Natura 2000 network. This is because all SPAs and SACs are comprised of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and all Ramsar sites in England are SSSIs. Together, SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites make up the Natura 200 network in England.

4.2.1 Explanation of SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

SPAs are areas which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within EU countries. Example: The Deben Estuary is internationally important for wintering waterfowl. Legislation: EU Birds Directive.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

SACs are areas designated to protect habitat types that are in danger of disappearance, have a small natural range, or are highly characteristic of the region; and to protect species that are endangered, vulnerable, rare, or endemic. Example: Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens for calcareous fens, *Molinia* meadows and Desmoulin's whorl snail. Legislation: EU Habitats Directive.

Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)

Ramsar Sites are designated to protect the biological and physical features of wetlands, especially for waterfowl habitats. For example, Redgrave and South Lopham Fens is an extensive example of lowland base-rich valley, remarkable for its lack of fragmentation which supports many rare and scarce invertebrates, including a population of the fen raft spider *Dolomedes plantarius*. Ramsar sites often overlap with SACs and SPAs and UK planning policy determines that they should be accorded the same importance when developments are proposed. Legislation: Ramsar Convention (1971) – Wetlands of International Importance.

4.2.2 European Sites to be considered

There are three European sites which lie within 20 km of Stowupland parish.

Table 3: European Sites within 20km of the development

SPA	SAC	Ramsar
Breckland	Waveney & Lt Ouse Valley Fens	Redgrave & South Lopham Fens

The locations and boundaries of the above sites are shown on the map in Appendix 2.

No European Sites lie within 13km of Stowupland parish, which is the largest Zone of Influence for any N2k site in Suffolk and the distance recently confirmed by Natural England as the zone of influence to identify potential recreational impacts on coastal statutory sites in Suffolk.

There are therefore no European sites to be considered to be within scope for this assessment.

4.3 Method and Approach

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

There are only two stages for Neighbourhood Plans as the CJEU ruling means that mitigation measures cannot be considered at HRA screening. The outcomes of the two stages are described in more detail in the following table. This document relates only to Stage 1 of the HRA process.

Table 4: Stages of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process for Neighbourhood Plans

Stage	Tasks	Outcome
Stage 1 HRA Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of the policies or projects • Identification of potential effects on a European site • Assessing the effects on a European site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects 	<p>Where effects are unlikely, prepare a 'finding of no significant effect' report.</p> <p>Where effects judged likely, or lack of information to prove otherwise, go to Stage 2.</p>



Stage	Tasks	Outcome
Stage 2 Revision of the plan to remove likely significant effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If impacts considered to affect qualifying features, those policies (and projects) that are likely to result in significant effects on any European site should be removed from the plan. 	<p>Approve the plan.</p> <p>If effects remain after alternative solutions been considered, the plan cannot be made.</p> <p><i>People over Wind CJEU ruling (April 2018) means that it is not possible to consider mitigation measures when screening for impacts.</i></p>

4.3.1 Stage 1: HRA Screening

The screening stage identifies if alternatives are needed because any policies or projects will have an impact on a European Site, amendments need to be made in Neighbourhood Development Plans. Table 6 identifies the different categories assigned to each policy in the plan: Category A identifies those policies or projects that may not result in a Likely Significant Effect and are considered to have No Negative Effect. Category B identifies those policies or projects that will have No Likely Significant Effect. Category C identifies those policies or projects that might have Likely Significant Effect and thus upon a European Site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Section 4 considers each policy or projects and the results of the screening exercise recorded.

Table 5: Screening categorisation

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

4.3.2 Potential impacts of Stowupland Neighbourhood Plan on Natura 2000 sites

There are a wide range of impacts and these can be summarised as -

- Land take by developments;
- Impact on protected species found within but which travel outside the protected sites may be relevant where development could result in effects on qualifying interest species



within the European site, for example through the loss of feeding grounds for an identified species.

