

Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement

December 2024

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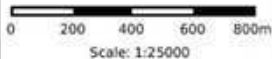
1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement has been prepared on behalf of Grafton Underwood Parish Council by Planit-X Town and Country Planning Services in relation to the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan (Draft Pre-Submission May 2024) (1st Draft (Regulation 14) Consultation, June – July 2024).
- 1.2 The purpose of the Screening Statement is to set out a screening opinion in relation to whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process is required to accompany the development of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan. The Screening Statement is to be provided to the statutory consultation bodies for SEA (Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England) for their opinion.
- 1.3 SEA is a systematic process undertaken to evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of plans. The requirement for SEA in England was introduced in 2004 through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulation 2004 ('The SEA Regulations'), which transposed the European SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).¹
- 1.4 One of the 'Basic Conditions' that a neighbourhood plan is tested against is whether the making of the neighbourhood plan is compatible with European Union obligations, including obligations under the SEA Directive. Neighbourhood plans only require SEA where they are likely to lead to significant environmental effects. To decide whether a proposed Neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it should be screened against the criteria set out in Annex 2 of the SEA Directive. Where it is determined that the Neighbourhood plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require SEA), a statement of reasons for this determination should be prepared and published for consultation with the statutory consultation bodies (Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England). Where a Neighbourhood plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment an SEA process must be carried out.
- 1.5 This Screening Statement therefore provides a screening opinion as to whether or not the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan is likely to

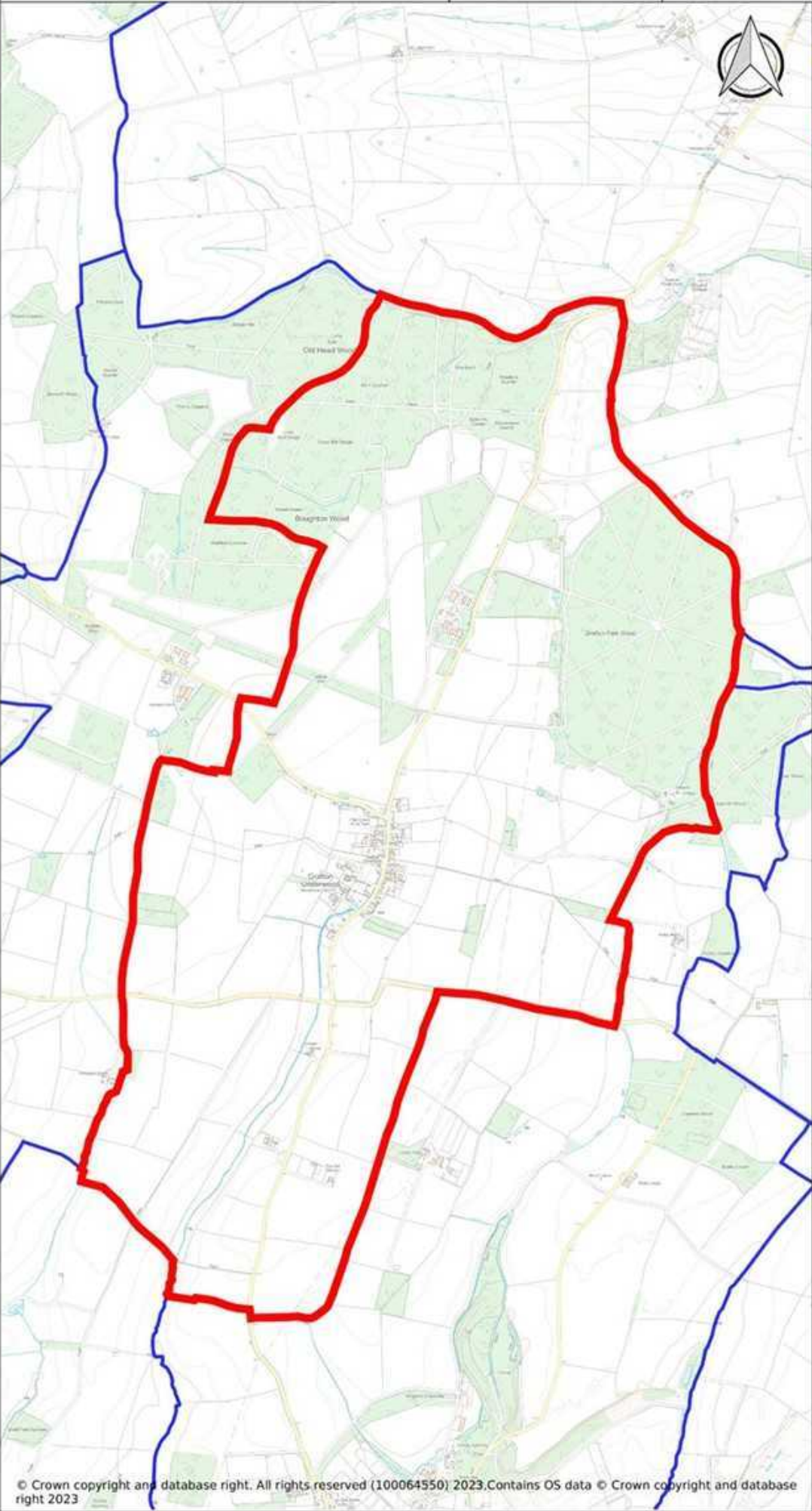
¹ The UK left the EU on 31st January 2020. Under the UK-EU withdrawal agreement, a transition period ended on 31st December 2020, during which time all EU law continued to apply to the UK. During the transition period the UK needed to continue following domestic law that implements EU law, or directly applicable EU law that is given effect through the EUWA 2018. Beyond the transition period, the SEA Regulations, which previously implemented the requirements of the SEA Directive in England, will continue to apply as before unless and until new legislation is introduced.



lead to significant environment effects, and as such requires a SEA process.



Author: R. Cole
Date: 23/04/2023



- Parish**
-  Neighbourhood Plan Area
 - 



2. Details of the Neighbourhood Plan

Title of the plan:

- 2.1 Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2041.

Name of Qualifying Body and Local Planning Authority:

- 2.2 The qualifying body preparing the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan is Grafton Underwood Parish Council. The Local Planning Authority is North Northamptonshire Council.
- 2.3 From 1 April 2021, North Northamptonshire Council became the single unitary council responsible for providing a range of public services to residents and businesses in the areas of Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough. It has replaced Corby Borough Council, East Northamptonshire Council, Kettering Borough Council and the Borough Council of Wellingborough, and now delivers all the services which were previously provided by these councils.

Grafton Underwood Parish Neighbourhood Plan contact point:

Parish Clerk
Rosedale.
Old Kettering Road
Twywell
Kettering
NN14 3AL

Email: clerkgupc@gmail.com

Location and spatial extent of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan:

- 2.4 The Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan covers the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Area, comprising the parish of Grafton Underwood which is located within North Northamptonshire. The parish is a rural area (737 hectares) with a population of 130 and 60 homes (2021 Census). The only settlement is Grafton Underwood village located centrally within the Neighbourhood Area. It has developed as an estate village associated with the Duke of Buccleugh's Estate of Boughton.
- 2.5 One of the key features of the village is the Alledge Brook. The village has been formed along its course producing a linear settlement pattern. The main street runs through its centre, along the eastern edge of the Alledge Brook, with most development laid out either side of the Brook. Grafton

Underwood only has very limited services and facilities comprising the church, village hall and a public house. There is no bus service.

