

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report

Wellow Parish Council

December 2022

Quality information

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Non-Technical Summary (NTS)

Introduction

AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Wellow Neighbourhood Plan (WNP).

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

The WNP is being prepared by the Parish Council in the context of the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan (RLP), the New Forest National Park Local Plan (NPLP), and the emerging Test Valley Borough Draft Local Plan (DLP). Once 'made' the WNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications, alongside the Test Valley Borough RLP, New Forest NPLP and Test Valley Borough DLP.

The WNP SEA will be published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).

Structure of the Environmental Report/ this NTS

SEA is undertaken in-line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('the SEA Regulations'). In creating a structured approach, SEA reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:

1. What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
 - i.e., in relation to exploring and appraising 'reasonable alternatives' (as prescribed by the SEA Regulations²).
2. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
 - i.e., in relation to the draft plan that is being consulted on.
3. What happens next?

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

¹ Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: a) an environmental report; or, b) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a 'screening' process completed in accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations ('the SEA Regulations'). The WNP was subject to informal screening by New Forest National Park Authority and subsequently a screening opinion was sought alongside a scoping opinion through formal scoping consultation in August 2022. This consultation sought the wider opinions of statutory consultees.

² The SEA Regulations are not prescriptive as to what constitutes reasonable alternatives but identifies that a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that "*identifies, describes, and evaluates*" the likely significant effects of implementing "*the plan, and reasonable alternatives*" considering the plan objectives and geographical scope.

What is the Plan seeking to achieve?

The WNP has a clear vision, which is as follows:

“In 2035 Wellow Parish will be a thriving, safe, sustainable, and friendly community retaining a village feel. The close relationship with the New Forest National Park will be respected and cherished.

It will have maintained and enhanced its rural character whilst absorbing some further housing development.

These small sustainable developments will have been designed to be sympathetic to the surrounding countryside and provide for a balance of dwelling types specifically designed to meet local needs. Green spaces will have been preserved between developments.

The local economy will be supported through the facilitation of modest business growth where appropriate to the rural setting.

Community facilities will have expanded and become more varied to meet changing local needs.

The sense of community will be strengthened through improved interconnectivity between its main areas of settlement.

This will have been achieved primarily through the development of a network of safe pedestrian, cycle, and equestrian routes.”

To achieve this vision, the following key themes, and objectives for realising the vision have been adopted:

- **Conserving and enhancing biodiversity**, the rural character and natural landscape of the Parish
- **Meeting the housing needs** whilst endeavouring to maintain a sustainable level of amenities and facilities for all residents of the Parish from younger families and the next generation through to the increasing number of older residents
- **Enabling appropriate development in sustainable locations**, such that these do not detract from the character, landscape and setting of the Parish
- **Having a balance of house types and sizes** reflecting the local need
- **Improving the built environment** and minimising the impact on the natural environment

What is the scope of the SEA?

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

SEA theme	SEA objective(s)
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area Support the resilience of the neighbourhood area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape
Historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area
Land, soil and water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the efficient and effective use of land Protect and enhance water quality and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner
Community wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, reducing deprivation, and supporting cohesive and inclusion communities.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

Plan-making/ SEA up to this point

An important element of the required SEA process involves assessing ‘reasonable alternatives’ in time to inform development of the draft proposals, and then publishing information on reasonable alternatives for consultation alongside the draft proposals.

As such, **Part 1** of the Environmental Report explains how work was undertaken to develop and assess a ‘reasonable’ range of alternative approaches to the allocation of land for housing, or alternative sites.

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

1. Explains the process of establishing the reasonable alternatives.
2. Presents the outcomes of assessing the reasonable alternatives.
3. Explains reasons for establishing the preferred option, in light of the assessment.

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

- WNP objectives, particularly the housing objective to provide sufficient and appropriate high-quality housing to meet local needs.
- Housing growth is known to be a matter of key interest amongst residents and other stakeholders; and
- The delivery of new homes is most likely to have a significant effect compared to the other proposals within the Plan. National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.

Establishing the reasonable alternatives

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

This work identified six sites under two options which have the potential to deliver growth within Wellow to meet the identified residual housing need for 22 homes. Most of these sites have been identified through the Test Valley Borough Strategy Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), though additional sites have also been identified through the plan-making process.

The two options recognise the main considerations for plan-making; 1) either the allocation of two small sites to meet the identified housing needs (for which there is one choice formed of the only two small available/ suitable sites), or 2) the allocation of one, slightly larger site (this option is formed of four choices). The two options (formed of six sites) are listed below, and form the alternative options for appraisal:

- **Option 1:** Allocate both SHELAA 261: Land adjacent to Rowden Close delivering up to nine homes, and Meadow Close: Land west of Meadow Close, Romsey Road delivering up to 18 homes.
- **Option 2:** Allocate one of either:
 - **Option 2a:** SHELAA 6 The Field at Crawley Hill delivering up to 40 homes.
 - **Option 2b:** SHELAA 16B Pottery Farm East delivering up to 37 homes.
 - **Option 2c:** SHELAA 37 Land to the rear of 'Iona' / 'Bellevue Garage', Crawley Hill delivering up to 26 homes.
 - **Option 2d:** SHELAA 75 Land east of School Road delivering up to 35 homes.

All options have the potential to exceed the identified residual housing needs. This may be a benefit explored further by the group, or alternatively, sites may be allocated to deliver a slightly reduced number of homes at any given location.

Assessing the reasonable alternatives

The main report (Chapter 6) assesses these options and presents detailed findings for the SEA themes. The following conclusions are reached in the assessment of these options:

SEA theme		Option 1: SHELAA 261 and Meadow Close	Option 2a: SHELAA 6	Option 2b: SHELAA 16B	Option 2c: SHELAA 37	Option 2d: SHELAA 75
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
	Rank	1	1	2	2	2

SEA theme		Option 1: SHELAA 261 and Meadow Close	Option 2a: SHELAA 6	Option 2b: SHELAA 16B	Option 2c: SHELAA 37	Option 2d: SHELAA 75
Climate change	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
	Rank	1	2	1	2	2
Landscape	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	No	No	No
	Rank	1	3	2	3	2
Historic environment	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	1	1	1
Land, soil, and water resources	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
	Rank	1	2	1	2	1
Community wellbeing	Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
	Rank	1	2	1	2	1
Transportation	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
	Rank	1	3	2	3	2

This assessment has highlighted that all options have the potential to have significant positive impacts in relation to the 'Community Wellbeing' theme, particularly in terms of delivering new housing in areas with good access to services and facilities and encouraging more sustainable and active methods of travel for undertaking some day-to-day activities within the neighbourhood area.

No other significant effects are considered likely at this stage; however, some uncertainty is noted in relation to landscape impacts at Option 2a. This relates to the larger scale of the site (though it is recognised that this may be larger than the eventual allocation/ promoted developable area of the site) and its potential impacts associated with important views in an open landscape area in the setting of the National Park. It is recognised that there is potential to reduce landscape impacts through appropriate design, layout, massing, and building heights in proposals for all options; but minor negative effects are still considered likely, associated with development in the setting of the National Park.

The proposed sites under Options 2a, 2c and 2d would reduce the gap between the settlements of West Wellow and East Wellow and potentially impact upon views towards the National Park. In this regard, Option 2b also directly obstructs views southeast from north of School Road and Option 1 (Meadow Close) has the potential to obstruct views northeast from Groves Down, depending on how much of the site developed. Impacts to the 'Historic environment' are less prominent: The settlement of West Wellow contains the greatest concentration of heritage features within the

neighbourhood area, however none of the five options are likely to lead to significant impacts on listed buildings (including the solitary Grade I Listed Building within the neighbourhood area – the Church of St Margaret, along Hackley's Lane) or heritage settings.

Options 2a and 2c relate to settlement expansion at East Wellow. This is considered a less sustainable location when compared to options expanding West Wellow, which would deliver development in closer proximity to the main service and facility provisions within the neighbourhood area. These factors result in Options 2a and 2c performing less favourably in relation to the 'transportation' and the 'climate change' SEA themes. When considering adaption to climate change, the assessment has also highlighted that Option 2b is constrained by 'High' surface water flood risk but significant negative effects are not expected.

Considering potential impacts to water quality, Options 2a and 2c are considered less favourable to Options 1, 2b, and 2d with regards to the 'Land, soil, and water resources' SEA theme, but with wider policy provisions (of the Local Plan and NPPF) protecting water quality, no significant effects are considered likely. All options focus development on areas of greenfield land and minor negative effects are considered likely in this respect.

The scale of development proposed under any option is not considered likely to lead to significant impacts in relation to biodiversity, but it is noted that Options 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d surround the central woodland area around Ham Lake with more ecological connections than identified at the sites under Option 1. Option 1 is often considered to perform marginally better in relation to environmental themes, by reducing the scale of development (with development dispersed across two smaller sites).

Developing the preferred approach

The Parish Council's reasons for developing the preferred approach (Option 1 – the Land at Rowden Close, and the Land adjacent to Meadow Close) in light of the alternatives assessment are identified below:

- The option includes two of six identified sites (five from the SHELAA and one from the SOA addendum report) – all of which are deemed suitable for limited development.
- The option would work to deliver the 22 additional dwellings identified by a housing needs assessment, plus the needed affordable housing, and would involve a mix of housing types and sizes.

The Steering Committee proposed allocating a site for affordable housing of ten dwellings or less, as well as one or two sites (of ten dwellings maximum each), to meet the local identified housing need. The potential sites went to community consultation, whereby the two sites forming Option 1 were concluded to be preferred by the community.

Assessment findings at this stage

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

Conclusions

No significant negative effects are considered likely in implementing the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan. Significant positive effects are likely to emerge from the plan efforts to address housing needs and deliver much needed affordable housing in suitable locations that connect well with the settlement, and the settlements' service and facility provisions.

With minimal constraints identified in relation to the proposed sites, no significant deviations from the baseline are anticipated in relation to the SEA themes of biodiversity, climate change, and historic environment, and broadly neutral effects are concluded in relation to these themes.

Residual minor negative effects are considered likely in relation to landscape, land, soil, and water resources, and transportation. This predominantly reflects the inevitable loss of greenfield land within a sensitive landscape area, and additional cars on the road generating local traffic. Effects are significantly reduced by the small-scale development being proposed at each site.

Cumulative effects are considered likely to be positive in relation to the wider housing market area (by contributing to district wide housing needs), but may be negative (though minor) in relation to the landscape, given the potential for multiple development plans increasing development pressures in the setting of the New Forest National Park.

Recommendations

No recommendations have been made for the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan, as the policies in place provide suitable mitigation to reduce impacts, and the identified residual minor negative effects are considered an inevitable consequence of development.

Next steps

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

Plan finalisation

Following consultation, responses received will be considered and the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan and SEA Environmental Report will be finalised for submission.