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

In line with the HRA for Mid Suffolk District Council Core Strategy, each policy will be assessed against the criteria in the table below.

Table 6: Assessment of potential impacts

Nature of potential impact	How the Stowupland Neighbourhood Plan (alone or in combination with other plans and project) could affect a Natura 2000 site?	Why these effects are not considered significant?
Land take by development	Stowupland is outside the boundaries of any N2k sites	N/A
Impact on protected species outside the protected sites	Stowupland is outside the Zone of Influence of any N2k sites	N/A
Recreational pressure and disturbance	Stowupland is outside the Zone of Influence of any N2k sites	N/A
Water quantity and quality	Stowupland is outside the Zone of Influence of any N2k sites	N/A
Changes in pollution levels	Stowupland is outside the Zone of Influence of any N2k sites	N/A



4.4 Results from HRA Screening of Draft Neighbourhood Plan Policies

The Screening exercise explores whether there will be any Likely Significant Effect resulting from the Plan's policies. These Policies are:

- Policy SNP1: Strategy for Sustainable Growth
- Policy SNP2: Land between Church Road and Gipping Road
- Policy SNP3: Land between Church Farm Barn and Brecklands, Church Road
- Policy SNP4: Land south-east of Church Road
- Policy SNP5: Affordable housing
- Policy SNP6: Rural Exception Sites
- Policy SNP7: Settlement boundaries
- Policy SNP8: Landscape character – important gaps, views and features
- Policy SNP9: Protecting best and most versatile agricultural land
- Policy SNP10: Protecting the natural environment and biodiversity – strengthening green/blue infrastructure
- Policy SNP11: Playing fields
- Policy SNP12: Local Green Spaces
- Policy SNP13: Public Rights of Way
- Policy SNP14: Quality of development, resource efficiency and design considerations
- Policy SNP15: Retention of employment, retail and business premises
- Policy SNP16: Protection of Locally Valued Resources

Each of the policies in the Stowupland Neighbourhood Development Plan has been screened to identify whether they would have any impact on a European Site. This assessment can be found in the following table.

Table 7: Assessment of potential impacts

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the European Sites?	Recommendations
Policy SNP1 - Strategy for Sustainable Growth	Stowupland will be a location for environmentally, socially and economically sustainable growth over the twenty-year period of the Neighbourhood Development	No, Category A	No specific recommendations



Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the European Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>Plan. The plan provides for at least 203 new homes by 2036.</p> <p>The protection of the natural and historic environment, the distinctive village character and maintenance of the visual gap and separation between the built-up areas of the village and Stowmarket will take priority when determining the location of all development proposals. Important gaps shall be protected and remain undeveloped to maintain this separation, and these are identified on the Proposals Map.</p> <p>Opportunities to use previously developed land and buildings, and infill sites will be supported.</p>		
<p>Policy SNP2 – Land between Church Road and Gipping Road</p>	<p>Land is allocated for up to 175 dwellings between Church Road and Gipping Road within the extended Stowupland settlement boundary.</p> <p>Any development proposals on site SNP2 should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) exclude any built development from a strip 30m deep from the site boundary where it adjoins Church Road to respect the wide set-back from the road characteristic of development in the area; b) include a pedestrian link to Gipping Road in the north-western corner of the site to facilitate good pedestrian links to bus stops and other services and facilities in the village; c) include an equipped play area; d) include a wide margin between the northern boundary of development and Gipping Road planted as a woodland belt using native species; e) ensure that none of the dwellings in an area 50m deep from the woodland belt (required in criterion (d) above) shall have any eaves higher than ground floor wall plate level or a ‘mansard’ style roof, and otherwise exceed two storeys in height to maintain a rural undeveloped setting for the entrance and approach to Columbine Hall and the character and setting of the nearby small traditional 	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the European Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>cottages on Gipping Road;</p> <p>f) provide pedestrian and, where appropriate, cycle paths within the site connecting to the public rights of way network in the parish.</p>		
Policy SNP3 – Land between Church Farm Barn and Brecklands, Church Road	<p>Land is allocated for up to 10 dwellings on land between Crown Farm Barn and Brecklands, Church Road.</p> <p>Any development proposals on site SNP3 shall respect the edge-of-village context of and rural views from this site. Materials used on the dwellings and boundary treatments shall be taken from a palette of local traditional building materials. Landscaping of the site shall incorporate indigenous species and include hedgerows and native trees.</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
Policy SNP4 – Land south-east of Church Road	<p>Land is allocated on the south-east side of Church Road, opposite Holy Trinity Church and Freeman Primary School for up to 18 dwellings, an extension to the cemetery and car park.</p> <p>Any development proposals on site SNP4 shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide and maintain a means of preventing any car park provided with the site from being used to drop-off or pick up children from school and/or pre-school; • provide a safe means of crossing the A1120 Church Road; • ensure the provision of a new access, visibility splays and footway does not compromise the safety of pedestrians and road users, especially cyclists; and • provide advance warning and traffic calming measures to highlight the presence of the primary and pre-school. 	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
Policy SNP5 – Affordable housing	<p>Proposals for residential development of more than 10 dwellings or over 1,000sqm gross floorspace shall ensure that 35% of the homes on the site are affordable homes and that they are delivered at the same time as the market homes.</p> <p>Conditions or legal obligations will be used to</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations



Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the European Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>ensure that affordable housing is secured and retained for those in housing need. The mix, size, type and tenure of affordable homes should meet the local identified housing need.</p> <p>Where affordable housing is provided under a Section 106 agreement or similar planning obligation, the maximum proportion possible of the total units provided under Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' Allocation Scheme shall at every opportunity be allocated to people meeting the "local lettings" circumstances with a local need or connections to Stowupland. This obligation will have permanent effect unless it can be demonstrated that there is no longer any requirement for the affordable housing.</p>		
<p>Policy SNP6 – Rural Exception Sites</p>	<p>Proposals for housing on sites situated outside, but adjoining the settlement boundaries of Stowupland village and Saxham Street (as defined on the Proposals Map) will be supported where the following criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the scheme would meet an identified *local need for affordable housing that cannot be met within the settlement boundaries; • the development is small-scale (*maximum of twenty dwellings) and demonstrates, where appropriate: (i) how it addresses the relationship of the proposal to the built form, history and character of the area, (ii) the effects on any nearby heritage assets, local buildings of character, and/or trees and hedgerows, village green, playing fields and local green space, and (iii) accessibility to village services and facilities; and where it complies with the other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan; • pre-application engagement with the local community has been undertaken; • secure arrangements are made to ensure the housing need to be met will be secured by legal agreement to ensure that the need can be met in perpetuity. <p>Where it is demonstrated that a proportion of market housing is necessary to cross-</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the European Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>subsidise the specific identified housing need the market housing should be provided at the minimum level to support viability and all proposals must be accompanied by an open book viability appraisal.</p> <p>Schemes will not be supported where it is considered that the location of the proposal is too remote from village services and facilities, and/or would have a detrimental impact on the built form, historical context or character of the area, or on the environment, green space, or landscape and/or landscape features including trees and hedgerows.</p> <p>Rural exception sites may also include an element of self-build or custom-build homes.</p> <p>*Note 1: local need will be identified through eligibility criteria set out in Mid Suffolk's Choice Based Letting System.</p> <p>*Note 2: applications will be considered on their merits and the figure of 20 dwellings should be regarded as a limit and not a target.</p>		
Policy SNP7 – Settlement boundaries	<p>Within the settlement boundaries for Stowupland and Saxham Street, as defined on the Proposals Map, there is a general presumption in favour of residential development in the form of infill and redevelopment sites and small groups of up to twenty dwellings subject to proposals being well designed and meeting all relevant requirements set out in other policies in this plan and Mid Suffolk development plan documents. Proposals that include provision for self-build or custom-build plots will be encouraged.</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
Policy SNP8 – Landscape character – important gaps, views and features	<p>Development proposals will be supported where:</p> <p>i. they do not have a detrimental impact on the rural setting of the village and the visual qualities of the upland landscape are protected;</p> <p>ii. the separate identity of Stowupland as a village is retained and coalescence with</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations



Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the European Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>Stowmarket is prevented;</p> <p>iii. the separate character of the main village and Saxham Street is maintained and coalescence between the two areas is prevented;</p> <p>iv. the plateau-edge open character of the parish (characterised by the open spaces, important gaps, wide verges, trees and hedgerows and key views out from points identified on the Proposals Map) are maintained.</p> <p>Key views to the wider landscape at the points identified on the Proposals Map are of particular importance in protecting the rural setting and maintaining the distinctive local character and qualities of the parish.</p>		
<p>Policy SNP9: Protecting best and most versatile agricultural land</p>	<p>Proposals for development on sites of 0.5ha or more affecting the best and most versatile agricultural land in the parish will not be supported to protect opportunities for food production and the continuance of the agricultural economy.</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>
<p>Policy SNP10: Protecting the natural environment and biodiversity – strengthening green/blue infrastructure</p>	<p>All proposals for development will be expected to retain features of biodiversity value, especially ponds, ditches, streams, trees and hedgerows, and green verges/margins.</p> <p>Where loss or damage is unavoidable e.g. where a new access is created, the development shall provide for appropriate replacement planting using native species together with a method statement for ongoing care and maintenance of that new/replacement planting, and new green or blue infrastructure features as appropriate.</p> <p>The creation of ponds, attenuation features, landscape planting and related management plan/method statements should reflect the characteristics of the locality and use indigenous species only. Where opportunities exist, new development must link with existing features to provide and promote ecological areas and restore wildlife “corridors”, and shall involve creating new/additional wildlife habitats.</p>	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the European Sites?	Recommendations
Policy SNP11: Playing fields	<p>The school and parish playing fields identified on the Proposals Map are designated for sport and recreation use. This land and the land and buildings associated with it shall not be built on unless the criteria set out in NPPF paragraph 74 are complied with in full, and the location of any alternative provision is centrally located and accessible to all.</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
Policy SNP12: Local Green Spaces	<p>Local Green Spaces are designated at the village green and an area of land to the east of the village known as the meadow (or Thradstones Meadow) as shown on the Proposals Map. Local Green Spaces shall not be built on or developed for other uses unless *very special circumstances are demonstrated.</p> <p>Development proposals adjacent to and/or affecting the historic setting, visual qualities, biodiversity and character of Local Green Spaces must demonstrate how the distinctive and valued qualities of the LGS have been considered, and should respond positively to the character and context of the LGS to preserve and enhance the quality of the LGS and its setting.</p> <p>*Very special circumstances will include proposals for alternative uses or small scale development for community interest only that come forward through a new or revised Neighbourhood Plan, Local Development Order, Community Right to Build Order or other similar locally-led mechanism, following local consultation.</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
Policy SNP13: Public Rights of Way	<p>Existing Public Rights of Way in the parish will be protected. Where re-routing is essential to accommodate sustainable development any loss of amenity value will be minimised.</p> <p>Opportunities will be sought to enhance the network of Public Rights of Way through the creation of new links, improved maintenance and waymarking, and making use of developer contributions, agricultural schemes and local partnership initiatives.</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations



Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the European Sites?	Recommendations
<p>Policy SNP14: Quality of development, resource efficiency and design considerations</p>	<p>All new development must meet the highest standards of design that respect the character, scale, form, height, proportions, density and massing, materials context and setting of buildings in the parish, demonstrate resource efficient design, and shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) respond positively to the key features, character and local context to maintain and enhance the community and its environment; b) not adversely affect the distinctive character around The Green, and the setting of and context for the listed buildings, heritage assets and their settings in the parish; c) enhance and protect the landscape and significant landscape features, and not involve the loss of locally important open, green or landscaped areas, including verges, trees, hedgerows, woodlands, orchards, and remnants of estate parkland, and night time dark skies that make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of Stowupland; d) provide access for all through the provision or enhancement of pedestrian and cycle links and routes that are attractive, safe and uncluttered, particularly to bus stops, the schools, and community facilities (including local shops); e) include parking spaces/facilities that are well integrated as part of the overall design; f) if appropriate to the scale of development, provide open space and green and blue infrastructure that connects, where possible, with existing green infrastructure; g) include measures to promote environmental sustainability and high levels of resource efficiency, including design and construction methods, passive design principles (e.g. site layout and building orientation designed to minimise energy demand through maximising natural light, solar gain and natural ventilation), energy and water efficiency measures (such as rain-water harvesting or rain water collection/recycling), low impact CO2 building materials; and other 	<p>No, Category A</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the European Sites?	Recommendations
	<p>environmentally sustainable initiatives that may come forward during the plan period;</p> <p>h) provide compost bins in addition to standard refuse requirements;</p> <p>i) ensure all lighting meets optimum levels of energy efficiency; and</p> <p>j) protect the amenity of existing and future residents, particularly with regard to privacy, overlooking, security, noise disturbance and pollution (including light pollution).</p> <p>For housing development within Stowupland the maintenance of local character has a higher significance than achieving a maximum housing density figure. The appropriate density for residential development should in every case result in a development that is in character with the village and respects the simple Suffolk style of domestic architecture in the parish.</p> <p>Proposals for residential development shall demonstrate how Building For Life 12 has been used to assess the scheme and identify what has not accorded to that document and justify why not.</p>		
Policy SNP15: Retention of employment, retail and business premises	<p>Proposals to change the use and/or redevelop existing employment uses, shops and other local businesses (e.g. car repairs, pubs) will be supported where the proposal continues to provide, extends or enhances employment uses, and/or local businesses/services.</p> <p>Proposals for new employment uses, either through new building or changes of use, will be supported where they are small-scale, appropriate in scale and appearance with their surroundings and where they do not affect residential amenity (including car parking and access arrangements).</p> <p>All proposals for new or extended employment uses, shops and other businesses should provide car parking on site in accordance with adopted standards.</p>	No, Category A	No specific recommendations
Policy SNP16: Protection of Locally Valued	Proposals that will result in the loss of Locally Valued Resources (as defined in Table 4) which support the local community (or	No, Category A	No specific recommendations

Policy Number	Policy Wording	Will Policy have Likely Significant Effects on the European Sites?	Recommendations
Resources	<p>premises last used for such purposes) will not be supported unless:</p> <p>a. it can be demonstrated that the current use is not economically viable nor likely to become viable. Where appropriate, supporting financial evidence should be provided including any efforts to advertise the premises for sale for a minimum of 12 months; and</p> <p>b. it can be demonstrated that there is no local demand for the use and that the building/site is not needed for any alternative social, community or leisure use; or</p> <p>c. alternative facilities and services are available, or replacement provision is made, of at least equivalent standard, in a location that is accessible to the community it serves with good access by public transport or by cycling or walking.</p> <p>The list of Locally Valued Resources is shown in Table 4 and will be reviewed regularly by the Parish Council.</p>		

Each of the site allocations identified for residential development in the Stowupland Neighbourhood Plan Pre-Submission Document have no potential for impacts on any N2k sites.

4.4.3 Recommendations

There are no recommendations for the site allocation policies in this draft Neighbourhood Plan as they have all been assigned to Category A. There will therefore be no need for any development subsequently coming forward to be subject to a project level HRA and secure sufficient mitigation measures, to avoid a Likely Significant Effect on any N2k sites. As such there is no requirement to progress to Appropriate Assessment.