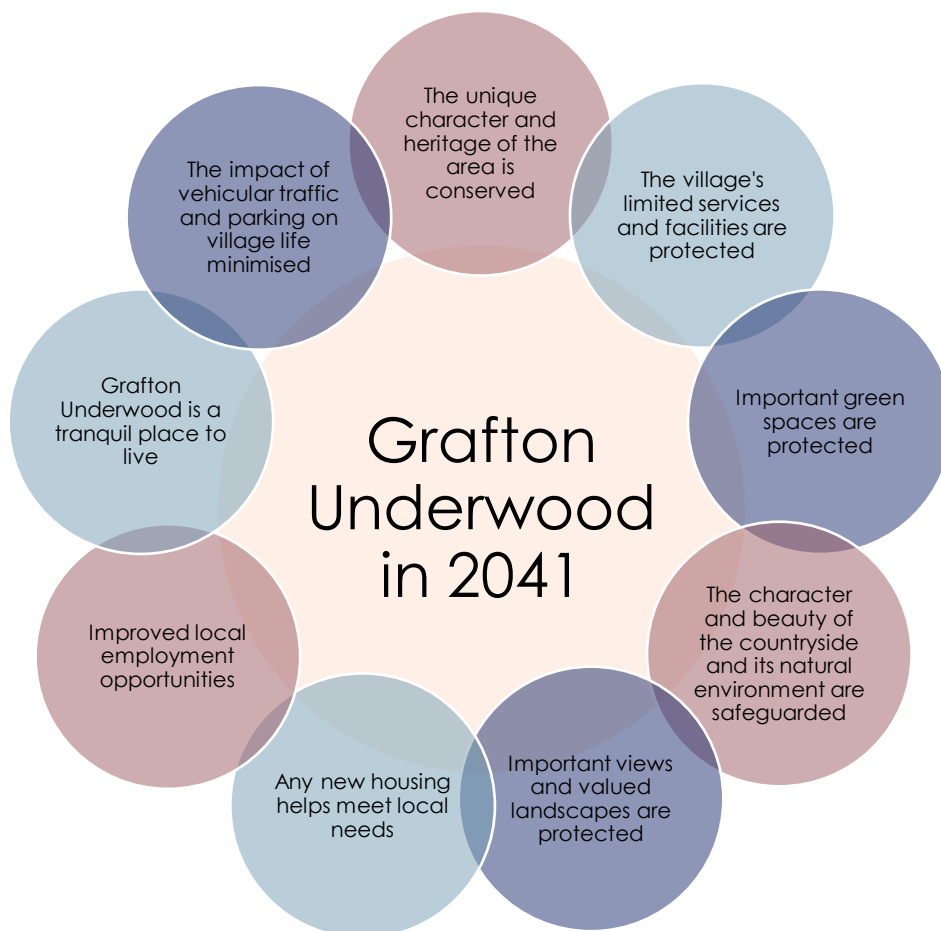
- 2.6 The parish is also within the area of the former Rockingham Forest and includes a former Second World War airbase and runway.

Timeframe of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan:

- 2.7 2022 to 2041.

Main aims of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan:

- 2.8 The following vision statement for the Plan makes it clear what the Plan is aiming to achieve:



Relationship with the Local Plan:

- 2.9 The Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in the context of the North Northamptonshire Development Plan. For the purposes of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan, the relevant



parts are the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 (Adopted July 2016) and the Kettering Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan 2011-2031 (Adopted December 2021).

- 2.10 The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) was adopted in July 2016. It is the overall strategic plan for North Northamptonshire setting out the spatial strategy. Kettering is the focus for the majority of growth. Development is also supported in the Market Towns of Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell where it would support regeneration and local services.
- 2.11 The Kettering Site Specific Part 2(SSP2) Local Plan develops in more detail the strategy outlined in the JCS and identifies sites for uses such as housing, employment and open space. It also contains development management policies which will be used to assess planning applications over the plan period. The SSP2 Local Plan defines the Settlement Boundary for Grafton Underwood and identifies Grafton Underwood as a 'Category B Village', a location where very limited within the settlement boundary is supported.
- 2.12 A parallel process of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) was undertaken alongside the plan-making process for these two documents.
- 2.13 Work has started on the North Northamptonshire Local Plan Review, to take into account changes since 2016 and extend the plan period to 2041. The Plan will cover both strategic and non-strategic matters. An initial consultation on its scope and issues was undertaken in March 2022. The Local Plan is due to be sent to the Secretary State for examination in 2024 and its adoption is anticipated for 2026.

Will the Grafton Underwood Parish Neighbourhood Plan propose allocations? And if so, will these be over and above those likely to be included in the Local Plan?

- 2.14 The Joint Core Strategy housing requirement for Kettering Borough equates to 10,400 dwellings (520 dwellings per year) over the period 2011-2031. Of this requirement, 480 dwellings are to be provided in the rural area over the plan period. The Kettering Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan demonstrates overall that through allocations and a windfall allowance, sufficient land will be provided to exceed the rural housing requirement. Grafton Underwood is not a suitable place for large scale housing development and the JCS requires the scale of housing growth in Grafton Underwood to be led by locally identified housing needs taking account of the general form and character of the village. There is no specific housing requirement identified for Grafton Underwood.



- 2.15 Furthermore, results from a village wide consultation identified only very limited support for new housing development in Grafton Underwood. There was however some support for the conversion of rural buildings as a means to meet local housing needs. Therefore, there are no proposed housing allocations in the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan.

What are the key environmental assets (including 'sensitive areas') near the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Area?

'Sensitive areas'

- 2.16 A key determinant of whether effects are likely to be significant is the sensitivity of the asset affected. In this context, the more environmentally sensitive a location, the more likely it is that potential environmental effects from a plan will be significant.
- 2.17 National Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on this topic through providing a list of sites and areas which should be deemed as 'sensitive areas' for the purposes of environmental assessment. These comprise:
- Natura 2000 site;
 - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
 - National Parks;
 - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
 - World Heritage Sites; and
 - Scheduled Monuments.
- 2.18 In the context of the categories of 'sensitive areas' described by the Planning Practice Guidance, the following sites and areas exist within or near the Neighbourhood Area.

Natura 2000 sites

Within the Neighbourhood Area:

- 2.19 There are no Special Protection Areas or Special Areas of Conservation present within the Neighbourhood Area.

Within 10km of the Neighbourhood Area

- 2.20 The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA) is located approximately 5.5km to the east of the Parish Neighbourhood Area. The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area/Ramsar site was formally classified by the UK government in 2011. It covers 1,358 hectares across four local authority areas namely. It is a composite site comprising



20 separate blocks of land and water fragmented by roads and other features and located adjacent and / or close to urban areas.

- 2.21 The SPA is legally protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (Habitat Regulations) for several reasons. Specifically, it is a wetland of International Importance used regularly by more than 20,000 water birds and by 2.3% of the UK Golden Plover population. Key threats to the SPA are recreational disturbance to water birds, and poorly designed or located development.
- 2.22 All SPA's are also notified as SSSIs, being sites that are of specific biological or geological features.
- 2.23 There are no Special Areas of Conservation present within 10km of the Neighbourhood Area. The nearest SACs are the Orton Pit SAC 25km to the north east of the Neighbourhood Area and Fenland SAC 28km to the east of the Neighbourhood Area.

SSSIs

Within the Neighbourhood Area

- 2.24 There are no SSSIs within the Neighbourhood Area.

Within 5km of Neighbourhood Area

Cranford St John

- 2.25 This site has been identified as being of national importance in geological terms. It is a key site for studying middle Jurassic strata and their environments of deposition. Illustrates their transitional nature between those seen to the north and south. The White Limestone Formation is in part very fossiliferous and also contains a regionally developed ancient erosion surface. Comprises 2 units.

- 2.26 Condition: Favourable

- 2.27 1.5km to the south of the Neighbourhood Area.

Twywell Gullet

- 2.28 This SSSI is one of the few remaining worked out ironstone quarries in Northamptonshire. The whole area has become vegetated over and presents a range of habitats, from extensive limestone grassland on the slopes and spoil heaps to a series of ponds and scrub in the bottom of the cutting. The grassland is generally species-rich and the well vegetated ponds add to the habitats available for rich invertebrate fauna. Species include notable beetles, soldier fly and dragonfly as well as butterfly and moths. Comprises 1 unit.

