

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report

April 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 Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets Neighbourhood Plan (SASMNP). The SASMNP is being prepared under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and in the context of the adopted East Hertfordshire District Plan (2018). Once 'made' the SASMNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications, as part of the East Hertfordshire local development framework.

SEA is a required process 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.¹

This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) provides a summary for the full Environmental Report for the SASMNP. It is 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 reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:

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

- including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.

2) What are the SEA findings **at this stage?**

- i.e., in relation to the draft plan.

3) What happens **next?**

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

What is the Plan seeking to achieve?

The following vision has been established in the development of the SASMNP:

"Our vision is for Stanstead Abbots, St Margarets, and The Folly to thrive as a diverse and inclusive rural village that supports varied livelihoods and promotes community cohesion and wellbeing. We will promote locally accessible and sustainable development that provides affordable housing whilst protecting the heritage of our area and the individual character of each parish. Our vision includes the enhancing of our green spaces for wildlife and community use, the

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. Whilst no initial screening was undertaken, the Parish and District agreed a high likely requirement for SEA and the initial steps of the SEA process involved obtaining views from consultees on both the need for SEA alongside the suggested scope of the SEA.

development and improvement of natural flood defences, and further establishing our place in the wider Lea Valley corridor.”

The SASMNP is working within the strategic context provided by the East Hertfordshire District Plan (EHDP), adopted 2018. The EHDP recognises Stanstead Abbots & St Margarets as a village inset from the Green Belt and Policy GBR1 states that *“the villages of Hertford Heath, Stanstead Abbots & St Margarets, and Watton-at-Stone will be encouraged to consider whether it is appropriate through the formulation of a Neighbourhood Plan to accommodate additional development”*. A provision for 94 homes in Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets in the period up to 2033 is expected by the EHDP.

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.

SEA theme	SEA objective
Biodiversity	Protect, maintain, and enhance the extent and quality of biodiversity and geodiversity sites and networks within and surrounding the Plan area.
Climate change (including flood risk)	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities in the Plan area. Support the resilience of the Plan area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.
Health and wellbeing	Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the SASMNP area.
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the SASMNP area.
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land. Protect and enhance water quality and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape, including the river corridor and strategic green infrastructure links.
Population and communities	Ensure growth in the Plan area is aligned with the needs of all residents and in suitably connected places, supported by the appropriate and timely provision of infrastructure to enable cohesive and inclusive communities.
Transportation and movement	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 for the SASMNP.

Specifically, Part 1 of the report –

1. Explains the process of establishing the reasonable alternatives.
2. Presents the outcomes of assessing the reasonable alternatives; and
3. Explains reasons for developing a preferred option, considering the assessment.

Establishing the alternatives

Part 1 of the Environmental Report explores both the strategic parameters provided by the EHDP and the available site options to establish alternatives to the preferred approach for housing development.

From the choices available to the group, 4 options are derived, see the table below.

Housing supply source	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Permitted/ completed sites to be allocated (Sites 16, 28, 29, 30a, 30b, 36, 37, and 38)	24	24	24	24
Brownfield sites within the settlement boundary (Sites 5, 6, 32, and 33)	15	15	15	15
Greenfield sites within the settlement boundary				
Amwell Lane (Site 35)	8	-	-	-
Settlement expansion options:				
Netherfield Lane (Sites K (brownfield) and L)	20*	60	-	-
Marsh Lane (Site C1)	18	-	-	-
Land south of Station Road (Site C2)	-	-	100	-
Roydon Road/ Hunsdon Road (Site C3)	-	-	-	114
East of Cappell Lane (Site NEW2)	15	-	-	-
Total housing supply	92	99	139	153

**Outline planning permission at Site K included*

Option 1 presents a strategy based on progression of small sites. However, it is recognised that allocating Site K in isolation from Site L may be problematic and the option still falls slightly short of the identified need for 94 homes. Options 2-4 present alternative options for greenfield development at a single larger site.

Notably, both Option 3 and 4 would likely require bringing additional land within the inset settlement boundary to accommodate a logical extension to the settlement.

Whilst indicative figures have been identified in terms of housing numbers under Options 3 and 4, it is recognised that further negotiations with landowners may be able to secure a reduced scale development scheme at the larger sites, which aligns more closely with the identified need and community preference (i.e., a preference not to significantly exceed the identified target housing needs figure).

Furthermore, it is also recognised that a hybrid option or multiple combinations of further options could be formed but this would be disproportionate for the purposes of strategic assessment at this stage and would hinder clarity when informing subsequent plan-making decisions.

Assessing the alternatives

The full assessment of the options for housing are presented in Part 1 of the Environmental Report. The summary findings are presented below.

Summary findings

		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Biodiversity	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	1	1
Climate change	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	1	1
Health and wellbeing	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	No	No	No
	Rank	3	2	1	2
Historic environment	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
	Rank	2	2	1	2
Land, soil and water resources	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	2	2
Landscape	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
	Rank	1	1	3	2
Population and communities	Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
	Rank	2	1	1	1
Transportation and movement	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	1	1

Overall Option 1 is notably more constrained than the other options and this relates to development within an area of medium to high fluvial flood risk as well as the potential loss of an area of open space.

All options have landscape and historic environment sensitivities which will require mitigation to reduce the significance of effects. Such mitigation is considered likely to be more effective in relation to landscape under Options 1 and 2.

All options are likely to lead to significant positive effects in relation to the population and communities theme, by allocating land to meet the forecasted housing needs over the Plan period. However, it is recognised that Option 1 is formed of smaller sites which are less likely to deliver a range of housing types and tenures, with implications for the delivery of affordable housing.

Developing the preferred approach

The SASMNP Steering Group's reasons for developing the preferred approach considering the assessment are identified below:

“The alternative options assessment demonstrates the issues with Option 1 by identifying likely significant negative effects in four categories, whilst the other options only show this to be the case for the Historic Environment and Landscape. This supports the Steering Groups conclusion not to base the SASM Neighbourhood Plan site allocations on just the brownfield portion of the Netherfield Lane site and including Marsh Lane and Cappell Lane as options in addition to Amwell Lane. In addition, the site in Marsh Lane has considerable constraints and the site in Cappell Lane was not put forward by the landowner at any point during the preparation of the Plan.

In terms of the relative merits of the remaining three Options 2, 3 and 4, the overall rankings of the sites show Option 2 to be ranked more slightly higher with a score of 10 as against Option 3 with a score of 11 and Option 4 as a score of 12.

From the point of view of the SASM Steering Group, there are issues for the settlement boundary in the case of Options 3 and 4. Site C2 would involve the significant extension of the settlement boundary to include St Margaretsbury and in the case of Site C3, it would encompass Kitten Lane and an important piece of common land, plus an extension of the settlement northwards on Hunsdon Road.

Considering the above, the preferred option is to allocate the larger Netherfield Lane site (Option 2) supported by smaller sites within the settlement boundary which have already or are likely to be developed over the plan period.”

Assessment findings at this stage

Part 2 of the Environmental Report presents an assessment of the SASMNP as a whole. Assessment findings are presented as a series of narratives under the 'SEA framework' theme headings. The following overall conclusions are reached:

Overall, the SASMNP is not judged likely to lead to any significant negative effects in relation to any of the SEA themes. Significant positive effects are considered likely through the proposed spatial strategy which allocates sufficient land to meet the forecasted housing needs over the plan period. Notably the settlement area is well-connected in terms of its sustainable transport offer as well as its proximity to higher-tier settlements. In this respect future residents will be supported by local services and facilities, bus connections to nearby settlements, and rail connections to significant employment bases.

Minor negative effects are considered likely due to localised impacts in relation to landscape, and soil resources. This is largely due to an element of greenfield development which is inevitable in any spatial strategy for the plan.