The in-combination effects from other plans and projects are considered in the following section.

4.5 Other Plans and Projects – In-combination Effects

There are no relevant Plan level HRAs that have been carried out by Babergh & Mid Suffolk DCs or other organisations and none have been found to have a likely significant effect on the European sites being assessed.

In the context of this HRA, the relevant other plans to be considered are listed below in combination with Stowupland Neighbourhood Plan HRA.

Table 8: Other plans or projects considered for in combination effects

Statutory Body	Title of HRA or Project	Findings of HRA or Project	Potential for in combination effects
Mid Suffolk District Council	Core Strategy Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appropriate Assessment) October 2007)	The HRA found no likely significant effects from the Plan on the Breckland SAC/SPA and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC.	It is considered that in combination likely significant effects are not predicted.
St Edmundsbury Borough Council	Core Strategy HRA screening (2010)	The HRA found no potential for in combination effects as no other current plans or projects that are likely to lead to significant effects on the Breckland SAC/SPA or the Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC have been identified, or where impacts have been identified they have been adequately mitigated.	It is considered that in combination likely significant effects are not predicted.
Babergh District Council	Habitat Regulations Assessment of Core Strategy 2011	The Core Strategy aims to minimise impacts on the Orwell and Stour estuaries, a European-designated site which supports species that are susceptible to disturbance. The principal potential impact on the European sites as a result of development proposed under the Core Strategy relates to increased recreational pressure. The Strategy therefore sets out a series of measures to ensure that the policies will not have a significant effect on the European sites.	It is considered that in combination likely significant effects are not predicted.



Statutory Body	Title of HRA or Project	Findings of HRA or Project	Potential for in combination effects
Suffolk Coastal District Council	Suffolk Coastal Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document HRA (2011)	N/A	It is considered that in combination likely significant effects are not predicted.

Due to the Parish of Stowupland lying outside the Impact Risk Zone for any N2k sites, this HRA screening concludes that it is possible to rule out likely significant effects. There is therefore no need for an Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

References

- Atkins (2011) Habitats Regulations Assessment for Babergh District Council Core Strategy
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appropriate Assessment) for Mid Suffolk District Council Core Strategy(2007)
- Atkins (2010) St. Edmundsbury Borough Council Core Strategy HRA screening
- Babergh District Council (2014) Local Plan Core Strategy and Policies
- Stowupland Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2036 Pre-Submission Draft Plan (May 2018)
- Natural England Conservation objectives for European Sites: East of England Website
- The Landscape Partnership (2011) Suffolk Coastal District Council Habitats Regulations Assessment for Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document



5. Conclusions

5.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

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

The Neighbourhood Development Plan allocates land for development purposes to the tune of 203 dwellings spread over three sites. Typically this would result in a Neighbourhood Development Plan having to adhere to the formal requirements of the SEA Directive in so far as there would have been no consideration of effects and their significance in order to justify their allocation in light of all reasonable alternatives. This would normally be the case due to the Plan's scheduled progression ahead of that of the Local Plan and therefore any reliance on the Local Plan's Sustainability Appraisal not being applicable until the Local Plan is found sound.

Despite this, there should be strong consideration of the fact that the Plan's allocations all have full planning permission. This means that their development would be forthcoming with or without their status as allocations within the Plan. As such the principle of the eventual development of the Plan's allocations is already established and beyond the influence of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. Additionally, any significant effects on the environment resulting from these proposals would have already been identified at the planning application stage and mitigated as part their determination in compliance with LPA and national policy requirements. For this reason it has been determined that the allocation of these sites would not warrant the full application of the SEA Directive in the form of a SEA Environmental Report.

As such, the content of the Stowupland Neighbourhood Plan has therefore been **screened out** for its requirement of Strategic Environmental Assessment in line with the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC.