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

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

Monitoring

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

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

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Wellow Neighbourhood Plan (WNP).
- 1.2 The WNP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and in the context of the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan (RLP), the New Forest National Park Local Plan (NPLP), and the emerging Test Valley Borough Draft Local Plan (DLP).
- 1.3 Once ‘made’ the WNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications, alongside the Test Valley Borough RLP, New Forest NPLP and Test Valley Borough DLP.
- 1.4 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. SEA of the WNP is a legal requirement.³

SEA explained

- 1.5 It is a requirement that SEA is undertaken in-line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which transposed into national law EU Directive 2001/42/EC on SEA.
- 1.6 In-line with the Regulations, a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that “*identifies, describes and evaluates*” the likely significant effects of implementing “*the plan, and reasonable alternatives*”.⁴ The report must then be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
- 1.7 More specifically, the Report must answer the following three questions:
 1. What has plan-making/ SEA involved up to this point?
 - including in relation to ‘reasonable alternatives’.
 2. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
 - i.e., in relation to the draft plan.
 3. What happens next?

³ Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: a) an environmental report; or, b) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a ‘screening’ process completed in accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (‘the SEA Regulations’). The WNP was subject to informal screening by New Forest National Park Authority and subsequently a screening opinion was sought alongside a scoping opinion through scoping consultation in August 2022. This consultation sought the wider opinions of statutory consultees.

⁴ Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

This Environmental Report

- 1.8 This report is the Environmental Report for the WNP. It is published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).
- 1.9 This report essentially answers questions 1, 2 and 3 in turn, to provide the required information.⁵ Each question is answered within a discrete 'part' of the report.
- 1.10 However, before answering Q1, two initial questions are answered to further set the scene; what is the plan seeking to achieve? And what is the scope of the SEA?

⁵ See **Appendix A** for further explanation of the regulatory basis for answering certain questions within the Environmental Report, and a 'checklist' explaining more precisely the regulatory basis for presenting certain information.

2. What is the plan seeking to achieve?

Introduction

- 2.1 This section considers the strategic planning policy context provided by the Test Valley Borough RLP, New Forest NPLP and Test Valley Borough DLP, before then presenting the vision and objectives of the WNP. **Figure 2.1** below presents the neighbourhood area.

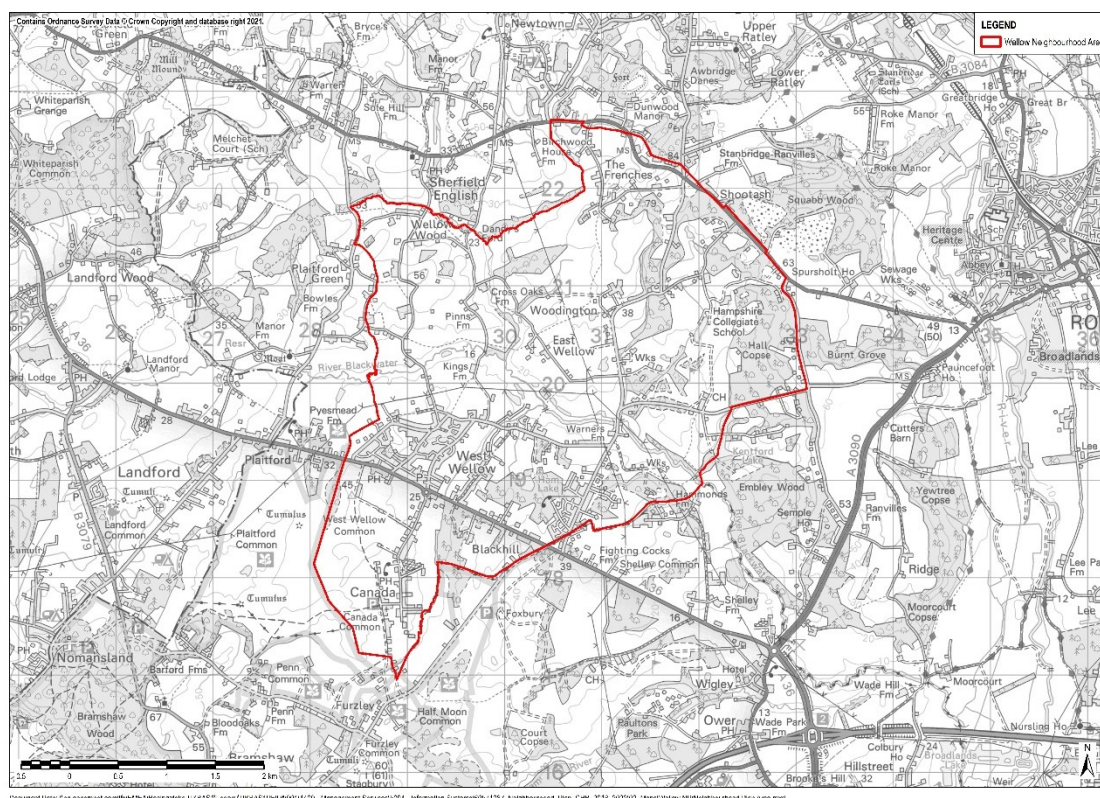


Figure 2.1 Wellow neighbourhood area

Strategic planning policy context

- 2.2 The WNP is being prepared in the context of the adopted and emerging planning policy framework for Test Valley. Part of the Parish also falls within the New Forest National Park, governed by the National Park Authority.
- 2.3 The Test Valley Borough RLP was adopted in 2016 and provides the main strategic context for the WNP, given its intention to allocate land outside of the National Park. The RLP identifies West Wellow as a 'Rural Village' in the third tier of the settlement hierarchy (Table 7). No specific housing allocations are made in Wellow in the RLP, however rural parishes in the Northern Test Valley were allocated an overall figure with no indication of how this might be divided between the parishes (refer to the Housing Needs Assessment⁶).
- 2.4 Test Valley Borough Council are currently developing the emerging Test Valley Borough DLP; however, this is at early stages of development, with consultation on refined 'Issues and Options' having concluded in 2020, and a Stage 1

⁶ Wellow Parish (2021): 'Wellow Housing Needs Assessment', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

Regulation 18 consultation having concluded in early 2022. A Stage 2 Regulation 18 consultation is anticipated later in 2022. The Stage 1 Regulation 18 draft identifies Wellow as a 'Tier 2' settlement in the settlement hierarchy (Spatial Strategy Policy 1). No clear indication is given at this stage as to the number of homes which would be anticipated in Wellow over the plan period.

WNP vision statement and objectives

2.5 The WNP has a clear vision, which is as follows:

"In 2035 Wellow Parish will be a thriving, safe, sustainable, and friendly community retaining a village feel. The close relationship with the New Forest National Park will be respected and cherished.

It will have maintained and enhanced its rural character whilst absorbing some further housing development.

These small sustainable developments will have been designed to be sympathetic to the surrounding countryside and provide for a balance of dwelling types specifically designed to meet local needs. Green spaces will have been preserved between developments.

The local economy will be supported through the facilitation of modest business growth where appropriate to the rural setting.

Community facilities will have expanded and become more varied to meet changing local needs.

The sense of community will be strengthened through improved interconnectivity between its main areas of settlement.

This will have been achieved primarily through the development of a network of safe pedestrian, cycle and equestrian routes."

2.6 To achieve this vision, the following key themes and objectives for realising the vision have been adopted:

- **Conserving and enhancing biodiversity**, the rural character and natural landscape of the Parish
- **Meeting the housing needs** whilst endeavouring to maintain a sustainable level of amenities and facilities for all residents of the Parish from younger families and the next generation through to the increasing number of older residents
- **Enabling appropriate development in sustainable locations**, such that these do not detract from the character, landscape and setting of the Parish
- **Having a balance of house types and sizes** reflecting the local need
- **Improving the built environment** and minimising the impact on the natural environment

3. What is the scope of the SEA?

Introduction

- 3.1 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA, i.e., the sustainability themes and objectives that should be a focus of the assessment of the plan and reasonable alternatives. Further information, i.e., the key issues which supported the development of the objectives, is presented in **Appendix B**.

Consultation

- 3.2 The SEA Regulations require that “*when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies*”. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England.⁷ As such, these authorities were consulted in March 2022. Only one response was received from Natural England, who had no specific comments to make.

The SEA framework

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

Table 3.2 SEA framework

SEA topic	SEA Objective	Assessment questions (will the proposal help to...)
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance internationally, nationally, and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites? • Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats as well as priority habitats and species, including ancient woodland? • Achieve biodiversity and environmental net gains and support the delivery of ecosystem services and multifunctional green infrastructure networks? • Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?
Climate change	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of journeys made by polluting vehicles?

⁷ These consultation bodies were selected “by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes” (SEA Directive, Article 6(3)).

SEA topic	SEA Objective	Assessment questions (will the proposal help to...)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling and public transport? Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources? Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?
	Support the resilience of the neighbourhood area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid development in areas at risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change? Ensure that inappropriate development does not take place in areas at higher risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change? Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the plan area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? Sustainably manage water runoff, reducing surface water runoff (either within the plan area or downstream)? Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development in the neighbourhood area? Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?
Landscape	To protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve and enhance the National Park? Protect and/ or enhance local landscape character and quality of place? Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character? Identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place? Protect visual amenity and locally important views in the neighbourhood area? Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the water setting, or rural setting, including trees and hedgerows?
Historic environment	To protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings?

SEA topic	SEA Objective	Assessment questions (will the proposal help to...)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the integrity of the historic setting of key monuments of cultural heritage interest as listed in the Hampshire HER? • Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the neighbourhood area?
Land, soil and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid the unnecessary sterilisation of, or hindering of access to mineral resources in the neighbourhood area? • Avoid the loss of high-quality agricultural land resources? • Avoid the unnecessary sterilisation of, or hindering of access to mineral resources in the neighbourhood area? • Promote the use of previously developed land, vacant & derelict brownfield land opportunities?
	Protect and enhance water quality and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support improvements to water quality? • Ensure the timely provision of wastewater infrastructure? • Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside development? • Protect groundwater and surface water resources from pollution? • Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/ or water recycling?
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, reducing deprivation, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality and affordable housing? • Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes? • Meet the needs of all sectors of the community? • Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people's needs? • Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including specialist services for disabled and older people? • Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities? • Facilitate green infrastructure enhancements? • Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction?

SEA topic	SEA Objective	Assessment questions (will the proposal help to...)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing residents?
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the key objectives within the Hampshire Local Transport Plan to encourage more sustainable transport? • Enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements? • Ensure sufficient road capacity to accommodate new development? • Promote improved local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement? • Facilitate on-going high levels of home and remote working? • Improve road safety? • Reduce the impact on residents from the road network? • Improve parking facilities? • Lack of EV charging points?

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

4. Introduction (to Part 1)

Overview

- 4.1 Whilst work on the WNP has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of all the work carried out to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives.
- 4.2 More specifically, this part of the report presents information on the consideration given to reasonable alternative approaches to addressing a particular issue that is of central importance to the Plan, namely the allocation of land for housing, or alternative sites. Land is currently being identified to deliver the neighbourhood area's 'fair share' of the Test Valley Borough RLP requirement for 588 new homes in the rural area of Northern Test Valley (which includes Wellow) within the plan period 2011 to 2029.