Notably, impacts in relation to the historic environment at the Netherfield Lane site (Policy H3) are uncertain at this stage. However, there is notable potential for significant negative effects to be avoided through good design, supported by the policy requirements for significant green infrastructure enhancement at the site and design concepts which are sympathetic to heritage settings. A good way to ensure

significant negative impacts are avoided in this respect is to develop the proposed masterplan for the site in consultation with Historic England.

Uncertainty is noted in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, recognising the need to consult with Natural England and agree suitable mitigation in relation to potential impacts on Rye Meads SSSI, particularly due to increased vehicle use along the A414. It is recommended that this consultation occurs prior to plan finalisation.

Next steps

Following Regulation 14 consultation and consideration of responses, the SASMNP 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 Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

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

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets Neighbourhood Plan (SASMNP). The SASMNP is being prepared under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and in the context of the adopted East Hertfordshire District Plan (2018). Once 'made' the SASMNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications, as part of the East Hertfordshire local development framework.
- 1.2 SEA is a required process 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.²

SEA explained

- 1.3 It is a requirement that the SEA process is undertaken in-line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 1.4 In-line with the Regulations, a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that "*identifies, describes and evaluates*" the likely significant effects of implementing "*the plan, and reasonable alternatives*".³ The report must then be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
- 1.5 More specifically, the report must answer the following three questions:
 4. What has plan-making/ SEA involved up to this point?
 - including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.
 5. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
 - i.e., in relation to the draft plan.
 6. What happens next?

This Environmental Report

- 1.6 This report is the Environmental Report for the SASMNP. It is published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).
- 1.7 This report answers questions 1, 2 and 3 in turn, to provide the required information.⁴ Each question is answered within a discrete 'part' of the report.
- 1.8 However, before answering Q1, two further introductory sections are presented to further set the scene.

² Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: A) an environmental report; or, B) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a 'screening' process. Whilst no initial screening was undertaken, the Parish and District agreed a high likely requirement for SEA and the initial steps of the SEA process involved obtaining views from consultees on both the need for SEA alongside the suggested scope of the SEA.

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

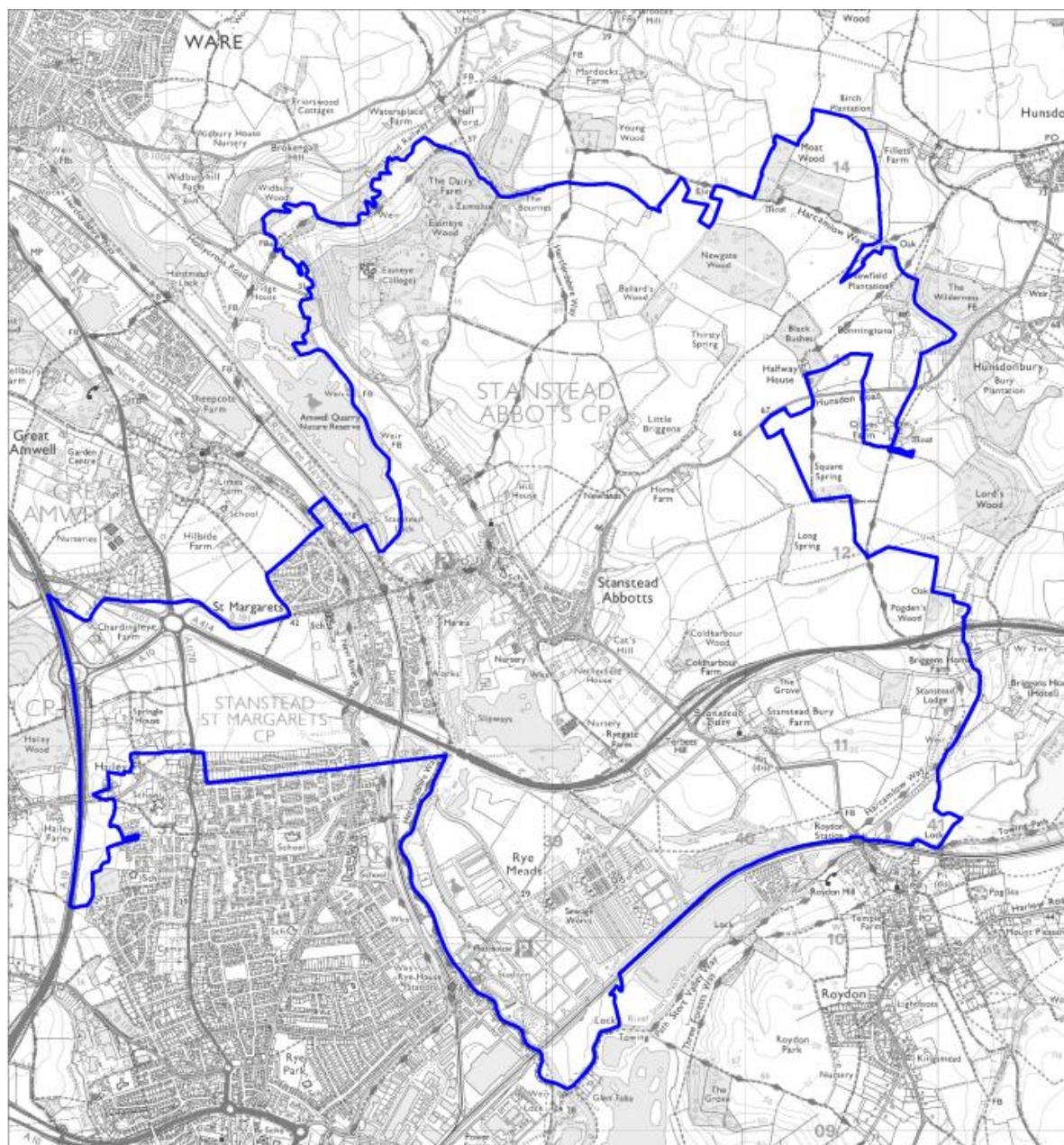
⁴ See **Appendix A** for further explanation of the report structure including its regulatory basis.

2. What is the SASMNP seeking to achieve?

Introduction

2.1 This section considers the context provided by the East Hertfordshire District Plan (2018) before setting out the established Neighbourhood Plan vision and objectives. **Figure 2.1** presents the Plan area.

Figure 2.1: SASMNP area, designated 2018



Strategic planning policy context

- 2.2 The Plan area falls within the boundary of East Hertfordshire district. The SASMNP must have regard for the strategic policies of the East Hertfordshire District Plan (EHDP), adopted 2018, in line with footnote 18 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).⁵
- 2.3 The EHDP recognises Stanstead Abbots & St Margarets as a village inset from the Green Belt and Policy GBR1 states that “*the villages of Hertford Heath, Stanstead Abbots & St Margarets, and Watton-at-Stone will be encouraged to consider whether it is appropriate through the formulation of a Neighbourhood Plan to accommodate additional development*”. Policy GBR1 (Green Belt) identifies that where proposals would involve changes to Green Belt boundaries, the District Council will consider making these amendments. The more recent update to the NPPF also now allows Neighbourhood Plans to change Green Belt boundaries if supported by strategic policies e.g., in this case the EHDP.
- 2.4 Policy VILL1 identifies Stanstead Abbots & St Margarets as a ‘Group 1 village’ and sets a range of parameters for growth in these areas, including: an appropriate scale, development that is in keeping with the character of the village, avoiding the loss of significant open space or important gaps, avoiding an extension of ribbon development, and protecting important views. Furthermore, Policy VILL4 protects three Employment Areas within the Plan area, at Leaside Works, Riverside Works (Amwell End) and The Maltings.