5.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Subject to Natural England's review, this HRA screening report indicates that the Stowupland Neighbourhood Plan is not predicted to have any likely significant effects on a N2k site. The requirement for the Plan to undertake further assessment under the Habitats Regulations 2017 is therefore **screened out**.

Appendix 1

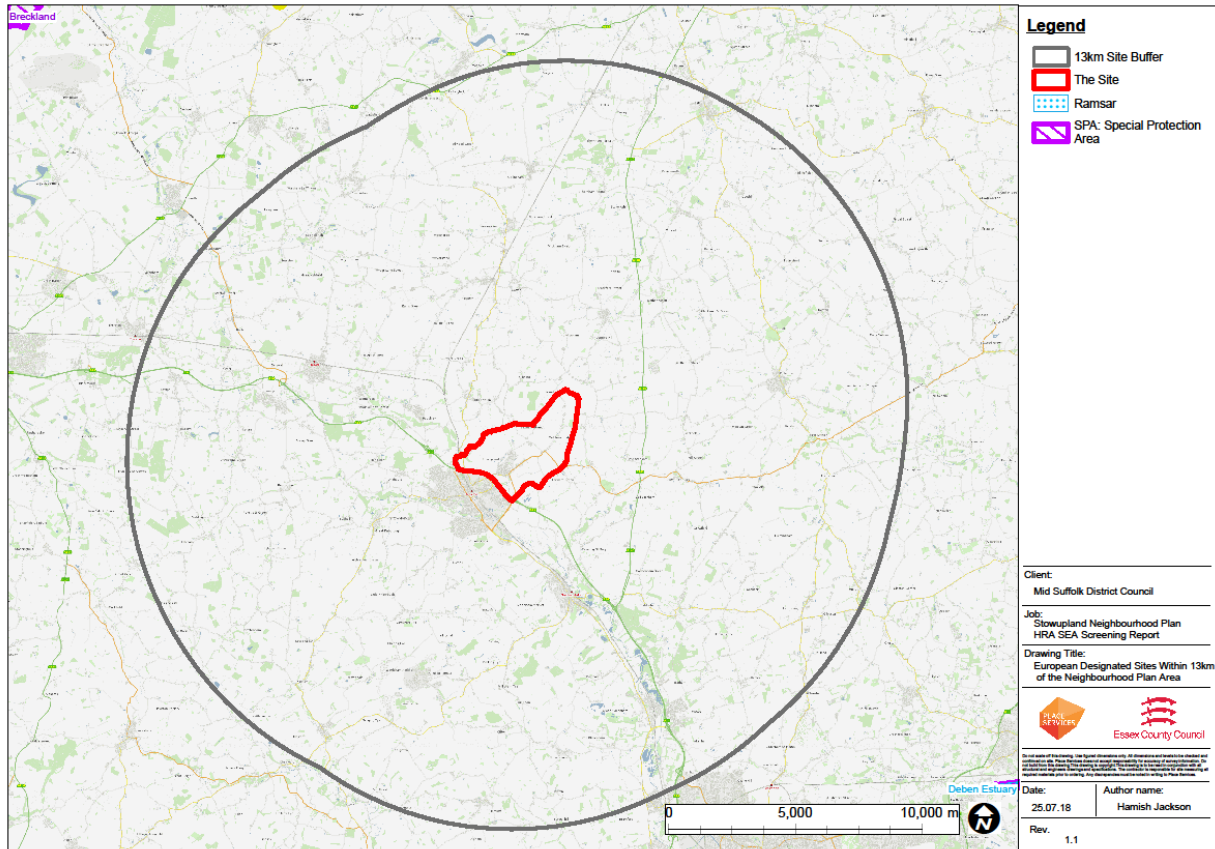
The Neighbourhood Plan area for Stowupland



Source: Mid Suffolk District Council, 2015

Appendix 2

Stowupland Parish and Locations of the European (Natura 2000) sites within 13km



Source: Place Services, 2018



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