Why focus on sites?

- 4.3 The decision was taken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives in relation to the matter of allocating land for housing, given the following considerations:
- WNP objectives, particularly housing objectives to provide sufficient and appropriate high-quality and affordable housing to meet local needs.
 - Housing growth is known to be a matter of key interest amongst residents and other stakeholders; and
 - The delivery of new homes is most likely to have a significant effect compared to the other proposals within the Plan. National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.

Structure of this part of the report

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

5. Establishing reasonable alternatives

Introduction

- 5.1 The aim here is to explain the process that led to the establishment of alternative sites and thereby present “an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with”.⁸
- 5.2 Specifically, there is a need to explain the strategic parameters that have a bearing on the establishment of options (in relation to the level and distribution of growth) and the work that has been undertaken to date to examine site options (i.e., sites potentially in contention for allocation in the WNP). These parameters are then drawn together in order to arrive at ‘reasonable alternatives’.

Strategic parameters

- 5.3 As discussed in **Section 2.1**, the WNP is being prepared in the context of the Test Valley Borough RLP, New Forest NPLP and the emerging Test Valley DLP.
- 5.4 The Test Valley Borough RLP was adopted in 2016 and provides the main strategic context for the WNP, given its intention to allocate land outside of the National Park. The RLP identifies West Wellow as a ‘Rural Village’ in the third tier of the settlement hierarchy. No specific housing allocations are made in Wellow in the RLP, however rural parishes in the Northern Test Valley were allocated an overall figure with no indication of how this might be divided between the parishes.
- 5.5 Test Valley Borough Council are currently developing the emerging Test Valley Borough DLP; however no clear indication is given at this stage as to the number of homes which would be anticipated in Wellow over the plan period. Due to this, the Steering Group have decided to use the overall figure for rural parishes, as set out in the RLP, to calculate their ‘fair share’ based on the percentage of Wellow’s population compared to the total population of the rural parishes. In calculating the ‘fair share’, the population of the Parish falling within the boundary of the New Forest National Park (c. 380 residents) were excluded from the calculation, in line with the New Forest National Park Local Plan which does not allocate additional housing in this part of the Parish. Whilst nothing is set in stone concerning the housing allocation for Wellow, Test Valley Borough Council have accepted this approach at present.
- 5.6 The Wellow Parish Housing Needs Assessment (HNA), published in February 2021, concludes that 58 dwellings are required within the Local Plan period up to 2029 based on the ‘fair share’ approach. Once extant permissions and completions have been considered, this leaves an outstanding total of 22 dwellings.

⁸ Schedule 2(8) of the SEA Regulations

Site options

- 5.7 **Table 5.1** overleaf identifies the sites assessed through the Wellow Site Options and Assessment (SOA) report, published in December 2020 and later edited in May 2021. These sites were identified through the Test Valley Borough Council Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) (2017 and 2019) and the Test Valley SHELAA Review Call for Sites (2019/ 2020). In total, 20 sites were assessed as part of the SOA. Each site was given a rating of either green (suitable), amber (less suitable) or red (not suitable). Five sites, SHELAA 261, 6, 16B, 37 and 75, were deemed potentially suitable for limited development, whilst two sites, SHELAA 178 and 230, were deemed potentially suitable for redevelopment (of existing businesses only). Hence, five sites from the SHELAA are suitable for housing development.
- 5.8 Following the publication of the SOA, an addendum report was issued by the WNP Steering Group. This report identifies an additional site, Meadow Close. As shown in **Table 5.1** below, this site was deemed suitable for limited development. Hence, a total of six sites (shown in amber below), are deemed suitable for limited development and can therefore be used to form reasonable alternatives as part of this report.

Table 5.1 Sites available within the neighbourhood area

Site Reference	Site Name	Area (ha)	Capacity
SHELAA 257	Greenwood Copse (Employment site)	5.2	N/A
SHELAA 261	Land adjacent to Rowden Close	0.5	9
SHELAA 290	Yew Tree Cottage Romsey Road	0.44	N/A
SHELAA 294	Land at Merryhill Farm, Tanners Lane	2.6	N/A
SHELAA 350	Land adjacent to Oakdene Farm, Whinwhistle Road	0.8	N/A
SHELAA 6	The Field at Crawley Hill	1.86	40
SHELAA 10	Land South West of Halls Wood	0.5	N/A
SHELAA 16A	Pottery Farm West	6.2	N/A
SHELAA 16B	Pottery Farm East	3.3	37
SHELAA 37	Land to Rear of "Iona"/ "Bellevue Garage", Crawley Hill	2.64	26
SHELAA 178	Tanners Court, Tanners Lane (Employment site)	1.15	N/A
SHELAA 75	Land East of School Road	2.4	35
SHELAA 171	Land South of Romsey Road	5.82	N/A
SHELAA 228	Land at Warners Farm East of Whinwhistle Road	5	N/A
SHELAA 229	Land at Warners Farm West of Whinwhistle Road	7.8	N/A
SHELAA 230	Oak Dene Farm, Whinwhistle Road (Employment site)	8.5	N/A
SHELAA 134	Land at Maury's Mount, Slab Lane	1	N/A
SHELAA 209	Land South of Maury's Lane	8.5	N/A

Site Reference	Site Name	Area (ha)	Capacity
SHELAA 223	Land West of Slab Farm	0.51	N/A
SHELAA 224	Land North of Maury's Mount	0.5	N/A
Meadow Close	Land west of Meadow Close, Romsey Road	1.2	18

Establishing reasonable alternatives

5.9 As outlined above, a total of six sites (five from the SHELAA and one from the SOA addendum report) are deemed potentially suitable for limited development and can therefore be used to form reasonable alternatives as part of this report.

5.10 Four of these sites (SHELAA 6, 16B, 37 and 75) have the capacity to individually accommodate the identified residual housing need of 22 dwellings. Two of the remaining sites (SHELAA 261 and Meadow Close) do not have the capacity to do so in isolation, though Meadow Close potentially falls only four dwellings short.

5.11 Two dominant options emerge at this stage:

- Option 1: Allocate the two smaller sites (SHELAA 261: Land adjacent to Rowden Close, and Meadow Close: Land west of Meadow Close, Romsey Road) to deliver up to 27 homes in total (across both sites).
- Option 2: Allocate a single larger site (for which there are four choices: at either SHELAA 6 The Field at Crawley Hill, SHELAA 16B Pottery Farm East, SHELAA 37 Land to the rear of 'Iona' / 'Bellevue Garage', Crawley Hill, or SHELAA 75 Land east of School Road) to deliver a minimum of 22 homes (potentially up to 40 homes).

5.12 On this basis, Options 1 and 2 are taken forward for assessment at this stage as follows:

- **Option 1:** SHELAA 261: Land adjacent to Rowden Close delivering up to nine homes, and Meadow Close: Land west of Meadow Close, Romsey Road delivering up to 18 homes.
- **Option 2:**
 - **Option 2a:** SHELAA 6 The Field at Crawley Hill delivering up to 40 homes.
 - **Option 2b:** SHELAA 16B Pottery Farm East delivering up to 37 homes.
 - **Option 2c:** SHELAA 37 Land to the rear of 'Iona' / 'Bellevue Garage', Crawley Hill delivering up to 26 homes.
 - **Option 2d:** SHELAA 75 Land east of School Road delivering up to 35 homes.

6. Assessing the reasonable alternatives

6.1 As outlined in the previous section, the following options are established as alternative options for the purposes of the SEA:

- **Option 1:** SHELAA 261: Land adjacent to Rowden Close delivering up to nine homes, and Meadow Close: Land west of Meadow Close, Romsey Road delivering up to 18 homes.
- **Option 2:**
 - **Option 2a:** SHELAA 6 The Field at Crawley Hill delivering up to 40 homes.
 - **Option 2b:** SHELAA 16B Pottery Farm East delivering up to 37 homes.
 - **Option 2c:** SHELAA 37 Land to the rear of 'Iona' / 'Bellevue Garage', Crawley Hill delivering up to 26 homes.
 - **Option 2d:** SHELAA 75 Land east of School Road delivering up to 35 homes.

Methodology

- 6.2 For each of the options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability themes and objectives identified through scoping (see **Table 3.2**) as a methodological framework. **Green** is used to indicate significant positive effects, whilst **red** is used to indicate significant negative effects. Where appropriate neutral effects, or uncertainty will also be noted. Uncertainty is noted with **grey** shading.
- 6.3 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, where there is a need to rely on assumptions to reach a conclusion on a 'significant effect' this is made explicit in the appraisal text.
- 6.4 Where it is not possible to predict likely significant effects based on reasonable assumptions, efforts are made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and to indicate **a rank of preference**. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. Numbers are used to highlight the option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective with 1 performing the best.
- 6.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted considering the criteria presented within Regulations.⁹ So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects.

⁹ Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 20004.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

	Option 1: SHELAA 261 and Meadow Close	Option 2a: SHELAA 6	Option 2b: SHELAA 16B	Option 2c: SHELAA 37	Option 2d: SHELAA 75
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
Rank	1	1	2	2	2

- 6.6 Whilst none of the sites directly overlap with the boundaries of an internationally designated site, the neighbourhood area is relatively constrained in terms of its proximity to biodiversity designations. Namely, the area south of the A36 extends into the New Forest National Park Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar Site. As such, development through all options has the potential to impact the integrity of these internationally designated sites in the absence of mitigation measures. In particular Option 2a: The Field at Crawley Hill (delivering up to 40 homes) is located circa 30m north of the SAC designation, only being separated by the A36 (also referred to as Crawley Hill). In this regard, this site performs less favourably than all other options in relation to biodiversity impacts.
- 6.7 Since all Options fall within the Zone of Influence (ZOI) of the SAC, any new residential development will be required to mitigate the effects of the development and show how this will be achieved prior to approval of planning permission. For sites comprising of more than 50 dwellings and in more sensitive locations, a bespoke approach including demonstration of on-site/ off-site mitigation measures may be required. However, Option 2a does not breach this limit (proposing up to 40 homes and the largest of all the options). The New Forest Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme and the Partnership Plan for the New Forest National Park provide guidance in this respect.¹⁰ The remainder of the neighbourhood area is covered by several impact zones relating to designated areas including the Mottisfont Bats SAC foraging buffer zone, which should be considered under all options.
- 6.8 Regarding national designations within the neighbourhood area, it should be noted that the New Forest National Park also forms part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The neighbourhood area is also host to several regions of Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland; however, no sites intersect or are in proximity to these designations.
- 6.9 At the local level, there is a network of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats and Options 2b, 2c, and 2d are adjacent to areas of 'deciduous woodland'. There is also woodland north-east of Option 1 (Land adjacent to Rowden Close), whilst national datasets indicate the entire site is formed of deciduous woodland priority habitat, aerial viewing confirms most of the site is grassland/ scrub. Equally, Option 2b is constrained by 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh' BAP Priority Habitats on the other side of School Road, .
- 6.10 Outside the village of West Wellow there is open farmland, hedges, shaws (narrow belts of woodland), solitary trees and woodland, ponds, a network of streams (associated with the river Blackwater), and locally valued biodiversity corridors. Whilst these features could be retained and enhanced through

¹⁰ New Forrester Authority (2021) Partnership Plan for the New Forest National Park Available at: <https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/about-us/managementplan/>

development proposals associated with all five options, Option 1 (through delivering the housing number across two smaller sites and containing few features of biodiversity value) and Option 2a (containing few ecological features) will minimise impacts to the ecological features and networks within the neighbourhood area in comparison to the other three options which focus on larger-scale allocations adjacent to woodland areas.