SASMNP vision and objectives

- 2.5 The following vision has been established in the development of the SASMNP:
- “Our vision is for Stanstead Abbots, St Margarets, and The Folly to thrive as a diverse and inclusive rural village that supports varied livelihoods and promotes community cohesion and wellbeing. We will promote locally accessible and sustainable development that provides affordable housing whilst protecting the heritage of our area and the individual character of each parish. Our vision includes the enhancing of our green spaces for wildlife and community use, the development and improvement of natural flood defences, and further establishing our place in the wider Lea Valley corridor.”*
- 2.6 To support this vision, the SASMNP Steering Group have developed 18 objectives under the themes of housing and design, the riverside, heritage, natural environment, leisure and community facilities, business and employment, and transport.

⁵ MHCLG (2021) [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

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.
- 3.2 The SEA Scoping Report (December 2021) set out the policy context and baseline information that has informed the development of key issues and the sustainability objectives.

Consultation

- 3.3 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.⁶ As such these authorities were consulted over the period Tuesday 21st December 2021 to Wednesday 2nd February 2022. All consultees responded and agreed with the scope of the SEA providing general advice, and Natural England suggested a minor amendment to the proposed objective for biodiversity which has since been incorporated into the SEA. Scoping consultation responses are available via the SASMNP website.⁷

The SEA framework

- 3.4 The SEA framework presents a list of themes, objectives, and assessment questions that together comprise a framework to guide the assessment. A summary framework of the themes and objectives is provided in **Table 3.1**, with the full SEA framework presented in the SEA Scoping Report, available via the SASMNP website.

⁶ 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)).

⁷ <https://www.stansteadabbotsneighbourhoodplan.uk/>

Table 3.1: The SEA framework

SEA theme	SEA objective
Biodiversity	Protect, maintain, and enhance the extent and quality of biodiversity and geodiversity sites and networks within and surrounding the Plan area.
Climate change (including flood risk)	<p>Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities in the Plan area.</p> <p>Support the resilience of the Plan area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.</p>
Health and wellbeing	Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the SASMNP area.
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the SASMNP area.
Land, soil, and water resources	<p>Ensure the efficient and effective use of land.</p> <p>Protect and enhance water quality and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.</p>
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape, including the river corridor and strategic green infrastructure links.
Population and communities	Ensure growth in the Plan area is aligned with the needs of all residents and in suitably connected places, supported by the appropriate and timely provision of infrastructure to enable cohesive and inclusive communities.
Transportation and movement	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

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

4. Introduction (to Part 1)

Overview

- 4.1 Whilst work on the SASMNP has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of work to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives.
- 4.2 More specifically, this part of the report presents information on the consideration given to reasonable alternative approaches to addressing a particular issue that is of central importance to the Plan, namely the allocation of land for housing, or alternative sites. Available development sites are being explored for their potential to contribute additional homes and community benefits.

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:
- The core plan objective to understand housing needs and allocate sites for development.
 - 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 other proposals within the Plan. National Planning Practice is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.

Structure of this part of the report

- 4.4 Part 1 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 the Steering Group's reasons for selecting the preferred option considering the alternatives.

5. Establishing alternatives

Introduction

- 5.1 The aim of this chapter is to explain the process that led to the establishment of alternative sites and thereby present “*an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with*”.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 SASMNP). These parameters are then drawn together in order to arrive at ‘reasonable alternatives’.

How much growth?

- 5.3 As noted previously, the EHDP recognises Stanstead Abbots & St Margarets as a village inset from the Green Belt and Policy GBR1 states that “*the villages of Hertford Heath, Stanstead Abbots & St Margarets, and Watton-at-Stone will be encouraged to consider whether it is appropriate through the formulation of a Neighbourhood Plan to accommodate additional development*”. Furthermore, Policy VILL1 identifies Stanstead Abbots & St Margarets as a ‘Group 1 Village’. Chapter 10 of the EHDP identifies that Group 1 Villages will need to accommodate at least a 10% increase in housing stock over the 16-year period between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2033. EHDP Table 10.1 identifies that this equates to 94 homes in Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets over this period.
- 5.4 Whilst small sites have gained planning permission since April 2017, East Hertfordshire District Council have advised that these sites will need to be allocated in the SASMNP to count towards the identified need for 94 homes. This is to ensure that no figures are double counted when capturing development that would contribute towards windfall housing supply over the Plan period, which East Hertfordshire District Council have calculated separately.

Where could growth be located?

- 5.5 The Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets Steering Group have identified a total of 64 sites from a range of sources. A local call for sites was undertaken in 2019 in which six sites were submitted for consideration. The group then undertook a ‘walkabout’ of the Plan area to identify potential land to be considered. Further sites also emerged through consultation to date, and four sites were identified through the East Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).
- 5.6 The Steering Group have undertaken an assessment of the available sites through three key stages. The first stage sought to knock out sites by critical criteria, such as location within Flood Zone 2 or 3, relationship to the existing settlement area, any potential loss of identified employment space, or because

⁸ Schedule 2(8) of the SEA Regulations.

the site is not available for development over the Plan period. Sites taken through to Stage 2 were then assessed in greater detail against a range of criteria underpinning an assessment of the site's suitability, availability, and deliverability. Each site was scored in relation to each criteria, and the outcome of the Stage 2 assessment was a ranked list of sites, depicting those sites judged to be 'top-performing'. The third stage of assessment undertook site selection from the ranked sites.

5.7 **Table 5.1** identifies the 64 sites, and their source and **Figure 5.1** displays the sites.

Table 5.1: SASMNP site options

Site reference	Site name	Source
C1	Marsh Lane	Call for sites
C2	Land south of Station Road	
C3	Roydon Road/ Hunsdon Road	
C4	St Margaretsbury Recreation	
C5	Roydon Road	
C6	Nursery Netherfield Lane	
1	North of High Street	Identified by Steering Group
2	Village Club car park	
3	South of High St/ west of car park	
4	North of High St	
5	Millers Lane	
6	South Street	
7	North of High Street	
8	Lawrence Avenue – east	
9	Lawrence Avenue – east/ High St	
10	Lawrence Avenue – west/ railway	
11	North Station Road	
12	Signal box	
13	North Station Road	
14	Folly View	
15	Folly View	
16	French Close – garages	
17	Scott Ave/ Gilpins Gallop	
18	Hillside Lane	

Site reference	Site name	Source
19	Hillside Lane/ entrance	
20	Hillside Lane/ Fieldway	
21	Fieldway/ New River Avenue	
22a	New River Avenue – garages	
22b	New River Avenue – garages	
23	Amwell Lane – garages	
24	Amwell Lane – industrial	
25	Sanville Gardens – green space	
26	The Granary – green space	
27	The Granary – green/ railway	
28	North of Hoddesdon Road	
29	East of Hoddesdon Road	
30a	West of Hoddesdon Road	
30b	West of Hoddesdon Road	
31	Chapelfields/ Woodcroft	
32	Chapelfields – garages	
33	Chapelfields – garages	
34	Chapelfields/ Woodcroft	
35	Amwell Lane	
36	Hillside Crescent	
37	French's Close	
38	French's Close	
A	Folly View	Identified at consultation
C	Recreation Ground	
D	Amwell View School	
E	Land south of Maltings	
F	Malting car park/ green space	
G	Maltings	
H	South of Maltings	
J	South of Marsh Lane	
K	Netherfield Lane	
L	Netherfield Lane	

Site reference	Site name	Source
M	Netherfield Lane – adj. Nursery	East Herfordshire SHLAA
P	School Recreation Ground	
Q	Cappell Lane	
S	South of Marsh Lane	
NEW2	East of Cappell Lane	
NEW3	Rear of St Andrew's Church	
NEW10	West of Ware Road	
NEW11	West of Ware Road	