- 2.29 Condition: Unfavourable - Declining

- 2.30 2.05km to the south east of the Neighbourhood Area.



Geddington Chase

2.31 Geddington Chase is the third largest extant ancient woodland in Northamptonshire and was formerly part of the Royal Forest of Rockingham. This SSSI defines the biggest discrete block of remaining semi-natural broadleaved woodland. The site is a good example of the wet ash-maple woods, a type which has significantly declined. The ground flora is diverse and the whole complex supports a wide range of common birds and insects. Comprises 1 unit.

2.32 Condition: Unfavourable – recovering.

2.33 2.4km to the north- west of the Neighbourhood Area.

River Ise and Meadows

2.34 A good example of a lowland river on clay fed by base-rich water. The channel displays a variety of semi-natural features increasingly uncommon in areas of intensive agriculture. Species rich, including woodland, mature trees, semi-grassland, flood meadow, aquatic plants, invertebrates and birds. Comprises 3 units.

2.35 Condition: 1 unit is identified as unfavourable, and 2 units are recorded as unfavourable – No change and recovering.

2.36 3.5km to the west of the Neighbourhood Area.

Southfield Farm Marsh

2.37 The largest known area of long-established tall grass washland in Northamptonshire. Includes base-rich and floristically diverse mire developed on silty peats and watered by calcareous spring-flows. Supports a specialised and uncommon invertebrate fauna. Comprises 5 units.

2.38 Condition: 1 units has been destroyed, 1 unit is favourable and 3 units are unfavourable – recovering.

2.39 3.7km to the south west of the Neighbourhood Area.

Sudborough Green Lodge Meadows

2.40 Two adjacent hay meadows on gently undulating boulder clay, the larger of which is agriculturally unimproved with extensive medieval ridge and furrow. The upright brome community is of considerable scientific interest since it is believed to be restricted to very few localities in the East Midlands. Comprises 1 unit.

2.41 Condition: Favourable – No identified condition threat.

2.42 3.7km to the north east of the Neighbourhood Area.



National Parks

Within the Neighbourhood Area

2.43 None.

Near the Neighbourhood Area

2.44 None – the closest National Park is the Peak District National Park (located approximately 99km to the north west of the Parish).

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Within the Neighbourhood Area

2.45 None.

Near the Neighbourhood Area

2.46 None- the closest is the Chilterns AONB (located 49km to the south of the Parish).

World Heritage Sites

Within the Neighbourhood Area

2.47 None.

Near the Neighbourhood Area

2.48 None- the closest site is the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site (located approximately 78km to the north west of the Parish).

Scheduled Monuments

Within the Neighbourhood Area

2.49 There are no Scheduled Monuments within the Neighbourhood Area.

Near the Neighbourhood Area

Slipton Lodge moated site

2.50 This moated site lies to the north west of Slipton Lodge and is now considered to be the site of the medieval park keeper's lodge, although it was previously thought to have been the site of a nunnery. The moat area is of trapezoidal shape, with an east ditch approximately 85m long, a west ditch of 47m, and north and south ditches about 120m in length. The moat island contains slightly raised rectangular areas, suggesting the location of former buildings.

2.51 Distance from Neighbourhood Area – 1km to the east of the Neighbourhood Area boundary.

Geddington Cross: Eleanor cross and conduit house

2.52 Of the 12 Eleanor crosses erected at the end of the 13th century only three still stand. Geddington Cross is the best preserved of these, and in its architectural and sculptural detail is a rare and well documented example of late 13th century stone carving of the highest quality. It is also unusual in its incorporation of a public water supply within a royal memorial. The



standing stone cross was erected at the end of the 13th century in memory of Eleanor of Castile, wife of Edward I.

- 2.53 Distance from Neighbourhood Area – 2.4km to the north west of the Neighbourhood Area boundary.

Geddington Bridge

- 2.54 Built in 1250 and comprises five arches.

- 2.55 Distance from Neighbourhood Area – 2.4km to the north west of the Neighbourhood Area boundary.

Barton Seagrave moats, fishponds and shrunken medieval village remains

- 2.56 The site includes two moated enclosures linked by a water channel and associated fishponds and water channels. To the north east of one of the moats lies part of the remains of the shrunken medieval village of Barton Seagrave.

- 2.57 Distance from the Neighbourhood Area – 2.8km to the south west of the Neighbourhood Area boundary.

A late 16th century house, gardens and dovecote, 300m west of Mill Farm

- 2.58 It includes the earthwork and buried remains of a late 16th century house and gardens and a dovecote which is Listed Grade I. To the north, east and south of the house site are a series of neatly cut, regular terraces and platforms which are considered to represent part of the formal gardens laid out around the house.

- 2.59 Distance from the Neighbourhood Area – 3.2km to the north west of the Neighbourhood Area boundary.

Medieval settlement remains at Woodford

- 2.60 The scheduled area includes the settlement remains of an abandoned part of the medieval village of Woodford, including house platforms and boundary banks.

- 2.61 Distance from the Neighbourhood Area – 4.4km to the south east of the Neighbourhood Area boundary.

Remains of manor house and garden

- 2.62 No further information available.

- 2.63 Distance from the Neighbourhood Area – 4.5km to the south east of the Neighbourhood Area boundary.

Three Hills round barrows

- 2.64 The monument consists of three Bronze Age bowl barrows which are contiguous and situated in a line on a NNW to SSE orientation.



- 2.65 Distance from the Neighbourhood Area – 4.6km to the south east of the Neighbourhood Area boundary.

Other key environmental assets

- 2.66 Other designated environmental assets located within the Neighbourhood Area (i.e. those which are not defined as 'sensitive areas' as defined by the Planning Practice Guidance) include as follows:

Historic Park and Gardens

- 2.67 There are no Historic Parks or Gardens located within Grafton Underwood Parish. Outside of the Parish, Boughton House (Grade I) is in close proximity to the west (480m) and Drayton House (Grade I), to the east (1.8km).