- 6.11 At this stage of assessment, the potential for minor negative effects is identified in relation to Options 2b, 2c, and 2d, due to their existing ecological connections, though it is recognised that mitigation could reduce the extent of these effects, and new recreational space could provide benefits for biodiversity in the long-term. Negative effects are considered less likely at the remaining options (Options 1 and 2a), and this is reflected in the ranking of the options.

Climate change

	Option 1: SHELAA 261 and Meadow Close	Option 2a: SHELAA 6	Option 2b: SHELAA 16B	Option 2c: SHELAA 37	Option 2d: SHELAA 75
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
Rank	1	2	1	2	2

- 6.12 Emissions in the Borough are above the county and national averages. In terms of climate change mitigation, road transport is the significant contributor to emissions and according to the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results¹¹ the car is the main way of travelling in and beyond the neighbourhood area with car ownership being high.
- 6.13 Therefore, all options located within or adjacent to the built-up area boundary of Wellow, will help limit greenhouse gas emissions from transport through encouraging new development in locations with closer proximity to key amenities and public transport networks. In particular, Option 2b is within walking distance of Wellow's Primary School, and Option 1 (Land west of Meadow Close) is near Romsey Road which provides another access route, helping reduce journey times and emissions linked with daily school journeys.
- 6.14 However, the discussion under the transport topic has identified that development under Options 2a, 2c, 2d and Option 1 (Land adjacent to Rowden Close) is likely to affect congestion and thus emissions along the main route through the neighbourhood area (the A36). Considering the proposed level of growth through all options, no significant effects are considered likely, in particular, Option 1 (Land adjacent to Rowden Close) proposes very low growth directly affecting the A36, where such effects are likely to be negligible.
- 6.15 In relation to adapting to the effects of climate change, the proposed site allocations through all options are located within Flood Zone 1 and have a low risk from fluvial flooding. Fluvial flood risk in the neighbourhood area largely follows the Blackwater River. Options 2b and 2d are located closest Flood Zones 2 and 3 (approximately 200m east), however there is a large built-up

¹¹ Wellow Parish Council (2019) Survey Summary Results Available at: [West-Wellow-Neighbourhood-Leaflet.pdf](https://wellownhp.org.uk/West-Wellow-Neighbourhood-Leaflet.pdf) (wellownhp.org.uk)

residential area that separates both options and therefore no fluvial flood risk is anticipated through development.

- 6.16 Surface water flooding in the neighbourhood area is also highest in areas directly adjacent to the River Blackwater, particularly through East Wellow where 'high' surface water flood risk is exhibited. Option 2b is constrained by 'high' surface water flood risk from a tributary of the River Blackwater, and mitigation will be required to avoid significant negative effects arising. Such mitigation is already expected under the national and local planning policy frameworks. Further, Option 1 (Land adjacent to Rowden Close), Option 2a, and Option 2c are intersected by sections of 'medium' surface water flood risk, where again, mitigation (e.g., sustainable drainage systems) will be required and is considered likely to reduce/ avoid negative effect arising.
- 6.17 Option 1 (Land west of Meadow Close) and Option 2d both exhibit 'very low' surface water flood risk and are thus more favourable in relation to adapting to the effects of climate change when compared to the other options.
- 6.18 Overall, although Option 2b will require on-site mitigation measures to address areas at high risk of surface water flooding, it is expected that this could be readily delivered in development (as required by higher level policy framework) and the site provides good access to services such as Wellow's Primary School. The site is thus considered most likely to support active travel and more sustainable local journeys and reduce per capita emissions in this respect. Similarly, Option 1 proposes growth adjacent to the settlement boundary that is relatively well connected. On this basis, Options 1 and 2b are ranked marginally more preferably to Options 2a, 2c, and 2d. No significant effects are considered likely under any option.

Landscape

	Option 1: SHELAA 261 and Meadow Close	Option 2a: SHELAA 6	Option 2b: SHELAA 16B	Option 2c: SHELAA 37	Option 2d: SHELAA 75
Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	No	No	No
Rank	1	3	2	3	2

- 6.19 In terms of nationally protected landscapes, none of the options would deliver development within the boundaries of the New Forest National Park. However, development would be in its setting, with three sites (Options 1 (SHELAA 261), 2a, and 2d located just the other side of the A36 (with the A36 forming the National Park boundary). At Options 2a and 2d, the character of some viewpoints from residential properties along Whinwhistle Road/ School Road to the National Park might be impacted by development at the site, particularly given the openness of the landscape at Option 2a and the downward sloping topography around the site.
- 6.20 Locally valued views are identified in the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan: Policy Consultation¹² as recognised in the scope of the SEA. In this regard, Option 2b directly obstructs views southeast from the north of School Road and Option 1 (Meadow Close) has the potential to obstruct views northeast from Groves

¹² Steering Committee (2021) Policy Consultation available at: [Community Consultations - Google Drive](#)

Down depending on how much of the site developed. Negative effects could be anticipated in this respect, though it is recognised that these could be mitigated through careful design and layout, and consideration of building heights and massing.

- 6.21 Option 2b and both sites under Option 1 are adjacent to the village of West Wellow. As such, development through these options would help maintain the sense of place for both the individual communities of West Wellow and East Wellow and for those travelling through the defined gaps. This is particularly true for, Option 1 (Land adjacent to Rowden Close) which is near to existing residential development. This is opposed to Options 2a and 2c (adjacent to East Wellow) and 2d (adjacent to West Wellow), which encroach upon key gaps or areas of separation with a potential to erode the individual settlement identities. Negative effects are considered more likely under these options, and whilst these effects are unlikely to be significant, they are reflected in the ranking of the options. Development of a lower density that employs sympathetic design measures to protect the rural character could help to reduce such impacts.
- 6.22 It is important to recognise that Options 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d are large areas of greenfield land and the visual and landscape impacts from development at these locations are considered likely to be of greater significance than at the smaller sites proposed under Option 1. As such, Option 1 is likely to perform most favourably in relation to the landscape SEA theme with a greater potential to absorb and integrate the proposed development.
- 6.23 In summary, given their greater potential to erode settlement identity and landscape gaps, Options 2a and 2c are ranked less favourably than Options 1, 2b, and 2d. Option 1 could present a well-designed low-density scheme that is more likely to be accommodated without significant effects for landscape, and as such is ranked most preferably overall. It is considered likely that significant impacts could be avoided under any option with high-quality design and layout, and effective landscaping strategies, however, this is considered more uncertain at Option 2a, given the openness of the landscape here in the immediate setting of the National Park.

Historic environment

	Option 1: SHELAA 261 and Meadow Close	Option 2a: SHELAA 6	Option 2b: SHELAA 16B	Option 2c: SHELAA 37	Option 2d: SHELAA 75
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
Rank	2	1	1	1	1

- 6.24 There are a total of 48 Listed Buildings within the neighbourhood area, with the majority of these being grade II listed houses which are concentrated around West Wellow, the Historic Embley Park, and structures and features associated with St Margaret's Church.
- 6.25 In this regard, Option 1 (SHELAA 261 and Meadow Close) are located closest to the Listed Buildings around Lower Common Road, Button Lane and Slab Lane. Despite this it is recognised that the sites are afforded screening by the existing development within the settlement. Option 1 (Meadow Close) may be

visible from the setting of Bridge End farm (Grade II listed). The potential for negative effects is therefore identified, and suitable mitigation should be considered in design proposals.

- 6.26 There is a distinct absence of heritage assets both west of School Road and directly north of Romsey Road. As such, Options 2b and 2d are likely to avoid effects arising. Similarly, there are no designated Listed Buildings in proximity to Option 2a and 2c west of Whinwhistle Road.
- 6.27 None of the options are considered likely to generate negative impacts with regards to the solitary grade I Listed Building within the neighbourhood area: the Church of St Margaret, along Hackley's Lane, and none of the options are close to a conservation area.
- 6.28 Considering the above, no significant effects are considered likely under any of the options. However, Option 1, by inclusion of sites in closer 'proximity to heritage assets, namely the Meadow Close site, is considered less favourable than the remaining options.

Land, soil, and water resources

	Option 1: SHELAA 261 and Meadow Close	Option 2a: SHELAA 6	Option 2b: SHELAA 16B	Option 2c: SHELAA 37	Option 2d: SHELAA 75
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
Rank	1	2	1	2	1

- 6.29 All options are predicted to be predominantly underlain by Grade 4 'poor' quality agricultural land with a moderate likelihood of areas of high-quality agricultural land, this reduces the potential for significant impacts in relation to soil resources. All five Options are located entirely on Greenfield land, the largest of which (Option 2b) is 3.3 ha.
- 6.30 Option 1 proposes small-scale settlement edge sites which will likely minimise impacts in relation to soil resources. Greater land-take is considered likely under Options 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d. However, it is recognised that the scale of proposals which would be taken forward at these locations can potentially limit the impacts to soil resources.
- 6.31 Several locations within the neighbourhood area, including the land proposed under all options, overlap with the Hamble Estuary Eutrophic Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ). It is important to acknowledge that new legal advice from Natural England recommends that new developments should only be permitted if they are nutrient neutral. However, this is a regional issue which is beyond the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan to address.
- 6.32 Options 1, 2b, and 2d do not intersect waterbodies and no significant effects are anticipated in this respect. Despite this, it will still be important to ensure that allocations are managed to maintain water quality and riparian habitats, reducing negative impacts on the river system down stream in the River Test.¹³

¹³ Test Valley Borough Council (2020) Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) Available at: https://www.wellownhp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Appendix-4_NTV-Sites-outside-Settlement-Boundary-2019-20-Wellow-Extract.pdf

- 6.33 Consideration is given to Option 2a, which is drained by a stream that runs north into Ham Lake, via (intersecting) Option 2c. Appropriate mitigation and sustainable drainage schemes would be required to avoid impacts in relation to water quality at both sites.
- 6.34 Considering the potential impacts to water quality, Options 2a and 2c are considered less favourable to Options 1, 2b, and 2d, and this is reflected in the ranking of the options. Despite this, given the higher level policy framework that exists and protects water quality in development, no significant effects are considered likely.