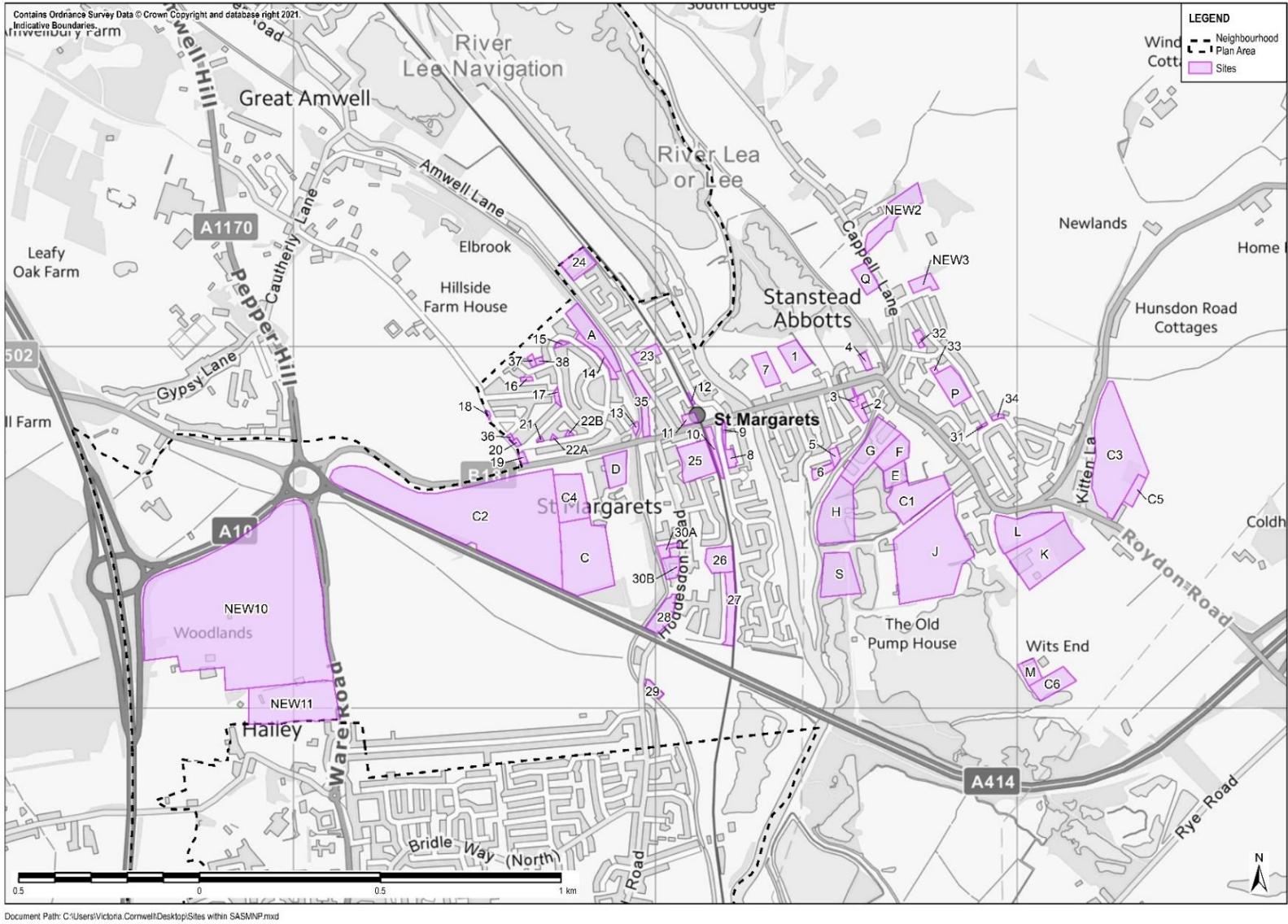


Figure 5.1: Sites identified in the development of the SASMNP

Establishing alternatives

5.8 In terms of the progression of sites through the SEA, an initial step has looked at key exclusionary criteria (like Stage 1 of the sites options assessment) and sought to sift the long list of sites where evidence indicates significant constraints to progression. These constraints are considered in turn below.

Flood risk

5.9 The following sites are not considered any further due to their location within an area of high flood risk affecting most of the site/ developable area:

- Site 1: North of High Street
- Site 4: North of High Street
- Site 7: North of High Street
- Site E: Land south of Maltings
- Site H: South of Maltings
- Site J: South of Marsh Lane
- Site Q: Cappell Lane
- Site S: South of Marsh Lane

Unavailable sites

5.10 The following sites have since been identified by the Steering Group as unavailable for development over the Plan period, and are therefore not considered any further through the SEA:

- Site 2: Village Club car park
- Site 11: North Station Road
- Site 25: Sanville Gardens green space
- Site 26: The Granary – green space
- Site C: Recreation Ground
- Site D: Amwell View School
- Site F: Malting Car Park and green space
- Site P: School Recreation Ground
- Site NEW3: Rear of St Andrew's Church

Employment areas

5.11 The following sites are located within an identified employment area. In line with SASMNP objectives, these areas will be retained to support economic vitality and provide local businesses with space to expand. As a result, these sites are not considered further through the SEA:

- Site 8: Lawrence Avenue East

- Site 24: Amwell Lane industrial
- Site G: Maltings (also identified as partially within an area of high flood risk)

Very small sites

- 5.12 Many of the sites identified by the Steering Group on their ‘walkabout’ are very small sites, capable of delivering one, maybe two dwellings. Some of these sites are brownfield and all are located within the settlement boundary.
- 5.13 These sites are not taken forward as options for the spatial strategy but are rather recognised as a potential small-scale supply and a ‘constant’ (or given) for any growth scenario (i.e., very small sites will form part of any development plan over the plan period). The contribution that development could make at these sites will either be counted as part of windfall development (calculated separately by East Hertfordshire) or (where planning permissions are granted) the sites may be allocated within the SASMNP to contribute to the identified housing needs figure of 94 homes.
- 5.14 On this basis, the following very small sites are not progressed for further assessment as part of the alternatives (for the purposes of SEA) as they do not provide realistic spatial strategy options:
- Site 3: South of High Street/ west of car park
 - Site 9: Lawrence Avenue – east/ High St
 - Site 12: Signal box
 - Site 13: North Station Road
 - Site 15: Folly View
 - Site 17: Scott Ave/ Gilpins Gallop
 - Site 18: Hillside Lane
 - Site 19: Hillside Lane/ entrance
 - Site 20: Hillside Lane/ Fieldway
 - Site 21: Fieldway/ New River Avenue
 - Site 22a: New River Avenue – garages
 - Site 22b: New River Avenue – garages
 - Site 31: Chapelfields/ Woodcroft
 - Site 34: Chapelfields/ Woodcroft

Permitted/ built out sites

- 5.15 In addition to the above, some sites have gained planning permission since 2017. These sites (as advised by East Hertfordshire District Council) will need to be allocated within the SASMNP to count towards the identified housing needs figure of 94 homes.
- Site 16: French Close – garages (1 dwelling)
 - Site 28: North of Hoddesdon Road (8 homes).

- Site 29: East of Hoddesdon Road (4 dwellings)
- Site 30a: West of Hoddesdon Road (6 dwellings)
- Site 30b: West of Hoddesdon Road (2 dwellings)
- Site 36: Hillside Crescent (1 dwelling)
- Site 37: French's Close (1 dwelling)
- Site 38: French's Close (1 dwelling)

Open space

5.16 The following sites are further identified wholly as Open Space either allocated within the District Plan, or as a new Local Green Space being allocated through the SASMNP. In line with SASMNP objectives which seek to support the growing population with access to existing and new open spaces, these sites are not considered further for housing development within the SASMNP:

- Site 14: Folly View
- Site 27: The Granary
- Site A: Folly View – woodland
- Site C4: St Margaretsbury Recreation

Short-listed sites

5.17 The above constraints reduce the long list of 64 sites to a short-list of **18 sites**.

5.18 The short-listed sites are considered in turn as each have merits and constraints to be considered in their progression as a potential allocation with the SASMNP. As a first port of call, seven of the 18 sites are located within the settlement boundary:

- **Site 10: Lawrence Avenue – west/ railway.** This site is a small strip of land adjacent to the railway and opposite an employment area. As a thin strip of land there is little potential to mitigate the impacts of the adjacent railway line in housing development, and the site is largely incompatible with surrounding land uses. With an employment area opposite, the site is judged to be more suitable for employment expansion than housing development and is not progressed as a suitable housing option or alternative for the purposes of SEA.
- **Site 5: Millers Lane and Site 6: South Street.** These are smaller brownfield sites located adjacent to each other and within the settlement area. However, both sites are traversed by pylons creating an obstacle to development with an identified need for mitigation. To increase the viability of development at the sites, the sites are combined to create one larger development site with a greater potential to address the identified issues on site. Together the sites could deliver around 9 homes.
- **Site 23: Amwell Lane – garages.** This site partially forms part of a Local Wildlife Site and contains a pumping station. A reduced development area which avoids loss of habitats at the locally designated biodiversity site could be considered, however, this would significantly reduce the scale of development to 1-2 dwellings. The site is thus categorised like a very small

site to be potentially captured through windfall development/ allocations in the SASMNP (see para 5.13).