Battlefields

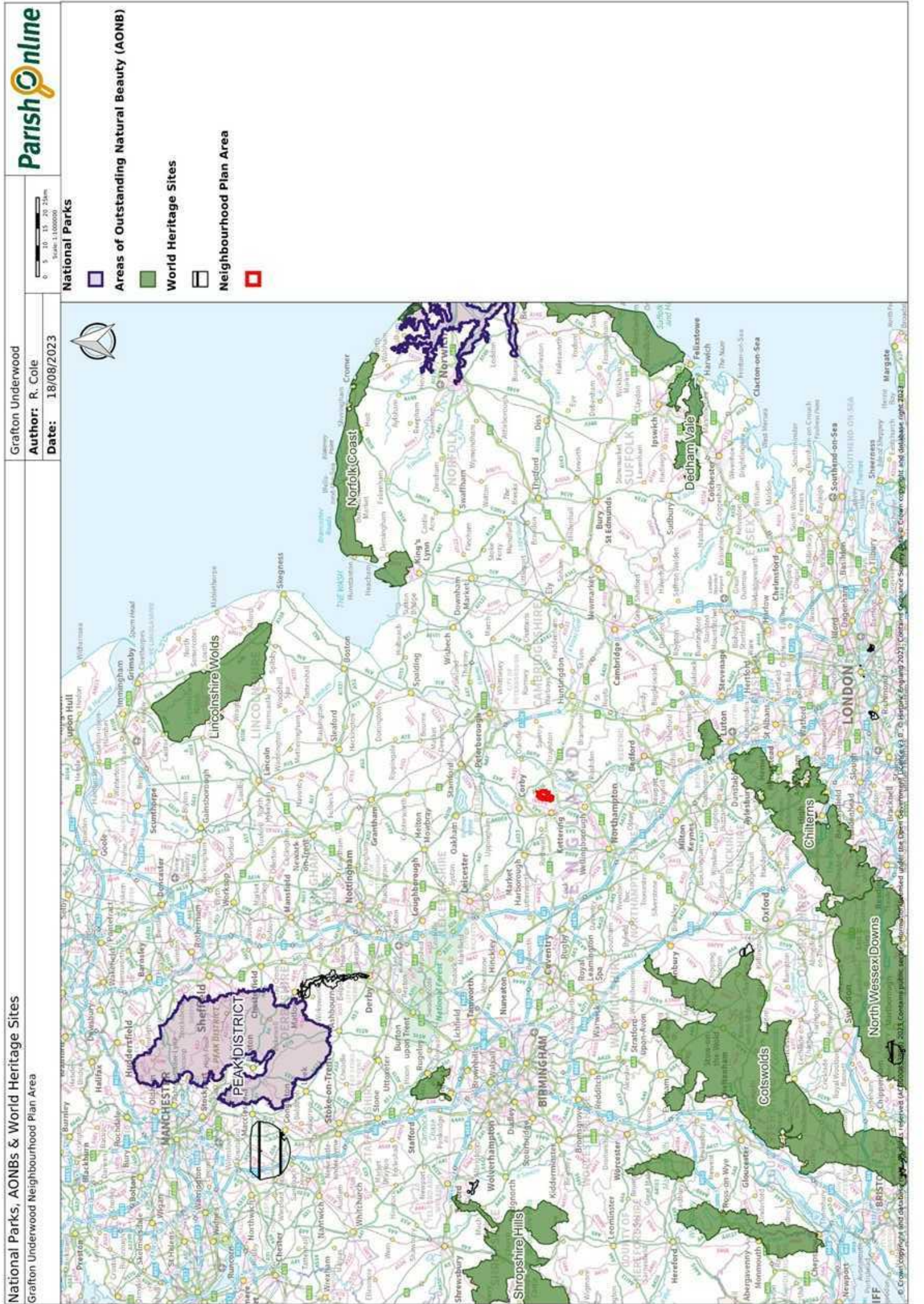
- 2.68 There are no Battlefields within the Neighbourhood Area. The nearest is the Battle of Naseby Field 1645, 21km to the west of the Neighbourhood Area.