Community wellbeing

	Option 1: SHELAA 261 and Meadow Close	Option 2a: SHELAA 6	Option 2b: SHELAA 16B	Option 2c: SHELAA 37	Option 2d: SHELAA 75
Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
Rank	1	2	1	2	1

- 6.35 All options could contribute to meeting the forecasted housing need over the Plan period, however, Option 1, in the absence of enhanced policy directions, may be less likely to contribute as significantly to meeting affordable housing needs given the smaller scale development proposed across two sites (reducing the potential to deliver affordable housing onsite). Despite this, it is recognised that the Parish Council would seek to explore the potential for focused affordable housing delivery at smaller sites and develop appropriate supporting policy.
- 6.36 Option 1 (Meadow Close) is connected to the village centre via a footway and public road, as well as the primary school, playing fields, parish hall, and a bus stop along the A36. Moreover, this site is close to existing residential development to the east and south. Option 1 (Land adjacent to Rowden Close) is also located close to local facilities and amenities, including the bus route along the A36, and is close to existing residential development.
- 6.37 Considering that residents will require access to a range of facilities, development away from the neighbourhood area's defined services and amenities is more unlikely to meet all the elements of sustainable development. East Wellow does not contain the range and number of facilities and services or have the same accessibility as West Wellow. Both Option 2a and 2c are located adjacent to the rural settlement of East Wellow, at a greater distance from the village centre and other amenities and can therefore be considered as less favourable in this regard.
- 6.38 Option 2b site is situated in a reasonably sustainable location in proximity to local amenities and services and is also adjacent to existing residential development within the settlement boundary. A powerline runs parallel with the site though which may restrict development as well as access for pedestrians and may pose a safety risk to younger individuals in the area. Option 2d is also within walking distance to local amenities. In this regard Option 2b and Option 2d are more sustainable sites in comparison to Option 2a and 2c.

6.39 In summary, Options 1, 2b and 2d would connect new development better with the village services and amenities available in West Wellow. These options are therefore preferred overall to Options 2a and 2c (which are located further and relate better to East Wellow). Despite this, all options are likely to result in significant positive effects given the contributions to meeting local housing needs.

Transportation

	Option 1: SHELAA 261 and Meadow Close	Option 2a: SHELAA 6	Option 2b: SHELAA 16B	Option 2c: SHELAA 37	Option 2d: SHELAA 75
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
Rank	1	3	2	3	2

6.40 With reference to local public transport networks, the neighbourhood area is not connected to the rail network. There are bus stops located along or near the A36 including Chatmohr, Slab Lane, and Canada Corner.

6.41 The A36 is the main A road within Wellow and provides a linear route through the south of the neighbourhood area. East Wellow and West Wellow are connected via Romsey Road, which can also be used to access Wellow Primary School. The settlements are also linked via smaller roads and tracks which include Tutts Lane and Tanners Lane to the north. In particular, Option 2b is within walking distance of Wellow's Primary School with Option 1 (Land west of Meadow Close) being located in proximity to Romsey Road, helping reduce journey times and emissions linked with daily school journeys.

6.42 Option 2b, Option 2d and both sites allocated through Option 1 would offer additional opportunities to deliver development in locations accessible to key services and facilities, thus limiting the need to travel to these amenities. Several smaller footpaths extend through the neighbourhood area. Option 2d and 2b (in particular) have direct access to Public Right of Way (PRoW) footpath number 40 15/1, which extends along School Road.

6.43 Option 1 (Land adjacent to Rowden Close) also offers opportunities to deliver development in good proximity to bus services near to the A36.

6.44 In contrast, Options 2a and 2c are located towards the settlement of East Wellow, north of the A36. Access to the Option 2a site would be directly from the A36, which would need to be confirmed with the Highways Authority to establish whether this point of access would be acceptable. Access to Option 2c would either need to be directly to the A36 (as with Option 2a) or via Option 2a. Although the positioning of both sites is adequate in terms of access to bus stops, their allocation may induce pressure on the A36 where concerns have raised by residents regarding congestion and access to the A road.¹⁴ This may be exacerbated due to Option 2a delivering up to 40 homes. Moreover, the location of Option 2a and 2c is further from services and amenities which may necessitate driving rather than sustainable modes of transport (including

¹⁴ Wellow Parish Council (2019) Survey Summary Results Available at: [West-Wellow-Neighbourhood-Leaflet.pdf](https://wellownhp.org.uk/West-Wellow-Neighbourhood-Leaflet.pdf) (wellownhp.org.uk)

walking or cycling). In this regard, Options 2a and 2c are less favourable in relation to the Transportation theme.

- 6.45 Option 2d would also likely require direct access from the A36, and it is noted that the School Road/ A36 junction/ access is already perceived to be dangerous (with restricted turning in place). This may also have implications for Option 2b further along School Road.
- 6.46 In summary Options 1 is considered most favourable in relation to the Transportation theme due to proximity to key amenities such as Wellow Primary School, PRowS and public transport. Options 2b and 2d perform less favourably due to their potential to exacerbate pressure on the A36. Options 2a and 2c are considered to perform least favourable given the potential to exacerbate pressure on the A36 and distance from services and amenities which will increase traffic related emissions and accessibility related issues. This is reflected in the ranking of options. Despite this, given the scale of development proposed under any option, these impacts are unlikely to be significant in nature.

Summary findings

6.47 A summary of the findings of the assessment of reasonable alternatives is presented below.

SEA theme		Option 1: SHELAA 261 and Meadow Close	Option 2a: SHELAA 6	Option 2b: SHELAA 16B	Option 2c: SHELAA 37	Option 2d: SHELAA 75
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
	Rank	1	1	2	2	2
Climate change	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
	Rank	1	2	1	2	2
Landscape	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	No	No	No
	Rank	1	3	2	3	2
Historic environment	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	1	1	1
Land, soil, and water resources	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
	Rank	1	2	1	2	1
Community wellbeing	Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
	Rank	1	2	1	2	1
Transportation	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No	No
	Rank	1	3	2	3	2

6.48 This assessment has highlighted that all options have the potential to have significant positive impacts in relation to the 'Community Wellbeing' theme, particularly in terms of delivering new housing in areas with good access to services and facilities and encouraging more sustainable and active methods of travel for undertaking some day-to-day activities within the neighbourhood area.

6.49 No other significant effects are considered likely at this stage; however, some uncertainty is noted in relation to landscape impacts at Option 2a. This relates to the larger scale of the site (though it is recognised that this may be larger than the eventual allocation/ promoted developable area of the site) and its potential impacts associated with important views in an open landscape area in the setting of the National Park. It is recognised that there is potential to reduce landscape impacts through appropriate design, layout, massing, and building heights in proposals for all options; but minor negative effects are still

considered likely, associated with development in the setting of the National Park.

- 6.50 The proposed sites under Options 2a, 2c and 2d would reduce the gap between the settlements of West Wellow and East Wellow and potentially impact upon views towards the National Park. In this regard, Option 2b also directly obstructs views southeast from north of School Road and Option 1 (Meadow Close) has the potential to obstruct views northeast from Groves Down, depending on how much of the site developed. Impacts to the 'Historic environment' are less prominent: The settlement of West Wellow contains the greatest concentration of heritage features within the neighbourhood area, however none of the five options are likely to lead to significant impacts on listed buildings (including the solitary Grade I Listed Building within the neighbourhood area – the Church of St Margaret, along Hackley's Lane) or heritage settings.
- 6.51 Options 2a and 2c relate to settlement expansion at East Wellow. This is considered a less sustainable location when compared to options expanding West Wellow, which would deliver development in closer proximity to the main service and facility provisions within the neighbourhood area. These factors result in Options 2a and 2c performing less favourably in relation to the 'transportation' and the 'climate change' SEA themes. When considering adaption to climate change, the assessment has also highlighted that Option 2b is constrained by 'High' surface water flood risk but significant negative effects are not expected.
- 6.52 Considering potential impacts to water quality, Options 2a and 2c are considered less favourable to Options 1, 2b, and 2d with regards to the 'Land, soil, and water resources' SEA theme, but with wider policy provisions (of the Local Plan and NPPF) protecting water quality, no significant effects are considered likely. All options focus development on areas of greenfield land and minor negative effects are considered likely in this respect.
- 6.53 The scale of development proposed under any option is not considered likely to lead to significant impacts in relation to biodiversity, but it is noted that Options 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d surround the central woodland area around Ham Lake with more ecological connections than identified at the sites under Option 1. Option 1 is often considered to perform marginally better in relation to environmental themes, by reducing the scale of development (with development dispersed across two smaller sites).

7. Developing the preferred approach

- 7.1 The Parish Council's reasons for developing the preferred approach in light of the alternatives assessment are identified below.
- 7.2 The Wellow Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee have identified that their preferred approach is to allocate the 'Land at Rowden Close' and the 'Land adjacent to Meadow Close' (Option 1) delivering up to 20 homes in total across both sites. Their reasons for doing so are given below:
1. Six potential sites - as described in Chapter 5 Establishing Reasonable Alternatives, a total of six sites (five from the SHELAA and one from the SOA addendum report) were deemed potentially suitable for limited development and formed reasonable alternatives. These were then assessed in further detail looking at constraints and opportunities as identified in the evidence base accumulated through the planning process. Each site does have constraints that need to be overcome through mitigation measures, which ultimately may not be appropriate.
 2. Housing need - a housing needs assessment¹⁵ was developed in the wake of a housing needs survey. The assessment took a top-down approach in considering the requirements of the Test Valley Borough's Local Plan¹⁶ and a bottom-up approach based on using the housing needs survey and market signals. Considering the housing already built during the Test Valley Borough's local plan period and following discussions with the Borough, the need for an additional 22 dwellings was identified in the Neighbourhood Plan period.
 3. Affordable housing - one of the key objectives for housing in the Neighbourhood Plan is to provide sufficient and appropriate high-quality and affordable housing to meet local needs. Based on the housing needs assessment, Test Valley Borough policies for building affordable housing and also through communication with the Borough, it was established that at least 9 affordable dwellings should be planned for to meet local needs.
 4. Size of sites - a comprehensive community survey in late 2018¹⁷, to which approximately 40% of households responded, indicated a strong preference for small developments of various types. Those developments thought to be suitable, or very suitable, were as follows (responses to a multiple choice question as a percentage of all responses to the question are given in brackets):
 - A mix of individual houses and small developments – less than 10 houses (87%)
 - Individual houses (83%)
 - Small developments of less than 10 houses (81%)

¹⁵ Wellow Neighbourhood Plan Team (2021) Housing Needs Assessment Wellow Parish: Summary Available at: [Housing Needs Assessment Wellow Parish Summary](#)

¹⁶ The New Forest National Park local plan did not make any provision for any further housing in that part of the Parish within the National Park.