- **Sites 32 and 33: Chapelfields – garages.** Both sites are brownfield land within the settlement boundary and both sites are relatively free from significant constraints. Site 32 has an identified capacity for 4 homes and Site 33 has an identified capacity for 2 homes.
- **Site 35: Amwell Lane.** The site is a stretch of greenfield land between Amwell Lane and the new river path with an identified capacity for 8 homes. The site is located within the settlement boundary and close to the train station.

5.19 This identifies that of the seven sites within the inset settlement boundary, five are potentially suitable for allocation within the SASMNP and progression through the SEA as a potential alternative. Two of these sites are combined to create one slightly larger site south of Millers Lane and South Street, thus four sites are progressed.

5.20 A further eleven sites are identified outside of the inset settlement boundary. At this stage, the constraints of the Green Belt, including the potential for Green Belt boundary amendments come into play for the Steering Group. It is noted that an extension to the settlement area ideally needs to be adjacent to the inset settlement boundary to facilitate Green Belt amendments through the Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan joint working process. Further removed sites would likely require additional land outside the settlement boundary to fully connect development with the settlement and establish a coherent and cohesive settlement pattern/ boundary. Such an extension is in many cases beyond the aims of the SASMNP and likely to meet with local objection. Significantly removed sites are considered to a large extent, a strategic planning matter for the Local Plan. Each of the eleven sites are explored in turn below:

- **Sites K and L at Netherfield Lane.** Site K has received outline planning permission for a mixed-use development of 20 homes and supporting B1 business use land. The site is part brownfield but removed from the settlement edge. Site L brings the land between the settlement edge and Site K into consideration as a more logical extension to the settlement boundary. A masterplan for the larger site (Sites K and L combined) has been submitted by developers demonstrating a mixed-use 60-home scheme (including a proportion of affordable housing) alongside B1 business use land.
- **Site C1: Marsh Lane.** The site is adjacent to the settlement boundary but is located partially within an area of high flood risk and contains Open Space as designated through the Local Plan. The Steering Group have investigated a reduced developable area that avoids high flood risk areas and retains designated Open Space, which could deliver around 18 homes.
- **Site C2: Land south of Station Road.** This is a large site within the Green Belt largely removed from the settlement boundary but connected by the north-eastern corner of the site at High Street. The site has the capacity for around 300 homes but a smaller scheme to meet local needs (at around 100 homes) could be considered. To create a more logical extension to the settlement area it may also be beneficial to include Amwell

View Sports School and the open space at Site C4 (St Margaretsbury Recreation). A capped scheme at around 100 homes could also avoid development in the west of the site and reduce potential contributions to coalescence with Great Amwell.

- **Site C3: Roydon Road/ Hunsdon Road.** The site is another large site with a capacity for around 114 homes. To adjoin the existing inset settlement area additional land between the B180 and Kitten Lane would need to be brought within the inset settlement boundary.
- **Site C5: Roydon Road.** This is a small parcel of land to the south east of Site C3 with an identified capacity for 9 homes. Given the location of the site, it could only be reasonably considered as an extension to Site C3, constituting an even higher level of growth and boundary adjustments. Given the capacity of Site C3 to meet locally identified needs in full, it is unlikely that Site C5 would be progressed within this plan period. The site is thus not progressed as a reasonable alternative at this stage.
- **Site C6: Nursery Netherfield Lane.** This site is brownfield land but situated even further removed from the settlement edge than the sites discussed above. It is considered highly unlikely that the Steering Group would be able to develop a Green Belt adjustment that would be acceptable to the local community and East Hertfordshire District Council, and the site is not progressed as a reasonable alternative.
- **Site M: Netherfield Lane (adjacent to Nursery).** This part-brownfield site lies adjacent to Site C6 and like the findings for Site C6 it is significantly removed from the settlement boundary further north along Netherfield Lane. The site is not progressed as a reasonable alternative.
- **Site NEW2: East of Cappell Lane.** The site is greenfield land at Cappell Lane with an estimated capacity for between 10 and 20 homes. Open greenfield land containing numerous trees are situated between the site and the settlement edge and this adjoining land has not been identified as available.
- **Site NEW10 and Site NEW11: West of Ware Road.** Both sites are situated around Amwell Roundabout distinctly removed from the inset settlement area of Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets. Development in this location would form more of an extension to/ better relate to the existing settlement at Hailey than the SASMNP area.

5.21 Upon consideration of the short-listed sites there are key points arising that influence the choices available to the Steering Group at this stage. Firstly, brownfield sites within the settlement boundary (free from significant constraints) are prioritised as part of the future growth strategy for the SASMNP area. These sites (Sites 5, 6, 32, 33) could together contribute around 15 homes towards the required need for 94 homes. Alongside this, the permitted/ completed sites that will be allocated (Sites 16, 28, 29, 30a, 30b, 36, 37, and 38) will further contribute an additional 24 homes. This leaves a residual requirement for 55 homes.

5.22 Greenfield sites within the existing settlement boundary become the next port of call, where Site 35 could contribute an additional 8 homes. With this contribution there is still a residual need for an additional 47 homes, making it clear that settlement expansion and a Green Belt amendment needs to form

part of the future growth strategy for the SASMNP. Sites K&L (combined), C1, C2, C3, and NEW2 form the reasonable alternatives for settlement expansion.

- 5.23 From the choices available to the group, 4 options are derived, see **Table 5.2**. Option 1 presents a strategy based on progression of small sites. However, it is recognised that allocating Site K in isolation from Site L may be problematic and the option still falls slightly short of the identified need for 94 homes. Options 2-4 present alternative options for greenfield development at a single larger site.
- 5.24 Notably, both Option 3 and 4 would likely require bringing additional land within the inset settlement boundary to accommodate a logical extension to the settlement.
- 5.25 Whilst indicative figures have been identified in terms of housing numbers under Options 3 and 4, it is recognised that further negotiations with landowners may be able to secure a reduced scale development scheme at the larger sites, which aligns more closely with the identified need and community preference (i.e., a preference not to significantly exceed the identified target housing needs figure).
- 5.26 Furthermore, it is also recognised that a hybrid option or multiple combinations of further options could be formed but this would be disproportionate for the purposes of strategic assessment at this stage and would hinder clarity when informing subsequent plan-making decisions.

Table 5.2: Housing supply and options for the SASMNP SEA

Housing supply source	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Permitted/ completed sites to be allocated (Sites 16, 28, 29, 30a, 30b, 36, 37, and 38)	24	24	24	24
Brownfield sites within the settlement boundary (Sites 5, 6, 32, and 33)	15	15	15	15
Greenfield sites within the settlement boundary				
Amwell Lane (Site 35)	8	-	-	-
Settlement expansion options:				
Netherfield Lane (Sites K (brownfield) and L)	20*	60	-	-
Marsh Lane (Site C1)	18	-	-	-
Land south of Station Road (Site C2)	-	-	100	-
Roydon Road/ Hunsdon Road (Site C3)	-	-	-	114
East of Cappell Lane (Site NEW2)	15	-	-	-
Total housing supply	92	99	139	153

*OPP at Site K included

6. Appraising alternatives

Introduction

- 6.1 As outlined in the previous section, Options 1 to 4 are established as alternative options for the purposes of SEA. **Figure 6.1** below outlines the sites that are included in each option, alongside the brownfield sites and permitted/completed sites to be allocated which form a part of each option.