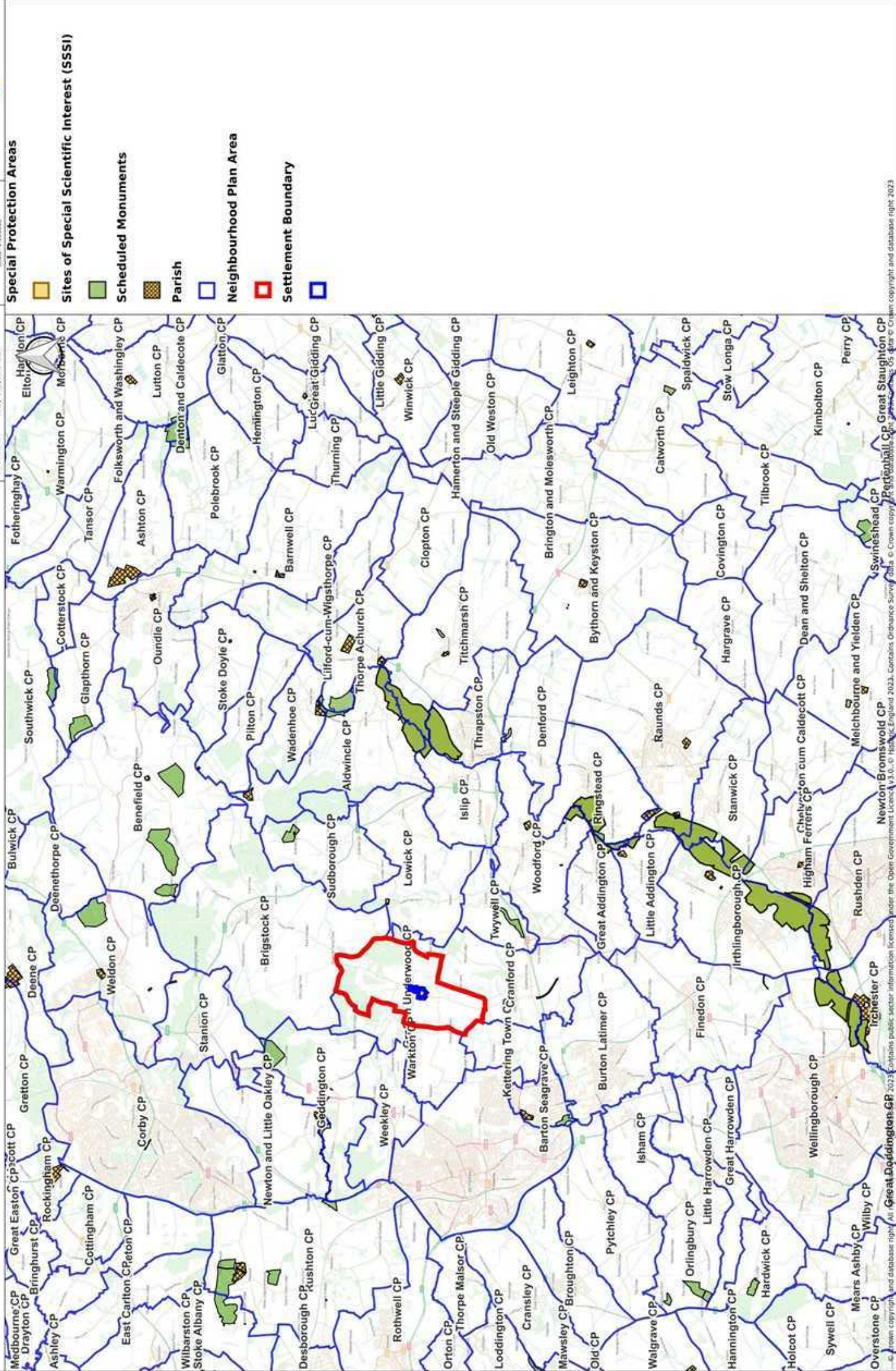
Conservation Areas

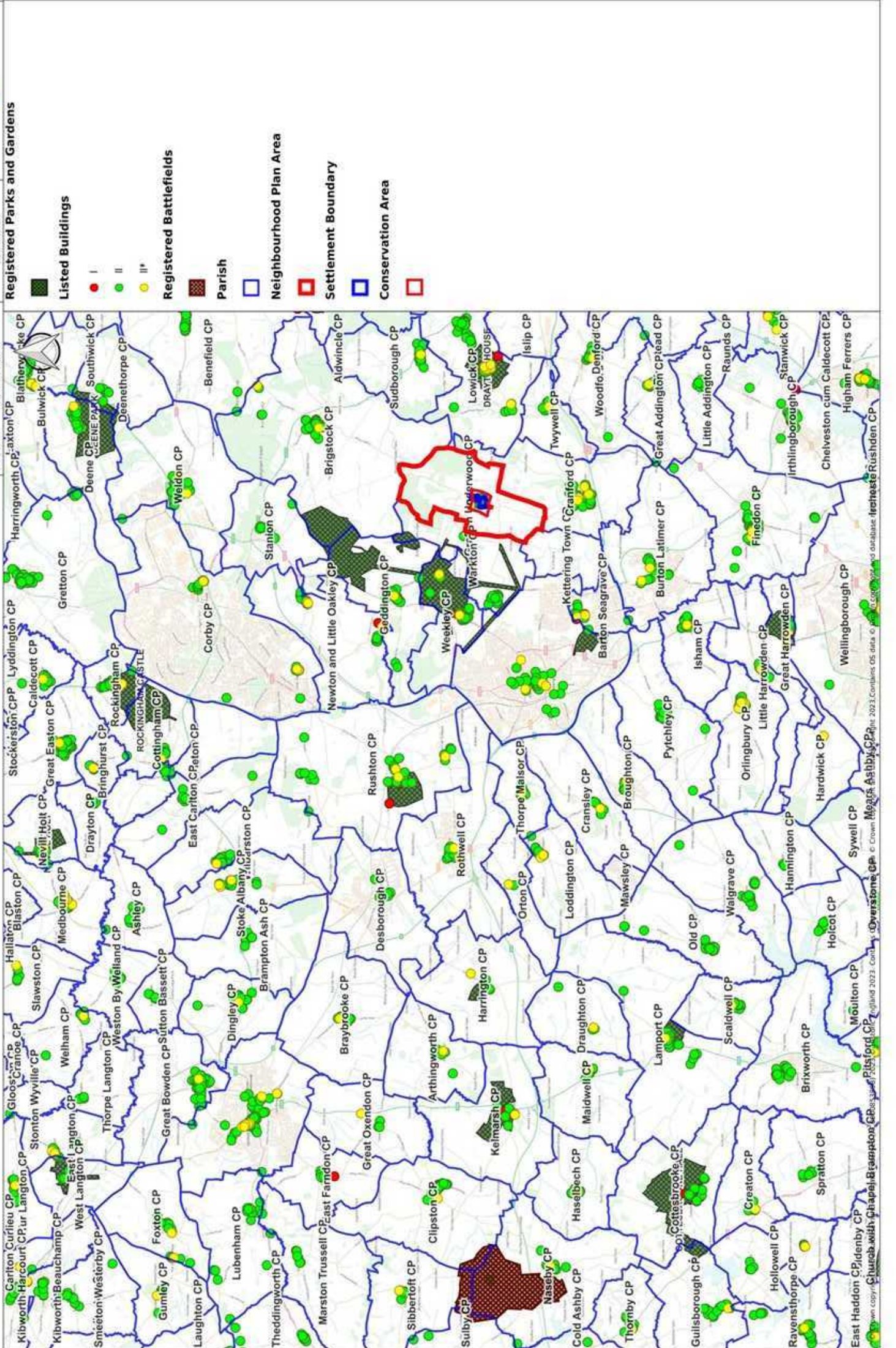
- 2.69 There is one Conservation Areas within Grafton Underwood Parish. Grafton Underwood Conservation Area was designated by Kettering Borough Council in 1977 and subsequently reviewed in 2007.

Listed Buildings

- 2.70 There are over 27 Listed Buildings in Parish listed by Historic England for their special architectural or historic interest. They include the Church of St. James, a Grade I Listed Building. The remaining are Grade II.









3. Legislative Background

- 3.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC which was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. Detailed Guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM 2005).
- 3.2 Schedule 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 makes provision in relation to the Habitats Directive. The Directive requires that any plan or project, likely to have a significant effect on a European site, must be subject to an appropriate assessment. To achieve this, paragraph 1 prescribes a basic condition that the making of a neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site. Paragraphs 2 to 5 of the Schedule amend the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 so as to apply its provisions to neighbourhood development orders and neighbourhood plans. In particular, paragraph 4 inserts new regulation 78A which provides that a neighbourhood development order may not grant planning permission for development which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site.
- 3.3 Schedule 3 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 makes provision in relation to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive. The Directive requires that EIA development must be subject to a development consent process. To enable this, Schedule 3 prescribes a basic condition that applies where development which is the subject of a proposal for a neighbourhood development order is of a type caught by the EIA Directive, and applies the relevant provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011(3) ("the EIA Regulations") with appropriate modifications (regulation 33 and paragraphs 1 to 4 and 6 of Schedule 3). Paragraphs 5 and 7 to 13 of Schedule 3 correct errors in the EIA Regulations.
- 3.4 It may be appropriate, and in some cases a requirement, that the statutory environmental bodies of Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England be consulted, for example, a draft neighbourhood plan proposal must be assessed to determine whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects.
- 3.5 There is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood plan to have a sustainability appraisal as set out in section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. However, a qualifying body must demonstrate how its plan or order will contribute to achieving sustainable development.



- 3.6 This report focuses on screening for SEA and the criteria for establishing whether a full assessment is needed considering the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment undertaken for the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 and the Sustainability Appraisal Report (2019) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (May 2020) undertaken of the Kettering Site Specific Part 2 (SSP2).



4. Criteria for Assessing the Effects of Neighbourhood Plans (the 'plan')

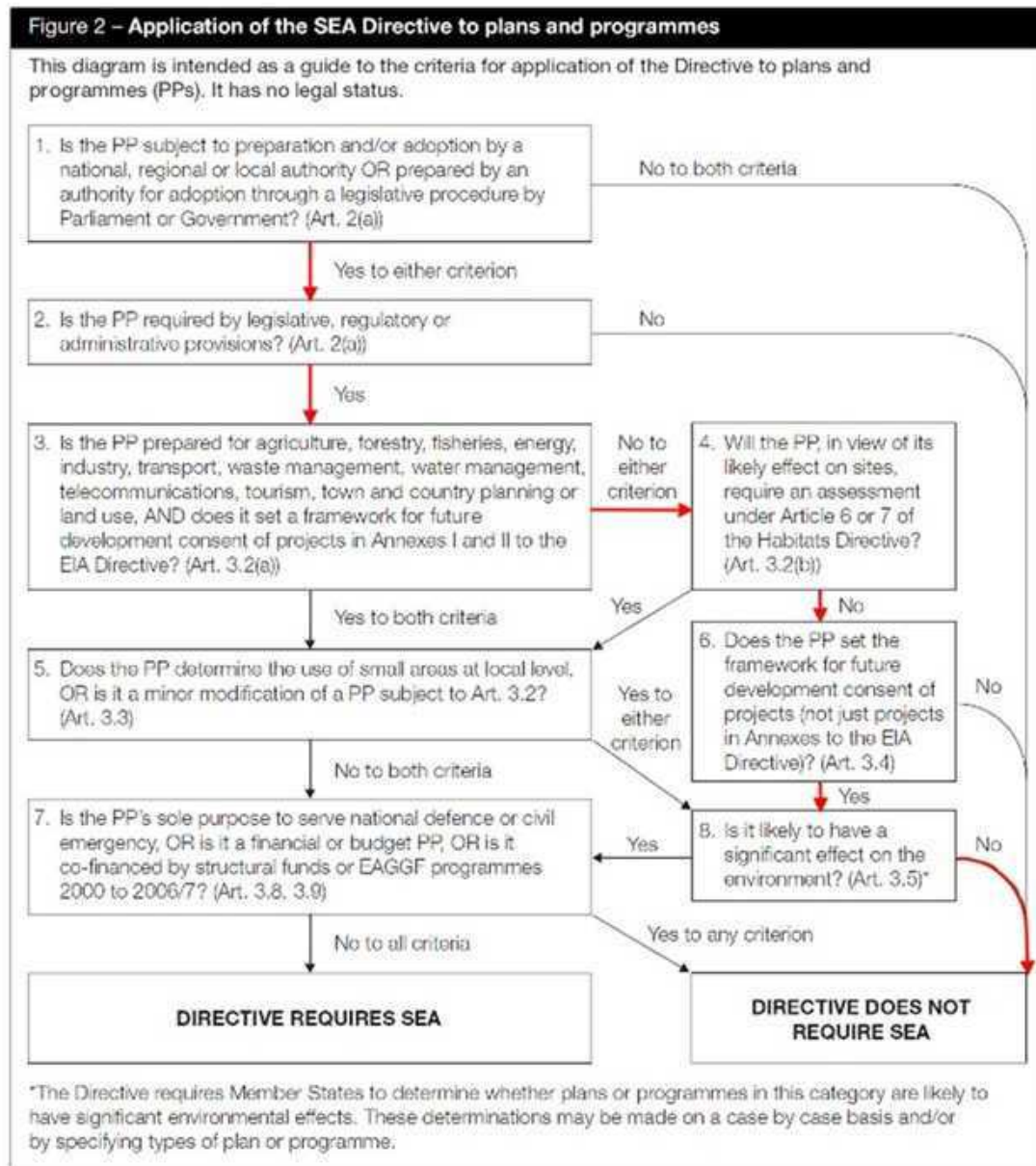
4.1 Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC are set out below²:

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

² Source: Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC

5. Assessment

- 5.1 This diagram shows the Directive's field of application in the form of a diagram. The original diagram is from 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Objective'. The red arrows indicate the process route for the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Assessment.