¹⁷ Wellow Neighbourhood Plan (2019) Results from the 2018 Parish-wide survey of residents Available at: [Wellow Neighbourhood Plan Residents Survey Results](#)

- For developments of 10 - 24 houses (51%).
- 7.3 The vast majority considered any development larger than 10 -24 houses to be unsuitable or not very suitable: 50 – 74 houses (94%) and 75 -100 houses (97%).
- 7.4 For any site to be chosen for affordable housing under the neighbourhood plan, sustainability (especially in relation to access to local services and public transport) was a key focus, as well as the willingness of the landowner for their land to be developed for this purpose. The Meadow Close site is connected to the village centre via a footway and public road, as well as the primary school, playing fields, parish hall, and a bus stop along the A36. Moreover, this site is close to existing residential development to the east and south. The Rowden Close site is also located close to local facilities and amenities, including the bus route along the A36, and is close to existing residential development. Pottery Farm East site and the Land East of School Road were also identified as being sustainable (see 6.38) although there was some question of direct access onto the A36 in the case of the latter. As such, it is concluded these two sites are well located in terms of access to local services and transport options.
- 7.5 Before a final decision was made on which of the alternatives to choose, there was a further consultation with the community on policies to be adopted in the Neighbourhood Plan. These included housing policies and in particular, the choice of sites for any proposed housing development. All six sites were presented and respondents were asked to indicate their preferences in a multiple choice question. They were also given the option of suggesting any other site which had not been considered.

The preamble to the question explained that the housing needs survey and assessment had highlighted that there was a need for more housing in the Parish including affordable housing for rent or sale. Thus the Steering Committee were proposing to allocate the following:

- a. A site for affordable housing (10 or less dwellings) to meet local need;
- b. One or two sites for housing (less than 10 dwellings each), to meet the identified housing requirements for the Parish over the life of the Plan.

It was also explained that these sites could not be within the New Forest National Park due to policy constraints. The sites were those which had been assessed by Test Valley Borough Council (through the SHELAA process) and independent consultants or the Steering Group. The six sites had been highlighted by developers or landowners as being available or potentially appropriate for housing development.

- 7.6 There were 505 responses to the consultation¹⁸. The answer to the multiple choice question in which 364 participated, presented in order of preference, are demonstrated in Table 7.1 overleaf.

¹⁸ Wellow Neighbourhood Plan (2022) Policy Consultation Results from the Autumn 2021 Parish-wide consultation of residents
Available at: [Wellow Neighbourhood Plan Policy Consultation Results](#)

Table 7.1: Consultation results for the sites

<i>Name of site</i>	<i>No. expressing preference</i>	<i>Percentage (see note below)</i>
Land adjacent to Rowden Close (SHELAA 261)	248	66%
Land west of Meadow Close	215	57%
The Field at Crawley Hill (SHELAA 6)	145	39%
Pottery Farm East (SHELAA 16B)	145	39%
Land to the rear of 'Iona'/Bellvue Garage (SHELAA 37)	140	37%
Land east of School Road (SHELAA 75)	135	36%
<i>Note: percentage - those expressing a preference for a site/total number participating in question</i>		

- 7.7 Based on potential site capacities for housing, sustainability, known preferences of landowners, detailed local knowledge of the sites and, most importantly, community preferences, the preferred approach was clear to the Steering Committee which was that the Rowden Close and Meadow Close sites should be included in the Plan policy.

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

8. Introduction (to Part 2)

8.1 The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the current 'Submission' version of the WNP. This chapter presents:

- An appraisal of the current version of the WNP under the seven SEA topic headings; and
- The overall conclusions at this current stage and recommendations for the next stage of plan-making.

WNP policies

8.2 The WNP puts forward 28 policies to guide development in the neighbourhood area. **Table 8.1** groups the drafted policies under eight broad policy themes set out within the WNP.

Table 8.1 WNP policies

Policy Number	Policy Name
WP-S1	Sustainable development
WP-S2	Renewable Energy Development
WP-L1A	Landscape Character Within the National Park
WP-L1B	Landscape Character Outside of the National Park
WP-L2	Equestrian Facilities
WP-L3	Local Green Spaces
WP-L4	Important Views
WP-L5	Green and Blue Infrastructure
WP-L6	Dark Night Skies
WP-L7	Biodiversity
WP-L8	The River Blackwater
WP-F1	Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Solent Maritime SAC
WP-F2	Flooding and Drainage
WP-H1	Housing Need
WP-H2	Infill and Redevelopment
WP-H3	Dwelling Extensions
WP-H4	Replacement dwellings
WP-H5	Seasonal Workers Accommodation
WP-B4	Conversion of Rural Buildings
WP-H6	Sites Allocated for Housing Development
WP-B1	Settlement Character
WP-B2	Design and Heritage
WP-B3	Special Character Areas
WP-C1	West Wellow Village Centre Improvements

Policy Number	Policy Name
WP-C2	Infrastructure / Community Aspirations
WP-E1	Employment Development
WP-T1	Accessibility, Road Safety and Sustainable Transport
WP-T2	Quiet Lanes Policy

Methodology

- 8.3 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see **Table 3.2**) as a methodological framework.
- 8.4 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the strategic nature of the policies under consideration and understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario) that is inevitably limited. Given uncertainties there is a need to make assumptions, e.g., in relation to plan implementation and aspects of the baseline that might be impacted. Assumptions are made cautiously and explained within the text (with the aim of striking a balance between comprehensiveness and conciseness). In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict 'significant effects', but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.
- 8.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e., the potential for the Neighbourhood Plan to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes and projects. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.

9. Assessment of the plan

Introduction

- 9.1 The assessment is presented below under eight topic headings, reflecting the established assessment framework (see **Section 3**). A final section (**Chapter 10**) then presents overall conclusions.

Plan contents, aims, and objectives

- 9.2 The Wellow neighbourhood area is in Central Hampshire within Test Valley Borough. The south-western part of the neighbourhood area is also within the New Forest National Park (south of the A36). The Wellow Neighbourhood Development Plan has been prepared to add further local information to the strategic policies of both the Test Valley Revised Local Plan (RLP) (2011) and the New Forest National Park Plan (2019).
- 9.3 The Test Valley Borough Local Plan identifies West Wellow as a 'Rural Village' within the third tier of the settlement hierarchy, with no specific housing need figure provided. However, the rural parishes of the Northern Test Valley are apportioned an overall combined figure of 588 homes, of which 200 are to be affordable. The Wellow neighbourhood area has committed to delivering 58 of these 588 homes. Once completions and permissions have been considered (covering the start of the plan period), 22 homes are required up to 2029.
- 9.4 To meet this need, the Wellow Neighbourhood Development Plan allocates the following two sites for development (Policy WP-H6: Sites Allocated for Housing Development):
- Site WP1: Land at Rowden Close, allocated for approximately six to eight houses; and
 - Site WP2: Land adjacent to Meadow Close for approximately 12 houses, ten of which are to be affordable.
- 9.5 Whilst this falls slightly short of the required need for 22 homes, this has been agreed to date with Test Valley as proportionate, and the remaining two homes are likely to be met through windfall development.
- 9.6 A key attribute of Site WP2 is the higher than usual proportion of affordable houses, which will provide increased opportunity for first time buyers and young families to move into the area.
- 9.7 Including the site allocations above, the Wellow Neighbourhood Development Plan proposes 28 policies to help shape development in the neighbourhood area. These policies seek to protect and enhance landscape character and value, settlement identities, biodiversity, watercourses and drainage, the built environment and heritage assets (including their settings), the design of development, community and transport infrastructure, and key employment areas. Furthermore, the policies recognise the context of climate change, and promote high levels of efficiency in development and opportunities to increase resilience and self-containment. Of note, the plan seeks to protect the rural character of Wellow, recognising key characteristics such as dark skies,

important views, local green spaces, countryside access, and quiet lanes, whilst facilitating appropriate countryside development.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- 9.8 A section of the southern part of the Wellow neighbourhood area intersects several designations for biodiversity, including international designations (Ramsar, Special Area of Conservation, and Special Protection Area) and nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in addition to being part of the New Forest National Park. As such, this part of the neighbourhood area and the wider neighbourhood area is at risk of impacts to biodiversity, including biodiversity loss and fragmentation. In light of the presence of internationally designated sites, a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) has been undertaken. The recommendations of this assessment have been incorporated into the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan, which, in line with the findings of the HRA will ensure no likely significant effects either alone or in combination with other plans.
- 9.9 The proposed allocation sites are not significantly constrained by biodiversity, whilst national datasets indicate that Site WP1 (Land at Rowden Close) is formed entirely of deciduous woodland, aerial viewing shows that the site is grassland/scrub adjacent to woodland habitats in the north-east of the site. The scale of development proposed at each site is lower than the indicative threshold for consultation with Natural England in relation to impacts at SSSIs.
- 9.10 The site allocation policy WP-H6 (Sites Allocated for Housing Development) helps to mitigate any biodiversity and geodiversity impacts at designated sites. The policy stipulates that proposals will need to ensure the density of development is appropriate to this edge of countryside location. Additionally, the policy ensures that a landscape buffer or biodiversity buffer is included as part of development proposals. The protection of green spaces (under Policy WP-L3) will also contribute to the wider green infrastructure network, supporting connectivity throughout the plan area.
- 9.11 Positive effects in this respect are also considered likely as a result of policy WP-B3 (Special Character Areas), which indicates development applications should plant native species to contribute to the natural environment. Policy WP-L5 (Green and Blue Infrastructure) further indicates proposals that link to the existing green and blue network will be supported where they will cause no damage and promote the planting of new trees. A key feature in the neighbourhood area is the River Blackwater. Policy WP-L8 seeks to protect biodiversity along the valued watercourse and its identified buffer zones.
- 9.12 Other policies of relevance to biodiversity include policies WP-S2 (Renewable Energy Development), WP-L2 (Equestrian Facilities) and WP-E1 (Employment Development). In line with these policies, applications for development will only be supported where areas that are important for biodiversity will not be adversely impacted. Additionally, vegetation like trees and hedgerows should be maintained, and fragmentation should be avoided (this is also supported through Policy WP-T2 (Quiet Lanes)).
- 9.13 The policies discussed above underpin the overarching policy WP-L7 (Biodiversity), which more broadly seeks to promote development that

conserves and enhances biodiversity, and importantly, provides a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%, in accordance with national policy.

- 9.14 In conclusion, the proposed spatial strategy avoids significant impacts in relation to biodiversity, and the wider plan policies work well to protect and enhance biodiversity where possible. As such, no significant deviations from the baseline are anticipated, and broadly **neutral effects** are concluded as most likely.