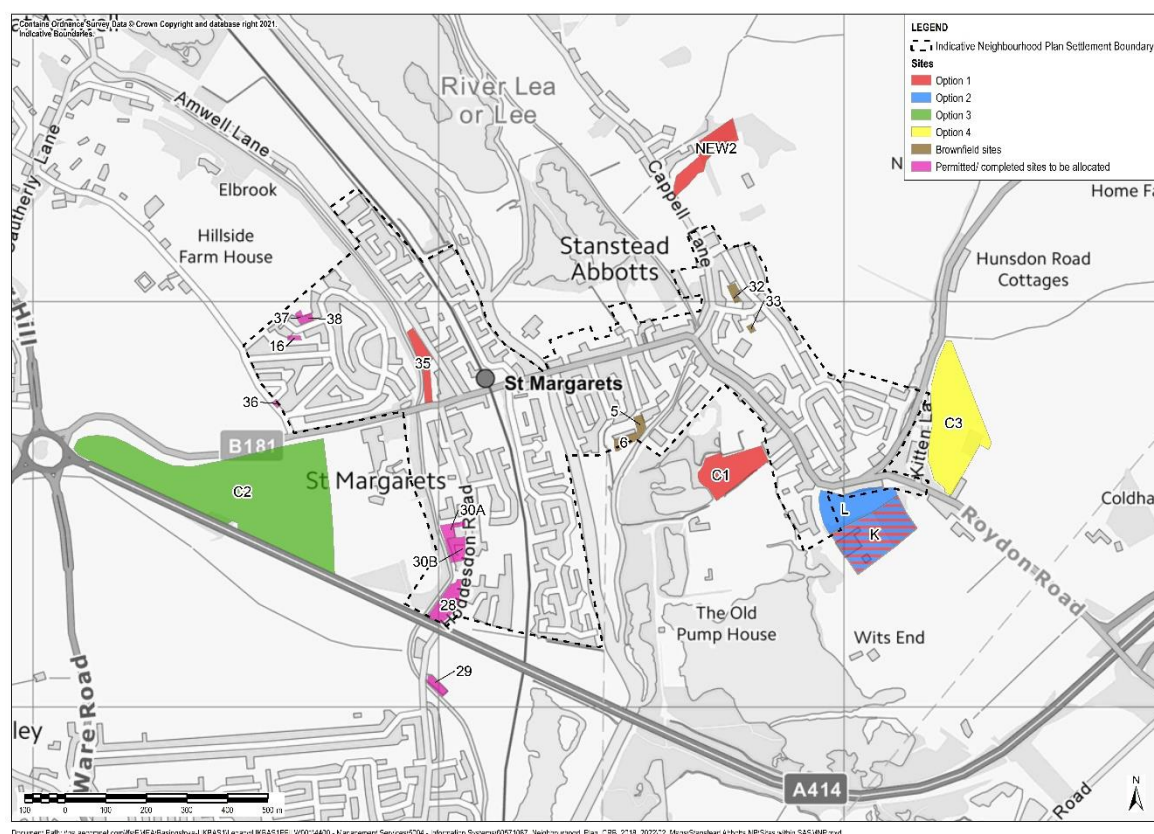


Figure 6.1 Sites being taken forward for assessment

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 3.1**) 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 in order 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 taking into account the criteria presented within Regulations.⁹ So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects.

Assessment findings

- 6.6 **Tables 6.1 to 6.8** below provide a comparative analysis of the four Options identified as alternatives, against each of the SEA themes established through scoping (see **Table 3.1**). Reference has not been made to the permitted/ completed sites to be allocated as the Plan has limited scope to affect development at these sites. Instead, the brownfield and greenfield sites within the settlement boundary and settlement expansion options that make up each option are appraised.

Table 6.1 Biodiversity and geodiversity assessment

SEA theme:
Biodiversity and
geodiversity

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Rank	2	1	1	1

- 6.7 Sites 35 and NEW2 (Option 1) are close to designated biodiversity sites Lee Valley Ramsar Site/ Special Protection Area (SPA) and Amwell Quarry Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 6.8 The corresponding SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) capture most development sites. With development of over 50 homes proposed at settlement expansion sites, Option 2, 3, and 4 require consultation with Natural England. Through the inclusion of Site NEW2 outside of the existing settlement area, Option 1 will also require consultation with Natural England.
- 6.9 A number of sites are adjacent to or in close proximity to Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitat deciduous woodland, however Site NEW2 (Option 1) is the only site that contains deciduous woodland. In addition to this, Site 35 (Option 1) is located adjacent to Network Enhance Zone 2 to the north of the site, which forms a buffer around Amwell Quarry SSSI. In this respect, and due to the proximity of Sites 35 and NEW2 to designated biodiversity sites, Option 1 is ranked slightly less favourably than the other options. Minor negative effects are anticipated under Option 1 recognising the potential for habitat loss, however, no significant negative effects are deemed likely for any of the options.

⁹ Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Table 6.2 Climate change and flood risk assessment

SEA theme:
Climate change
and flood risk

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Significant effect?	Yes - negative	No	No	No
Rank	2	1	1	1

- 6.10 In terms of fluvial flood risk, Site 35 (Option 1) borders the New River to the west and falls within Flood Zone 2 and 3. However, the part of the site that falls within Flood Zone 3 benefits from flood defences. Site C1 (Option 1) borders a tributary of the River Lea to the south and falls within Flood Zone 2. Moreover, Site C1 is surrounded by Flood Zone 3, and unlike Site 35, this area covered by Flood Zone 3 does not benefit from flood defences. Sites L (Option 2) and K (Options 1 and 2) do not fall within a flood zone, but they are bordered by Flood Zone 2 to the west, and Site L borders a tributary of the River Lea to the north.
- 6.11 Sites 5 and 6 (common to all options) are also located within the floodplain, though predominantly in an area of low risk. Development may have the chance to improve drainage at brownfield sites and such benefits could be sought through the Plan process.
- 6.12 In terms of surface water flood risk, small sections of Sites 35 (Option 1) and L (Option 2) are within an area at low risk of surface water flooding. Although not within an area at risk of surface water flooding, Site C1 (Option 1) is surrounded by areas at low to high risk of surface water flooding. Development at Site C1 has the potential to exacerbate surface water flooding in these areas due to an increase in non-permeable surfaces, potentially increasing the risk at Site C1.
- 6.13 The incorporation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) at sites with an increased risk of surface water flooding, and the addition/ improvement of flood defences at sites with an increased risk of fluvial flooding, will play an essential role in mitigating the risk of flooding at these sites. Nevertheless, due to the significant risk of flooding at Sites 35 and C1, Option 1 is ranked less favourably than the other options, with an identified potential for significant negative effects (pre-mitigation).
- 6.14 All options are considered to provide similar opportunities for delivering climate change mitigation measures which support low-emission, resource and energy efficient, and resilient development, and this is most likely to be guided by the existing policy context and the proposed SASMNP policy framework.