- 5.2 The table below shows the assessment of whether the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan will require a full SEA. The questions below are drawn from the diagram above which sets out how the SEA Directive should be applied.



Stage	Yes/No	Reason
1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	The preparation of and adoption of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan is allowed under The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan will be prepared by Grafton Underwood Parish Council (as the 'relevant body') and will be 'made' by North Northamptonshire Council as the local authority. The preparation of neighbourhood plans is subject to the following regulations: The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and The Neighbourhood Planning (referendums) Regulations 2012.
2. Is the Neighbourhood Plan required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes	Whilst the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan is not a requirement and is optional under the provisions of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, it will if 'made', form part of the Development Plan for the area. It is therefore important that the screening process considers whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive.
3. Is the Neighbourhood 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	No	Whilst the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan covers a range of land use issues, it does not set the framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive (see Appendix 2 for list). Instead, the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan is a non-strategic scale document, focused solely upon the Parish of Grafton Underwood.



Stage	Yes/No	Reason
Annexes I and II (see Appendix 2) to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))		
4. Will the Neighbourhood Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive (Art 3.2(b))	No	The Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have a substantial effect on the Natura 2000 network of protected sites. The nearest SPA is the Upper Nene Valley Gravel pits and is located 5.5km to the east of the Neighbourhood Plan area. The closest SAC is Orton Pit 25km to the north east. In 2013, a Habitats Regulations Assessment (Likely Significant Effects) exercise was undertaken of the North Northamptonshire JCS. A further Habitats Regulation Assessment was prepared in January 2015 to accompany the JCS public consultation. This concluded that mechanisms to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA had been incorporated into the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and the planning application determination process. The JCS Inspector's report indicates that the HRA was satisfactory and taking into account advice from relevant consultees, notably Natural England, the Inspector concluded that the JCS was sound and consistent with Government policy. The Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Kettering Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan (2019) concluded that all residential site allocations lie beyond the 3km screening distance defined by the JCS HRA meaning that the SSP2 will not result in likely significant effects to the Upper Nene



Stage	Yes/No	Reason
		Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar. In addition, all residential and employment site allocations lies further than 4km from the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar, the distance that golden plover from the SPA/Ramsar are considered to travel from the designated site to feed on parcels of agricultural land. It concludes the SSP2 will not result in likely significant effects regarding the loss of functionally linked land. The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits (SPD) and Mitigation Strategy has been produced to help Local Planning Authorities, developers and others to ensure that development has no significant effect on the SPA. This places a mitigation charge for any new dwelling within 3km of the SPA boundary to address possible significant effects of additional residential development (households) upon the SPA. In view of the distance between the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Area, and the SPA and SAC, as well as considering the scope of the proposals within the draft Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan, further stages in the HRA process are not required (including further screening or Appropriate Assessment). The Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have a substantial impact on the Natura 2000 network of protected sites.
5. Does the Neighbourhood Plan determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification	Yes	Determination of small sites at local level only.



Stage	Yes/No	Reason
of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)		
6.Does the Neighbourhood Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Yes	The Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan is to be used for determining future planning applications.
7. Is the Neighbourhood Plan's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, or is it co-financed by structural funds or EAFF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	No	No
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	No	Appendix 1 presents the environmental effects which have the potential to arise as a result of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan.



6. Summary of screening determination

- 6.1 This determination has considered whether the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan is likely to lead to significant environmental effects as defined by Directive 2001/42/EC, the 'SEA Directive' and the transposing regulations. In particular, the review has considered several sensitive areas located in the vicinity of the Neighbourhood Area and the potential environmental effects on these areas that may arise as a result of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.2 Environmental effects have the potential to take place as a result of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan, including in relation to the majority of the SEA 'topics'.
- 6.3 This SEA screening opinion provides the necessary analysis relating to the potential for negative effects on 'Sensitive Areas' and other key environmental assets, including nearby SPAs, SSSIs, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Gardens, Conservation Area and Listed Buildings. With respect to these designations, it is considered that these are unlikely to be significant in the context of the SEA Directive. The significance of potential effects will be limited by key aims of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan and these are in turn reflected by the policy approaches proposed by the latest version of the plan.
- 6.4 It is therefore recommended that the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan should not be subject to a full SEA.

Habitats Regulation Assessment

- 6.5 A separate Habitat Regulations Screening Report has been undertaken and it is concluded that a full Habitat Regulations Appropriate Assessment of the current Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan is not required, as it is unlikely to have a significant effect on any designated sites.

Conclusion

- 6.6 **This screening opinion has been prepared to fulfil the statutory SEA requirements, as set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The environmental consultation bodies – Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency have been consulted during the preparation of this Screening Statement. Their responses are summarised below:**
- **Historic England – For the purposes of consultation on SEA Screening Opinions, Historic England confines its advice to the question, "Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?" in respect of our area of concern, cultural heritage.**



On the basis of the information supplied and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of the SEA Directive], Historic England concurs with your view that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required. The views of the other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for a SEA is made.

- **Natural England - Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.**

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:

- **significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,**
- **significant effects on Habitats sites¹, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.**

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

- **Environment Agency - We aim to reduce flood risk, while protecting and enhancing the water environment. Our comments on this matter are therefore made solely from these points of view. Having looked at the documentation, and noting the conclusions in it, from the point of view of the topics outlined above that the Environment Agency is commenting on, we agree with the conclusions that neither a SEA nor an HRA is needed.**

A full copy of the responses received are attached as Appendix 3.



- 6.7 For the above reasons, it is considered that the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan is not subject to the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC, the 'SEA Directive' and accompanying regulations.**



Appendix 1: Assessment of potential environmental effects

The following table presents the environmental effects which have the potential to arise because of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan. This is accompanied by a commentary on whether these effects are likely to be significant. The environmental effects have been grouped by the SEA 'topics' suggested by Annex I(f) of the SEA Directive.

SEA Topic	Likely effect? Y/N	Description of effect	Effect likely to be significant in the context of SEA?
Biodiversity, flora and fauna (Including biodiversity habitats and species, biodiversity sites, areas of geological interest)	Y	Without mitigation and enhancement measures, the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan has the potential to lead to effects on biodiversity, including through loss of habitat, disturbance, effects on ecological connections and indirect effects such as from impacts on water quality and quantity.	There are no Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPA) present within the Neighbourhood Area. The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Habitat Regulations Appropriate Assessment concluded that any policies and developments outlined within the Core Strategy, potential non-strategic sites or sites that have submitted a planning application, but has not yet been granted will not lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of Rutland Water SPA, SAC, Ramsar site, Barnack Hills and Holes SAC, Nene Washes SPA/SAC/Ramsar site or Orton Pit SAC either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA) is located to the east of the Parish Neighbourhood Area. The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area/Ramsar site was formally classified by the UK government in 2011. The nearest block is 5.5km from the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Area. Given the distance between the Neighbourhood Area and the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA, and the likely scale of future development in the Neighbourhood



SEA Topic	Likely effect? Y/N	Description of effect	Effect likely to be significant in the context of SEA?
			Area, the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan Draft Habitat Regulations Screening Report has concluded that a full Habitat Regulations Assessment is not required and the Neighbourhood Plan will have no effects on Integrity of the above-mentioned designated sites. All SPA's are also notified as SSSIs, being sites that are of specific biological or geological features. In relation to biodiversity there are no SSSIs located within the Neighbourhood Area. However, the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Area lies within the Impact Risk Zones for the Twywell Gullet SSSI and the Geddington Chase SSSI. Certain types of development within the zones require consultation with Natural England depending on the specific zone that the proposal is located. The Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan does not proposed any allocations for development, nor does it propose any development of the type that would require consultation with Natural England. The Neighbourhood Plan includes a biodiversity policy that seeks to protect, conserve and enhance existing ecological corridors and features for biodiversity. This policy seeks to reduce the likelihood of significant effects on these 'sensitive areas' as well as the delivery of biodiversity net gain.