Climate change

- 9.15 Carbon dioxide emissions for the Test Valley authority area have been declining over the period 2005-2018 (in line with regional and national statistics, though at a slower rate). The biggest contributor to emissions in the district is the transport sector. Currently, there are no electric vehicle charging points within the neighbourhood area itself which can help mitigate this impact. In terms of flooding, the Wellow neighbourhood area is subject to medium and high risk of surface water flooding due to the presence of watercourses, including the River Blackwater.
- 9.16 The two sites proposed are not significantly constrained by flood risk, but Site WP1 (Land at Rowden Close) does intersect an area of medium surface water flood risk, whilst Site WP2 (Land adjacent to Meadow Close) exhibits low surface water flood risk. Both sites are at the settlement edge and relate well to West Wellow, where most of the neighbourhood area's service and facility provisions are located.
- 9.17 The site allocation policy WP-H6 (Sites Allocated for Housing Development) indicates development will need to have a climate change focus. The policy specifies development proposals should include electric charging points for the new residents, which will encourage a shift towards electric vehicles and a possible reduction in emissions. Additionally, the policy stipulates there should be safe pedestrian and cycle access provided on both sites, which will encourage a modal shift further supporting emissions reductions. The policy also supports a more sustainable design and build process, for example, siting and orientating structures to optimise passive solar gain where appropriate and using thermally efficient building materials. This could offer the opportunity for solar energy generation, and lower carbon emissions associated with energy generation for running homes.
- 9.18 In terms of the wider policy framework, Policy WP-S1 (Sustainable development) indicates proposals should promote sustainable transport links to all local facilities, minimise energy use and include methods of renewable energy generation, water recycling, and rainwater harvesting. This will help to lower carbon emissions in the area whilst also reducing the amount of water consumed and energy used to recycle it.
- 9.19 In terms of flooding, Policy WP-L8 (The River Blackwater) stipulates that development proposals will need to ensure there is no adverse impact on watercourses through flood risk. Policy WP-F2 (Flooding and Drainage) further reiterates this point; stating all new developments should adopt sustainable drainage systems where appropriate to aid in flood water removal. This reflects the requirements of the NPPF (2021) for mitigation.

9.20 In conclusion, the spatial strategy avoids significant effects in relation to climate change adaptation, whilst wider plan policies seek to promote climate mitigation and increase resilience. The plan policies work well to reduce carbon emissions, encourage renewable energy, and manage flood risk. On this basis, no significant deviations from the baseline are anticipated as a result of implementing the plan, and broadly **neutral effects** are concluded as most likely. Minor positive effects may be achieved given the promotion for more renewable energy installations and higher levels of efficiency in development.

Landscape

9.21 The Wellow neighbourhood area lies within the South Hampshire Lowlands National Character Area, where ongoing development is cited as a challenge to the landscape. Wellow also overlaps with three local landscape character areas: LCA1A West Wellow Heaths, LCA2A Embley Wood and Heath, and LCA4A Sherfield English. Key development impacts in these areas include loss or impacts to key landscape features (such as trees and hedgerow) and the construction of overhead pylons, which are intrusive on the landscape in open areas.

9.22 Part of the Wellow neighbourhood area also lies within the New Forest National Park (under the remit of the National Park Authority). Notably there are important views in the neighbourhood area, that have been identified as providing locally valued views of the landscape, and special qualities of the National Park.

9.23 The proposed sites are located at the edge of West Wellow. Most notably, Site WP1 (Land at Rowden Close) is located adjacent (on the opposite side of the A36) and in the immediate setting of the National Park, whilst Site WP2 (Land adjacent to Meadow Close) is located further north, beyond the existing built-up area of West Wellow. Site WP2 (Land adjacent to Meadow Close) has the potential to obstruct views northeast from Groves Down depending on how much of the site developed. Negative effects could be anticipated in this respect, though it is recognised that these could be mitigated through careful design and layout, and consideration of building heights and massing.

9.24 The site allocation policy WP-H6 (Sites Allocated for Housing Development) demonstrates proposals will need to fully consider the landscape context of the neighbourhood area. The policy stipulates housing layouts should minimise the visual impact for residents of nearby houses, and that the design should consider the natural and historic local environment and as referred to in the relevant character areas. Additionally, the policy sets out the need to ensure the density of development is appropriate to this edge of countryside location and makes provision for a landscape buffer. The policy seeks to ensure visual impacts on the landscape are reduced to a minimum, the important surrounding landscape is used to inspire considerate development in terms of siting, density and design, and landscaping is used to positively contribute to the surrounding countryside. These policy provisions are particularly important given the proximity to and the overlap with the New Forest National Park.

9.25 The wider housing policies seek to ensure new development protects key views and respects local character. Policies concerned with different development types, such as WP-L2 (Equestrian Facilities) and WP-E1 (Employment Development), and specific landscape features, like WP-L8 (The River

Blackwater) and WP-T2 (Quiet Lanes), outline the need for new development to not adversely impact the quality and character of the local area. These policies ensure landscape is carefully considered in all types of development.

- 9.26 The wider policy framework seeks to broadly maintain and enhance the local landscape. Policies WP-S1 (Sustainable Development) and WP-S2 (Renewable Energy Development) require that renewable energy development is in keeping with the character of the area and does not detract from key landscape features, such as identified key views (also protected through policy WP-L4). Additionally, Policies WP-L1A (Landscape Character within the National Park) and WP-L1B (Landscape Character Outside of the National Park) seek to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park, which includes protecting the settlement pattern and rural lanes (supplemented by Policy WP-T2), maintaining levels of tranquillity (supplemented by Policy WP-L6), and supporting proposals that reduce adverse landscape impacts.
- 9.27 In conclusion, the Plan proposes small-scale greenfield development, within a sensitive landscape setting and as such, negative impacts are considered highly likely. However, the plan policies cumulatively work well to reduce the landscape impact that development is likely to have and reduce the potential significance of residual effects. As such, **minor long-term negative effects** are concluded as most likely.

Historic environment

- 9.28 The Wellow neighbourhood area has a rich historic environment. This includes 48 listed buildings, many non-designated locally important heritage assets, and the Grade II listed Embley Park - which is on the Heritage at Risk register. The Wellow Neighbourhood Plan will need to consider the historic environment of the area and ensure policies work to maintain and improve it.
- 9.29 Neither of the proposed site allocations are immediately constrained by designated heritage assets. Most notably, there is a potential for development at WP2 (Land adjacent to Meadow Close) to affect the setting of Bridge End farm (Grade II listed), however, mitigation (including appropriate screening) could likely reduce the significance of impacts in this respect.
- 9.30 The site allocation policy WP-H6 (Sites Allocated for Housing Development) demonstrates proposals will have to fully consider the historic environment. The policy indicates development design will need to draw on references from the historic environment, including information provided in the Character Appraisal areas and the design codes prepared for both sites. This demonstrates the existing historic environment will help to influence the layout, siting, and design of new housing; working to ensure new development is considerate of its surroundings and works to positively contribute to the local historic environment.
- 9.31 The wider Neighbourhood Plan policy framework further supports the protection and enhancement of the local historic environment. Specifically, policy WP-B2 (Design and Heritage) stipulates proposals must ensure development unsympathetic towards the historic environment is not brought forward. Furthermore, Policy WB-L1B (Landscape Character Outside of the National Park) indicates development that will better reveal the significance of the Grade II listed Embley Park and sustain its value for the future will be supported.

Policy WP-L8 (The River Blackwater) indicates all development alongside the watercourse and within its buffer areas should protect and enhance heritage value and setting.

- 9.32 Additionally, the housing policies work to ensure housing development better reveals the significance or special interest of heritage assets and does not detract from the historical or architectural qualities of heritage assets.
- 9.33 In conclusion, the policies within the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan work well to prevent or mitigate any potential impacts development could have on the historic environment, and no significant impacts are considered likely as a result of the spatial strategy. As such, no significant deviations from the baseline are anticipated, and broadly **neutral residual effects** are concluded as most likely overall.

Land, soil, and water resources

- 9.34 Parts of the Wellow neighbourhood area are underlain by Grade 2 and Grade 3 agricultural land, while other parts are of lower agricultural land quality. The proposed allocation sites (WP1 and WP2) are considered likely to be of lower quality (Grade 4) agricultural land, and neither site is currently actively farmed. Whilst greenfield sites, small-scale development is being proposed, which includes space allowances for landscaping/ a landscape buffer. It is further noted that the spatial strategy reflects a lack of available brownfield alternatives in the settlement areas.
- 9.35 Policy WP-S2 (Renewable Energy Development) indicates applications for renewable energy development will be supported where they make the use of previously developed land, non-agricultural land, or land of low agricultural value. This will help to safeguard areas of greater agricultural value and undeveloped land for more appropriate use. Furthermore, the land surrounding the settlement areas is recognised as countryside, limiting development potential, and providing long-term protection for soils.
- 9.36 Policy WP-L8 (The River Blackwater) indicates water resources will be safeguarded in the neighbourhood area and development proposals will need to demonstrate they will not cause pollution, contamination, or flood risk. This links to policy WP-F2 (Flooding and Drainage), which outlines the need to adopt sustainable drainage schemes where appropriate to help manage water flows and water quality. Furthermore, nitrogen pollution in the Solent Region International Sites is covered by policy WP-F1 (Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Solent Maritime SAC). In line with Policy WP-F1, proposals will need to demonstrate the mitigation measures that will be adopted, including financial contributions.
- 9.37 In conclusion, the policies within the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan work to safeguard soil and water resources. However, the development proposed will result in the loss of greenfield land at the settlement edge. Given only small-scale development is being proposed, **minor negative effects** are concluded as most likely.

Community wellbeing

- 9.38 The Wellow neighbourhood area experiences strong barriers to housing; the area in its entirety falls within the 10% most deprived category according to the 2019 findings for this domain of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The 2019 IMD also highlights that 'living environment' is a domain of concern for the neighbourhood area.
- 9.39 The proposed site allocations relate well with West Wellow (as settlement edge locations) and will deliver most of the identified housing needs whilst maintaining the separate community identities of East and West Wellow. The site allocation policy, Policy WP-H6 (Sites Allocated for Housing Development), demonstrates development will need to have a community wellbeing focus. The policy indicates that development proposals will need to provide safe active transportation access (pedestrian and cycle) to the sites and integrate with the wider Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network. This will support modal shift, encouraging active travel uptake which will improve the physical and mental health of residents.
- 9.40 The wider neighbourhood plan policies will bring about positive impacts for Wellow. Notably Policy WP-S1 (Sustainable development) outlines the need for development to contribute to the vitality and viability of the neighbourhood area; including designating local green spaces for recreational activities to promote physical and mental wellbeing (supplemented by Policy WP-L3). Policy WP-S1 (Renewable Energy Development) seeks to ensure where development is proposed, this does not affect the amenities of the neighbourhood area or compromise resident safety. Furthermore, the housing policies seek to ensure specific housing needs are addressed connecting with, and without compromising, the parish's existing infrastructure, facilities, and services.
- 9.41 Positive effects are considered likely through the delivery of community policies WP-C1 (West Wellow Village Centre Improvements) and WP-C2 (Infrastructure / Community Aspirations). These policies will clearly bring forward benefits by ensuring access to facilities is improved, more services are provided, and local needs raised through consultation are addressed. This includes supporting local economic growth through Policy WP-E1 (Employment Development), which will allow for working from home as well as increased business in the neighbourhood area.
- 9.42 In conclusion, the policies within the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan work to improve resident wellbeing, delivering new high-quality housing, safeguarding infrastructure, designating green space, and supporting local employment development. As such, it is concluded there will be **significant long-term positive effects** against this SEA theme.

Transportation

- 9.43 The Wellow neighbourhood area experiences issues associated with large traffic volumes, vehicular pollution, and difficulties with access due to poor public transportation. New development has the potential to increase these pressures and as such proposals should incorporate ways to alleviate this stress. It is also noted that additional development could compromise road

safety, given the narrow lanes of the neighbourhood area already experience busy congested periods.