Table 6.3 Health and wellbeing assessment**SEA theme: Health and wellbeing**

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Significant effect?	Yes - negative	No	No	No
Rank	3	2	1	2
<p>6.15 Most notably site C1 under Option 1 contains designated open space in the EHDP and its loss could have potential impacts in relation to access to open space for existing residents unless re-provided elsewhere.</p> <p>6.16 Site C2 (Option 3) is adjacent to St. Margaretsbury Recreation Ground, which contains a sports and social club, tennis club and cricket club amongst a large area of open green space. Site 35 (Option 1) is also located in good proximity to St. Margaretsbury Recreation Ground.</p> <p>6.17 Sites 35 (Option 1), C1 (Option 1) and NEW2 (Option 1) are in good proximity to Stanstead Abbots Village Playground located just north of the High Street. These sites are also located close to the two allotment sites in the village. Moreover, these sites are located near to the High Street and services here, including Stanstead Abbots Dental Practice.</p> <p>6.18 In comparison, Sites K (Options 1 and 2), L (Option 2) and C3 (Option 4) are located relatively far away from these facilities, which could have negative implications on residents' health and wellbeing. In addition to this, the location of these sites could cause residents to rely on private vehicles instead of walking or cycling to access these facilities, reducing active travel uptake.</p> <p>6.19 Brownfield sites are already relatively well connected in terms of footpaths. In relation to Public Rights of Way (PROWs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option 1: Site 35 is located next to a public footpath (Great Amwell 014) that follows the New River to the north. Site NEW2 is located next to a public footpath (Stanstead Abbots 005) and bridleway (Stanstead Abbots 017) which connect to a network of PROWs towards the east. Site C1 borders a public footpath (Stanstead Abbots 026) on all sides apart from the southern boundary (this may be impacted by development at this site). Option 2: Site L borders a public footpath (Stanstead Abbots 012) to the north and bridleway (Stanstead Abbots 019) to the west, which extends south past Site K (which also forms part of Option 1). Option 3: Site C2 contains a restricted byway (Stanstead St Margarets 001) which passes north to south through the site, connecting Stanstead Abbots to Hertford Heath in the west. Option 4: Site C3 is not located immediately next to any PROWs. <p>6.20 Option 1 could result in the loss of open space, where the potential for negative effects of significance are identified, and the option is ranked least favourably accordingly. Option 3 provides better access to existing services, facilities, leisure and recreational areas, and active travel opportunities than Options 2 and 4 and is therefore ranked more favourably than these options. No significant negative effects are deemed likely under Options 2, 3, or 4, with no</p>				

significant deviation from the baseline predicted. Options 2, 3, and 4 contain larger-scale development sites that could potentially lead to the delivery of new facilities (such as new recreational areas) that could in turn contribute to more positive health outcomes.

Table 6.4 Historic environment assessment

SEA theme:
Historic
environment

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
Rank	2	2	1	2

6.21 Constraints are identified for each of the options as follows:

- **Option 1:** The southern boundary of site NEW2 is located next to grade II listed building Hill House.¹⁰ This site is also located close to the 'stable block at Hill House and the cottage' which is also a grade II listed building.¹¹ Site NEW2 also lies within the Stanstead Abbots Conservation Area, and Sites 35, K, and C1 border it. There is significant potential to affect the setting and significance of designated heritage assets. According to the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Unit, site K is also within an Area of Archaeological Importance.
- **Option 2:** The northern boundary of site L is located next to grade II* listed buildings 'the Baesh Almshouses and attached forecourt wall'¹², as well as 91 and 93 Roydon Road¹³, and Fern Cottage Woodside¹⁴. Sites K and L also border the Stanstead Abbots Conservation Area. There is significant potential to affect the setting and significance of designated heritage assets. According to the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Unit, sites K and L are within an Area of Archaeological Importance and notably, residents are pursuing a dig this Spring.
- **Option 3:** The Stanstead Abbots Conservation Area lies east of site C2, whilst not adjacent, large-scale development has the potential to affect the setting and views to and from of the conservation area.
- **Option 4:** The western boundary of site C3 is located close to grade II listed building 'Netherfield Cottages' which is on the other side of Kitten Lane.¹⁵ The southern half of the site is located close to another grade II listed building, 'Gatescreen, piers and gates at the Coach House'¹⁶, and lies within the Stanstead Abbots Conservation Area. There is significant potential to affect the setting and significance of designated heritage assets.

6.22 Furthermore, the brownfield sites common to all options lie just outside of the Stanstead Abbots Conservation Area.

6.23 According to the Historic Environment Record (HER)¹⁷, the building Warrax House and scheduled monument 'undated earthwork, Warrax Park' are located north of Site NEW2 (Option 1). With regards to Sites K (Options 1 and 2) and L

¹⁰ Historic England (no date): 'Hill House', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹¹ Historic England (no date): 'Stable block at Hill House and the cottage', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹² Historic England (no date): 'The Baish Almshouses and attached forecourt wall', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹³ Historic England (no date): '91 and 93 Roydon Road', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹⁴ Historic England (no date): 'Fern Cottage Woodside', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹⁵ Historic England (no date): 'Netherfield Cottages', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹⁶ Historic England (no date): 'Gatescreen, piers and gates at the Coach House', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹⁷ Heritage Gateway (no date): 'More detailed search', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

(Option 2), the HER defines a large area for Netherfield House, which meets the eastern boundary of both sites. The HER also identifies monument 'Cat's Hill' near Site C3 (Option 4), located next to listed building Netherfield Cottages.

- 6.24 Considering the above, Option 3 is considered the least constrained option in relation to the historic environment (and is thus ranked most favourably), whilst recognising that mitigation would still be required to reduce the impacts of development at site C2, particularly in relation to the setting of the conservation area. All options have a notable potential for negative effects of significance that would need to be addressed through appropriate mitigation strategies in consultation with Historic England.

Table 6.5 Land, soil, and water resources assessment

**SEA theme: Land,
soil and water
resources**

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Rank	2	1	2	2

6.25 All options involve an element of brownfield and greenfield development.

6.26 In relation to greenfield development, the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) assessment¹⁸ classifies agricultural land on Site C2 (Option 3) as 'Very Good', and agricultural land on Sites C3 (Option 4) and NEW2 (Option 1) as 'Good to Moderate'. The Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land classification¹⁹ similarly indicates that Sites C2 (Option 3), C3 (Option 4) and NEW2 (Option 1) have a high likelihood of being underlain by BMV land (>60% area).

6.27 Option 2 performs notably better, with most development at the Netherfield Lane site (sites K and L) falling within an area of non-agricultural use.

6.28 All options fall within the Lee Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) and a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone (DWSZ) for Surface Water. Sites 35 (Option 1), C1 (Option 1), C2 (Option 3) and NEW1 (Option 1) also fall either entirely or partially within a DWSZ for Groundwater. Whilst significant effects are likely to be avoided given wider regulatory and policy frameworks, a requirement for mitigation to ensure development does not impact upon water quality is noted.

6.29 In relation to minerals, the Hertfordshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework²⁰ identifies Rye Meads (Stanstead Abbots) in its list of Safeguarded Waste Sites. However, Rye Meads lies south of the village, away from all options.

6.30 By potentially avoiding the loss of high-quality agricultural land, Option 2 is judged to perform better and ranked most favourably. Through the inclusion of greenfield development, all options are considered likely to lead to minor long-term negative effects, and these effects are exacerbated under Options 1, 3, and 4 recognising the potential for higher quality agricultural land losses within them.