SEA Topic	Likely effect? Y/N	Description of effect	Effect likely to be significant in the context of SEA?
			Due to the distance of the above identified nature conservation areas from the Neighbourhood Area, it is considered that effects on biodiversity are not deemed to be significant if the current policy approach proposed in the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan is taken forward.
Population (Including residents' quality of life, accessibility to services and facilities, deprivation and similar)	Y	As indicated by the current policy approaches proposed for the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan, the Plan has the potential to have a range of benefits for the quality of life of residents and for accessibility to services, facilities and opportunities. It seeks to prevent the loss of local services and facilities, makes provision for the protection of Local Green Space, facilitates pedestrian and cycle links and supports home working. Policies also seek to prevent light pollution and	Whilst the benefits for residents of Grafton Underwood Parish from a well-designed neighbourhood plan have the potential to be wide-ranging, these are not deemed to be significant in the context of the SEA Directive.



SEA Topic	Likely effect? Y/N	Description of effect	Effect likely to be significant in the context of SEA?
		protect residential amenity. The Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan will help deliver a mix of housing types, including the provision of smaller homes, homes suitable for older people and rural worker accommodation.	
Human Health (Incorporating residents' health and wellbeing)	Y	As indicated by the current policy approaches proposed for the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan, the Plan has the potential to have a range of benefits for residents' health and wellbeing through promoting healthier lifestyles and supporting accessibility to services and facilities. Policies support the protection of local green spaces, improve and enhance the	Whilst the health and wellbeing benefits for residents of the Neighbourhood Area from a well-designed neighbourhood plan have the potential to be wide-ranging, these are not deemed to be significant in the context of the SEA Directive. Likely effects from noise quality are also not deemed to be significant.



SEA Topic	Likely effect? Y/N	Description of effect	Effect likely to be significant in the context of SEA?
		parish's networks of footpaths and cycleways.	
Soil (Including agricultural land, soil erosion, soil quality)	Y	It is uncertain whether any future development will be sited on land classified as the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land, as recent detailed agricultural land classification has not taken place. The Plan maintains the currently defined settlement boundary and seeks to limit development in the countryside. The re-use and/or adaptation of rural buildings is also supported.	Due to the relatively limited area of land likely to be developed through the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan, effects on the soils resource are unlikely to be significant .
Water (Including water quality and availability)	Y	The Grafton Underwood Plan has the potential to lead to a very small-scale increase in water demand in the Neighbourhood Area	Potential effects on water availability will be limited by the relatively small-scale of proposals likely to be facilitated by the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan. Effects unlikely to be significant .



SEA Topic	Likely effect? Y/N	Description of effect	Effect likely to be significant in the context of SEA?
		through supporting the delivery of limited new housing provision. New development should also take full account of flood risk in accordance with national and local planning policies, as well as sustainable building design as detailed in the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide.	
Air (Including air quality)	Y	Whilst new development in the Neighbourhood Area may lead to increased traffic flows and congestion, this is unlikely to lead to marked effects on air quality. The Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan supports only limited development, the	No existing air quality issues exist in the Neighbourhood Area and there are no Air Quality Management Areas within the Neighbourhood Area. Any effects on air quality are not deemed to be significant in the context of the SEA Directive.



SEA Topic	Likely effect? Y/N	Description of effect	Effect likely to be significant in the context of SEA?
		protection and enhancement of cycle and pedestrian links as well as the protection of local services.	
Climatic Factors (Including relating to climate change mitigation (limiting greenhouse gas emissions) and adaptation (adapting to the anticipated effects of climate change, including flood risk))	Y	In terms of climate change mitigation, the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan actively seeks to locate new housing development within the defined settlement boundary, and supports the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings. This will help limit potential increases in greenhouse gas emissions from an increase in the built footprint of the Neighbourhood Area. Policy seeks measures to assist meet the challenges of climate change through the incorporation of sustainable design. Statutory requirements	Due to the small scale, local scope of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan, the nature and magnitude of effects directly arising as a result of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to be significant in the context of the SEA Directive.



SEA Topic	Likely effect? Y/N	Description of effect	Effect likely to be significant in the context of SEA?
		(including the requirements of the NPPF) will ensure that flood risk is addressed through new development proposal. Neighbourhood Plan policy supports the development of low carbon technologies and small scale renewable energy development.	
Material Assets (Including minerals resources, waste considerations)	Y	The Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan may lead to small increases in the Neighbourhood Area's waste management requirements through supporting the delivery of limited new housing. No mineral sites or resources, or waste sites are likely to be affected or undermined as a result of the	Potential increases in waste as a direct result of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan will be managed through statutory requirements regarding waste management. Due to their limited magnitude, effects are therefore unlikely to be significant in the context of the SEA Directive.



SEA Topic	Likely effect? Y/N	Description of effect	Effect likely to be significant in the context of SEA?
Cultural Heritage (Including historic environment, cultural heritage, historic settings)	Y	Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan. Development undertaken in accordance with the policies of the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan has the potential to have effects on the fabric and setting of historic environment assets.	There are no Scheduled Monuments in the Neighbourhood Area and the nearest Scheduled Monument is a distance of 1km from the Neighbourhood Area. No Historic Parks or Gardens located within the Parish although there is Boughton House (Grade I) located approximately 480m, too the west of the Neighbourhood Area. There are also several Listed Buildings in the Neighbourhood Area as well as the Conservation Area. There is the statutory protection of these designations that will run alongside the neighbourhood plan policy and local plan policy, which seeks to ensure that new development reflects the distinctive and traditional character of the village and its heritage assets. Therefore, effects are unlikely to be significant in the context of the SEA directive.
Landscape (Including landscape and townscape quality)	Y	Direct effects from the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan on landscape and townscape character have the potential to take place.	In terms of landscape quality, no 'sensitive areas' as defined by the NPPG are present in the Neighbourhood Area. Overall the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan's focus on protecting and enhancing the landscape/townscape of the Neighbourhood Area and protecting key features of importance for the historic environment will deliver positive effects on landscape and townscape quality and facilitate enhancements.



SEA Topic	Likely effect? Y/N	Description of effect	Effect likely to be significant in the context of SEA?
			Therefore, potential effects on townscape quality is unlikely to be significant in the context of the SEA Directive.



Appendix 2: Annex I and Annex II Projects, EIA Directive

Annex I Projects, EIA Directive

All projects listed in Annex I are considered as having significant effects on the environment and require an Environmental Impact Assessment. The listed projects are summarised as follows:

1. Crude oil refineries, coal or shale gasification liquefaction installations
2. Thermal power stations, nuclear power stations, other nuclear reactors etc
3. Installations for the processing, reprocessing, final disposal or storage of irradiated nuclear fuel, or the production or enrichment of nuclear fuel
4. Integrated works for the initial smelting of cast-iron and steel, and the production of non-ferrous crude metals from ore
5. Installations for the extraction, processing and transforming of asbestos
6. Integrated chemical installations for the industrial scale manufacture of basic organic and inorganic fertilisers, plant health products and biocides, pharmaceuticals, and explosives
7. Construction of long-distance railway lines. Airports with a basic runway length run of 2,100 metres or more. Construction of motorways and express roads. New roads of four or more lanes and roads which have been improved so as to convert two lanes or fewer to four lanes or more, where such road would be 10 kilometres or more in continuous length
8. Inland waterways and ports for inland-waterway traffic, trading ports and piers
9. Waste disposal installations for the incineration or chemical treatment of hazardous waste
10. Waste disposal installations for the incineration or chemical treatment of non-hazardous waste
11. Groundwater abstraction or artificial groundwater recharge schemes
12. Water transfer schemes between river basins
13. Wastewater treatment plants
14. Commercial extraction of petroleum and natural gas
15. Dams and water storage installations
16. Gas, oil or chemical pipelines and pipelines used for the transport of carbon dioxide for geological storage