- 9.44 The proposed sites are capable of connecting efficiently with the existing road network and integrate well with existing transport provisions. The site allocation policy, Policy WP-H6 (Sites Allocated for Housing Development) demonstrates development will need to have a transportation focus. The policy indicates proposals should include electric charging points for residents of the new development and minimise street parking by providing on-plot parking – which will encourage a shift towards electric vehicles and reduce any additional parking impacts. Additionally, the policy stipulates there should be safe pedestrian and cycle access provided on both sites, with the potential to be integrated into the existing PRoW network, which will encourage active and transportation options.
- 9.45 The wider neighbourhood plan policy framework seeks to deliver transport improvements within the neighbourhood area. Notably Policy WP-S1 (Sustainable development) indicates easily accessible sustainable modes of transport to local facilities should be provided, especially in areas with poor connection. The need for good connections is reiterated in policy WP-B2 (Design and Heritage), which indicates walking and cycling routes should be implemented to boost connectivity. Additionally, Policy WP-C1 (West Wellow Village Centre Improvements) highlights the need to improve car parking provision and consider the impact of new development on the narrow lanes of the area. This links to policy WP-E1 (Employment Development) which seeks to reduce the transport impact of other types of development in the neighbourhood area.
- 9.46 Policy WP-L5 works to protect Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in the area by ensuring proposals provide mitigation where they do impact on these PRoWs. The transport policies work to ensure road safety is considered in all development, sustainable travel is encouraged, active transportation links are improved, parking provision is sufficient, and quiet lanes are maintained. This is further reflected through Policies WP-S2 (Renewable Energy Development) and WP-L2 (Equestrian Facilities), which require that development proposals do not adversely impact the existing rural road network but work to provide suitable and safe access.
- 9.47 In conclusion, while it is considered that new development in Wellow will increase the stress on the local transportation network the Neighbourhood Plan policy framework seeks to improve existing transport infrastructure and support modal shift. Measures proposed range from parking provisions to improving active and sustainable transportation links and should cumulatively work to reduce the potential impact of development being proposed through the plan, as well as wider development that may occur over the plan period. As such, impacts are not considered likely to be of significance, and residual **minor negative effects** are concluded as most likely.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- 10.1 No significant negative effects are considered likely in implementing the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan. Significant positive effects are likely to emerge from the plan efforts to address housing needs and deliver much needed affordable housing in suitable locations that connect well with the settlement, and the settlements' service and facility provisions.
- 10.2 With minimal constraints identified in relation to the proposed sites, no significant deviations from the baseline are anticipated in relation to the SEA themes of biodiversity, climate change, and historic environment, and broadly neutral effects are concluded in relation to these themes.
- 10.3 Residual minor negative effects are considered likely in relation to landscape, land, soil, and water resources, and transportation. This predominantly reflects the inevitable loss of greenfield land within a sensitive landscape area, and additional cars on the road generating local traffic. Effects are significantly reduced by the small-scale development being proposed at each site.
- 10.4 Cumulative effects are considered likely to be positive in relation to the wider housing market area (by contributing to district wide housing needs), but may be negative (though minor) in relation to the landscape, given the potential for multiple development plans increasing development pressures in the setting of the New Forest National Park.

Recommendations

- 10.5 No recommendations have been made for the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan, as the policies in place provide suitable mitigation to reduce impacts, and the identified residual minor negative effects are considered an inevitable consequence of development.

Part 3: What are the next steps?

11. Next steps

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

Plan finalisation

11.2 Following consultation, responses received will be considered and the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan and SEA Environmental Report will be finalised for submission.

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

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

Monitoring

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

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

Appendices

Appendix A Regulatory requirements

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

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

Environmental Report question	In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include... ¹⁹
What is the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan.
What is the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship with other relevant plans and programmes. The relevant environmental protection objectives established at international or national level. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
What's the scope of the SEA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
What is the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
What are the key issues and objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key problems/issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment.
What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with. The likely significant effects associated with alternatives. Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives appraisal/a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the current version of the plan.
What are the assessment findings at this stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likely significant effects associated with the Regulation 14 version of the plan. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the Regulation 14 version of the plan.
What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The next steps for the plan making /SEA process.

¹⁹ NB this column does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation.

Table AA.2 ‘Checklist’ of how (throughout the SEA process) and where (within this report) regulatory requirements have been, are, and will be met.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
Schedule 2 of the regulations lists the information to be provided within the SA Report	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	Chapter 2 (‘What is the plan seeking to achieve’) presents this information.
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;	These matters have been considered in detail through scoping work, which has involved dedicated consultation on a Scoping Report. The ‘SEA framework’ – the outcome of scoping – is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA?’). More detailed messages, established through a context and baseline review are also presented in Appendix B of this Environmental Report.
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.;	
5. The environmental protection, objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been considered during its preparation;	<p>The SEA framework is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA’). Also, Appendix B presents key messages from the context review.</p> <p>With regards to explaining “how...considerations have been taken into account”, Chapter 7 explains the Steering Group’s ‘reasons for supporting the preferred approach’, i.e., explains how/ why the preferred approach is justified in light of alternatives appraisal.</p>
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects);	<p>Chapter 6 presents alternatives appraisal findings (in relation to housing growth, which is a ‘stand-out’ plan policy area).</p> <p>Chapters 9 presents an appraisal of the plan.</p> <p>With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 8 explains the role of the SEA framework/scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions, e.g., timescale.</p>
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;	The assessment highlights certain tensions between competing objectives, which might potentially be actioned by the Examiner, when finalising the plan. Also, specific recommendations are made in Chapter 10.
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;	<p>Chapters 4 and 5 deal with ‘Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with’, in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues and options.</p> <p>Also, Chapter 7 explains the Parish Council’s ‘reasons for selecting the preferred option’ (in-light of alternatives assessment).</p>

9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10;	Chapter 11 presents measures envisaged concerning monitoring.
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10.A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings	The NTS is provided at the beginning of this Environmental Report.
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The SA Report must be published alongside the Draft Plan, in accordance with the following regulations

authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2)	At the current time, this Environmental Report is published alongside the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan, with a view to informing Regulation 14 consultation.
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The SA must be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.

The environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 shall be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure.	Assessment findings presented within this Environmental Report, and consultation responses received, have been fed back to the Steering Group and have informed/ will continue to inform plan finalisation.
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Appendix B Scoping information

The following key issues were identified through scoping.

Air quality

With no significant air quality issues identified, air quality was scoped out of the assessment.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

A small section on the southern tip of the WNA falls under several designations of international and national importance, including Ramsar Site/SAC/SPA/SSSI, whilst also falling within the New Forest National Park boundary.

Increased recreation without mitigation could result in the significant features of the sites being degraded or lost. In turn, these internationally important areas could lose their birds and habitat, (and therefore their designations), and the wider New Forest site could lose significant important areas for birds, plants, and wildlife generally.

Since the WNA falls within the Zone of Influence (ZOI), any new residential development will be required to mitigate the effects of the development and show how this will be achieved prior to approval of planning permission. For sites comprising of more than 50 dwellings and in more sensitive locations, a bespoke approach including demonstration of on-site/ off-site mitigation measures may be required. The New Forest Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme and the Partnership Plan for the New Forest National Park provide guidance in this respect.

The priority habitats within the WNA including the Rivers Blackwater host a variety of plant and animal species that contribute to biodiversity and support ecological connectivity. These areas should be retained and enhanced through development.

Climate change

CO₂ emissions for Test Valley have steadily declined over the period of 2005-2018, in line with regional and national statistics, but at a slightly slower rate. The transport sector is the largest contributor to emissions in the district, and continues to be a key challenge locally, reflecting the rural nature of the parish.

The lack of charging stations with the WNA itself, has the potential to discourage sustainable transport methods in Wellow.

The WNA is partially affected by areas of high and medium fluvial and surface water flood risk, notably adjacent to the River Blackwater.

Landscape

The WNA lies within the South Hampshire Lowlands National Character Area (NCA). New development within the WNA should seek to protect, manage, and enhance the area's historic well-wooded character, including its ancient semi-natural woodlands, wood pasture, and hedgerows.

There are three distinct LCAs within the Parish, namely LCA1A West Wellow Heaths, LCA2A Embley Wood and Heath, and LCA4A Sherfield English. A prominent issue

associated with the Sherfield English LCA is the extent of overhead pylons which are intrusive particularly in more open areas. Similarly, the LCA's visually prominent poly tunnels may be vulnerable to associated development.

Moreover, important viewpoints have been identified in Wellow, valued locally by residents, and reflecting the special qualities of the WNA.

Historic environment

With regards to the 'at risk' Embley Park historic park and garden, the need to widen understanding of significance and conservation to sustain value remains and close attention should be paid to the Conservation Management Plan which covers the adjacent school. This area may be considered highly vulnerable to new development within the WNA.

The parish is also rich in non-designated assets, for example Hampshire's HER notes records of historic features and structures scattered across the Parish, which include Palaeolithic hand axes which should be considered through any new development.

Land, soil, and water resources

A proportion of the WNA is underlain by land classified as (moderate) best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land. Future development should seek to avoid loss of this resource wherever possible. Changes in climate may also influence the condition / quality of soil. This includes in relation to soil moisture levels (which in turn may affect the use of land and economic activities such as agriculture), whilst other uses of the land may equally have an effect (e.g., through agricultural and other land management activities / operations).

Public water supplies in the area are largely dependent on groundwater either directly or from the groundwater-fed watercourses. Therefore, changes to soil and geology (including land use changes, changes in climate, or pollution events) could have implications for the water supplies of the Borough, as well as for biodiversity.

Community wellbeing

The 2019 IMD indicates that there are strong barriers to housing experienced in across the Parish, with the total area falling within the 10% most deprived in the nation. Therefore, the WNP should seek to reduce the barriers to housing, for example, through Affordable Housing policies.

The 2019 IMD also highlights that 'living environment' is a topic of concern the areas of the Parish covered by Test Valley 013A and Test Valley 013B. The WNP may include relevant policies to address this indicator, aiming to address issues such as housing quality, air quality, and road safety.

As the requirements of the working population continue to change, there is likely to be a greater need for adaptable dwellings that can accommodate flexible working practices which might include co-working facilities or hubs.

Transportation

According to the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results the noise and volume of traffic on the A36, pollution and difficulties of access were what Wellow residents dislike most in the WNA in addition to poor public transport - specifically, the bus service.

Considering trends which favour cars/vans as the primary mode of transport and low levels of public transport use, planning should seek to maximise opportunities to reduce the need to travel, enable home working, and access a choice of sustainable transport modes where possible including active travel opportunities.

New development has high potential to increase traffic and lead to additional localised congestion and parking issues which in turn may reduce road safety. A key concern in this respect is narrow lanes which are already heavily trafficked, and the exacerbation of existing peak time congestion.

Opportunities to improve and/ or extend active travel connections, alongside public realm improvements and urban greening within the plan should be sought.

Other pressures on transport could come from the insufficient provision of charging stations within the WNA.