Annex II Projects, EIA Directive

For the projects listed in Annex II the national authorities have to decide whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is needed. The projects listed in Annex II are in general those not included in Annex I but also other types such as urban development projects and flood-relief works. The listed projects are summarised as follows:

1. Agriculture, silviculture* and aquaculture Restructuring of rural land holdings; use of uncultivated land or seminatural areas for intensive agriculture; water management projects for agriculture; initial afforestation* and deforestation* for the purpose of conversion to a different land use; intensive livestock installations (projects not included in Annex I); intensive fish farming; reclamation of land from the sea.
2. Extractive industry Quarries, open-cast mining, peat extraction (projects not included in Annex I); underground mining; dredging; deep drilling; surface installations for coal, gas, ore and shale extraction.
3. Energy industry Installations for production of electricity, steam and hot water and for carrying gas, steam and hot water, and transmission of electricity by overhead cables* (projects not included in Annex I); surface storage of natural gas and fossil fuels; underground storage of combustible gases; briquetting of coal and lignite; installations for processing and storage of radioactive waste (unless included in Annex I); hydroelectric and wind power installations.
4. Production and processing of metals Installations for the production of pig iron or steel; processing of ferrous metals; ferrous metal foundries; installations for smelting metals and surface treatment of metals and plastic materials; assembly and manufacture of motor vehicles and motor-vehicle engines; shipyards; installations for construction and repair of aircraft; manufacture of railway equipment; swaging by explosives; and installations for the roasting and sintering of metallic ores.
5. Metal industry Coke ovens; installations for the manufacture of glass, cement, asbestos and asbestos products (projects not covered by Annex I); smelting mineral substances; manufacture of ceramic products by burning.
6. Chemical industry (projects not included in Annex I) Treatment of intermediate products and production of chemicals; production of pesticides, pharmaceuticals, paint, varnishes, elastomers and peroxides; storage facilities for petroleum, petrochemical products and chemical products.
7. Food industry Manufacture of oils, fats, dairy products, confectionery, syrup, industrial starch; packing and canning; brewing and malting; sugar, fish-meal and fish-oil factories; and installations for the slaughter of animals.
8. Textile, leather, wood and paper industries Industrial plants for paper and board production (projects not included in Annex I); pre-treatment plants; tanning plants; cellulose-processing and production installations.
9. Rubber industry Manufacture and treatment of elastomer-based products.
10. Infrastructure projects (not included in Annex I) Industrial estates; urban development projects (including shopping centres and car parks); railways and transshipment facilities; airfields, roads, harbours, ports, inland-waterways; dams and water storage facilities; tramways, elevated and underground passenger railways etc.; oil and gas pipe-lines; long-distance aqueducts; coastal and sea defence works; groundwater abstraction and artificial groundwater recharge schemes; water transfer schemes between river basins; motorway service areas.



11. Other projects Permanent motor racing and test tracks; waste disposal projects and waste water treatment plants (projects not included in Annex I); sludge disposal sites; storage of scrap iron (including scrap vehicles); test benches for engines etc.; installations for the manufacture of artificial mineral fibres and the recovery or destruction of explosives; knackers' yards.
12. Tourism and leisure Ski-runs, ski-lifts, cable cars etc.; marinas; holiday villages and hotel complexes outside urban areas; permanent camp sites and caravan sites; theme parks and golf courses.
13. Any change or extension of projects listed in Annex I or Annex II, already authorised, executed or in the process of being executed, which may have adverse environmental effects Projects in Annex I, undertaken exclusively or mainly for the development and testing of new methods or products and not used for more than two years.

Note Some of the types of projects listed above are covered by Annex II and the Regulations only if they meet certain threshold levels or other criteria. * A project which is included in Annex II of the Directive but excluded from Schedule 2 of the Regulations (SI 1999/293).

Appendix 1: Responses from the Consultation Bodies



Appendix 3: Responses from the Consultation Bodies



Alison Gibson MRTPI
Planit-X Town and Country Planning
Services Ltd

Our ref: AN/2022/133336/PO-
03/SB1-L01

Your ref:

Date: 17 September 2024

Via Email

Dear [REDACTED]

Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan – Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement and Draft Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report.

I refer to your email dated 6 September 2024 in relation to the draft Strategic Environmental Assessment screening statement (dated May 2024) and the draft Habitat Regulations Assessment screening report (dated May 2024) for the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan.

We aim to reduce flood risk, while protecting and enhancing the water environment. Our comments on this matter are therefore made solely from these points of view.

Environment Agency position.

We note you are specifically asking us if we agree with the conclusions in the submitted documentation that neither a full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) nor an Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) needs to be undertaken for the Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan.

Having looked at the documentation, and noting the conclusions in it, from the point of view of the topics outlined above that the Environment Agency is commenting on, we agree with the conclusions that neither a SEA nor an HRA is needed.

Notwithstanding this, as you are aware from our letter of 6 August 2024 to the Clerk to Grafton Underwood Parish Council, we do have a number of detailed comments on the draft Neighbourhood Plan which accompanied the SEA screening statement and HRA report and we should be grateful if they could be taken into account as this matter progresses.

I hope these comments are of assistance. Should you require any additional

Environment Agency
Nene House (Pythley Lodge Industrial Estate) Pythley Lodge Road, Kettering, Northamptonshire, NN15 6JQ.

Customer services line: 03708 506 506

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

Cont/d..

information, or wish to discuss these matters further, please do not hesitate to contact me via my number or email address below.

Yours sincerely

Mr Wayne Cattell
Planning Advisor

Direct dial [REDACTED]

Direct e-mail [REDACTED]

End

Ms Alison Gibson
Planit-X Town and Country Planning Services
Ltd

Direct Dial: [REDACTED]

Our ref: PL00796896

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

12 September 2024

Dear Ms Gibson

**GRAFTON UNDERWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SEA & HRA SCREENING
OPINION CONSULTATION**

Thank you for your consultation and the invitation to comment on the SEA Screening Document for the above Neighbourhood Plan.

For the purposes of consultations on SEA Screening Opinions, Historic England confines its advice to the question, "Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?" in respect of our area of concern, cultural heritage.

Our comments are based on the information supplied with the screening request. On the basis of the information supplied and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of the 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with your view that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

Regarding HRA Historic England does not disagree with your conclusions but would defer to the opinions of the other statutory consultees.

The views of the other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for a SEA is made. If a decision is made to undertake a SEA, please note that Historic England has published guidance on Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Historic Environment that is relevant to both local and neighbourhood planning and available at: [<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>](https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/)

I trust the above comments will be of help in taking forward the Neighbourhood Plan.



THE FOUNDRY 82 GRANVILLE STREET BIRMINGHAM B1 2LH

Telephone 0121 625 6888
[HistoricEngland.org.uk](https://www.historicengland.org.uk)



Historic England

Yours sincerely,

Rose Thompson

Rose Thompson
Historic Places Adviser



THE FOUNDRY 82 GRANVILLE STREET BIRMINGHAM B1 2LH

Telephone 0121 625 6888
HistoricEngland.org.uk

Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any Information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.

Date: 22 August 2024
Our ref: 482779
Your ref: Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan



Grafton Underwood Parish Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Sir/Madam

Grafton Underwood Neighbourhood Plan - SEA & Appropriate Assessment Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 19 July 2024.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:

- **significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,**
- **significant effects on Habitats sites¹, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.**

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the [Planning Practice Guidance](#). This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected

¹ Habitats sites are those referred to in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (Annex 2 - glossary) as "any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites".

species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's [standing advice](#) on protected species.

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission [standing advice](#).

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle
Consultations Team