¹⁸ Natural England (2010): 'Agricultural Land Classification map Eastern Region (ALC008)', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹⁹ Natural England (2017): 'Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land – Strategic scale map Easton Region (ALC020)', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

²⁰ Hertfordshire County Council (2021): 'Hertfordshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

Table 6.6 Landscape assessment

SEA theme:
Landscape

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
Rank	1	1	3	2

6.31 All options perform positively through inclusion of an element of brownfield development within the existing settlement boundary. Despite this, all options require an element of Green Belt development. With regards to the options the following points are made:

- **Option 1:** This option reduces the extent of development beyond the settlement boundary. However, the sites K and NEW2 do not relate well with the settlement boundary. The option does not contribute to coalescence. Sites C1 and K form part of the Lee Valley Regional park where landscape sensitivity could be increased. Site C1 also contains designated open space (designated within the EHDP).
- **Option 2:** This option directs most growth to the Netherfield Lane site (Sites K and L) where a logical extension can be made to the settlement boundary in the south east. The option does not contribute to coalescence and the site is brownfield in part. The option does however, form part of the Lee Valley Regional park where landscape sensitivity could be increased. Notably the site has a much greater housing capacity, meaning there is good opportunity for sensitive design in the smaller scale scheme being proposed.
- **Option 3:** This option directs most growth to site C2 in the west of the settlement. Site C2 does not relate particularly well to the existing settlement boundary and is situated on higher ground than the existing settlement sloping east towards the village. Including the land between the site and Hoddesdon Road would make a more logical extension to the settlement boundary, bringing Amwell View School and Specialist Sports College within the boundary at the same time. The option lies directly within the SASMNP's proposed strategic gap, where the retention of open countryside is sought between Stanstead St Margarets and Great Amwell, and Stanstead St Margarets and Hoddesdon. Development at this option would contribute to the coalescence of Stanstead St Margarets with Great Amwell unless the site was significantly reduced in scale (avoiding development in the western half). A smaller scale scheme could provide opportunity for more sensitive design.
- **Option 4:** This option directs most growth to the east beyond Kitten Lane. Site C3 is located on higher ground than the existing settlement sloping west towards the village. The option would bring Kitten Lane within an extended settlement boundary and would not contribute to coalescence.

6.32 All the options involve an element of greenfield and Green Belt development, where there are identified landscape sensitivities. Due to its contribution to coalescence and impacts relating to development on higher ground, Option 3 is ranked least favourably and a potential for negative effects of significance is identified. As a result of development on higher ground, Option 4 is ranked

next and again, the potential for negative effects of significance is identified. Due to landscape sensitivity associated with the Lee Valley Regional Park, potential negative effects of significance are also identified under Options 1 and 2, though these are ranked more preferably overall. This reflects a greater potential for mitigation to reduce the significance of impacts under these options.

Table 6.7 Population and communities assessment

SEA theme:
Population and
communities

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
Rank	2	1	1	1

- 6.33 Each option is considered likely to lead to significant positive effects for population and communities through their contribution to meeting the identified residual housing needs, and affordable housing needs, either alone or in combination. However, affordable housing needs are likely to be more difficult to achieve in Option 1 due to the relatively small number of homes proposed for each site.
- 6.34 In addition to this, Options 2, 3, and 4 provide increased opportunities for infrastructure upgrades or enhancements due to their inclusion of larger sites. This could include new open space to support the growing population. Due to this, and their ability to better meet affordable housing needs, Options 2, 3, and 4 are ranked more favourably than Option 1. Option 1 is ranked least favourably and is deemed less likely to deliver a broader range of housing types/ tenures.

Table 6.8 Transportation and movement assessment

SEA theme:
Transportation and
movement

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Rank	2	1	1	1

- 6.35 All options will lead to increases in vehicle use on the local road network and minor negative effects can be anticipated.
- 6.36 Stanstead Abbots is well connected to the transport network, with several bus routes connecting the village to surrounding towns as well as a train station, St Margarets, which is on the Hertford East to London Liverpool Street line and connects the village to the East of England. London is accessible via train in approximately 45 minutes, and it is likely that many residents in Stanstead Abbots commute here for work.
- 6.37 All options involve settlement edge development and whilst further from the centre, still largely accessible to the train station and services within a 15 to 20-minute walk. Sites 35 (under Option 1) is notably more centrally located providing excellent access to the train station.
- 6.38 All options provide good potential to connect with existing footpaths and cycle ways, and through inclusion of larger scale development sites, Options 2, 3, and 4 may provide opportunities to enhance infrastructure to some extent. These options (through economies of scale) also provide greater potential to address any localised impacts to the road network. On this basis, Options 2, 3, and 4 are ranked more favourably than Option 1. No significant effects are anticipated at this stage, with near 100 new homes already planned for in Stanstead Abbots through the EHDP.

Summary of findings

6.39 **Table 6.9** below summarises the findings of the assessment.

Table 6.9 Summary of the findings of the assessment of alternative options

Summary findings

		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Biodiversity	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	1	1
Climate change	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	1	1
Health and wellbeing	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	No	No	No
	Rank	3	2	1	2
Historic environment	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
	Rank	2	2	1	2
Land, soil and water resources	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	2	2
Landscape	Significant effect?	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative	Yes - negative
	Rank	1	1	3	2
Population and communities	Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive	Yes - positive
	Rank	2	1	1	1
Transportation and movement	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
	Rank	2	1	1	1

6.40 Overall Option 1 is notably more constrained than the other options and this relates to development within an area of medium to high fluvial flood risk as well as the potential loss of an area of open space.

6.41 All options have landscape and historic environment sensitivities which will require mitigation to reduce the significance of effects. Such mitigation is considered likely to be more effective in relation to landscape under Options 1 and 2.

6.42 All options are likely to lead to significant positive effects in relation to the population and communities theme, by allocating land to meet the forecasted housing needs over the Plan period. However, it is recognised that Option 1 is formed of smaller sites which are less likely to deliver a range of housing types and tenures, with implications for the delivery of affordable housing.

7. Identifying the preferred approach

7.1 The SASMNP Steering Group's reasons for developing the preferred approach considering the assessment are identified below:

“The alternative options assessment demonstrates the issues with Option 1 by identifying likely significant negative effects in four categories, whilst the other options only show this to be the case for the Historic Environment and Landscape. This supports the Steering Groups conclusion not to base the SASM Neighbourhood Plan site allocations on just the brownfield portion of the Netherfield Lane site and including Marsh Lane and Cappell Lane as options in addition to Amwell Lane. In addition, the site in Marsh Lane has considerable constraints and the site in Cappell Lane was not put forward by the landowner at any point during the preparation of the Plan.

In terms of the relative merits of the remaining three Options 2, 3 and 4, the overall rankings of the sites show Option 2 to be ranked more slightly higher with a score of 10 as against Option 3 with a score of 11 and Option 4 as a score of 12.

From the point of view of the SASM Steering Group, there are issues for the settlement boundary in the case of Options 3 and 4. Site C2 would involve the significant extension of the settlement boundary to include St Margaretsbury and in the case of Site C3, it would encompass Kitten Lane and an important piece of common land, plus an extension of the settlement northwards on Hunsdon Road.

Considering the above, the preferred option is to allocate the larger Netherfield Lane site (Option 2) supported by smaller sites within the settlement boundary which have already or are likely to be developed over the plan period.”

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

8. Introduction (to Part 2)

8.1 The aim of Part 2 is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the current version of the SASMNP. This part of the report presents:

- An outline of the Plan contents, aims, and objectives.
- An appraisal of the Plan under the eight SEA theme headings.
- Consideration of cumulative effects; and
- The overall conclusions at this stage and recommendations for the next stage of plan-making.

SASMNP Policies

8.2 The SASMNP proposes 38 policies to guide future development in the neighbourhood area, the policy list is presented in **Table 8.1**.

Table 8.1: SASMNP policies

Policy reference	Policy name
SASM H1	Village and Green Belt Boundary
SASM H2	Housing Numbers
SASM H3	Land east of Netherfield Lane/ south of Roydon Road
SASM H4	Land south of South Street
SASM H5	Land west of Amwell Lane
SASM H6	Chapelfields and Abbots Way Garages
SASM H7	Land east of Amwell Lane
SASM H8	Sites with Planning Permission
SASM H9	Brownfield Land
SASM H10	Type and Mix of Housing
SASM H11	First Homes
SASM D1	Design of Development
SASM D2	Housing Density
SASM D3	Amenity
SASM D4	Residential Amenity Space
SASM R1	Riverside Development
SASM R2	Floating Structures
SASM HA1	Heritage Assets
SASM HA2	Non-designated Heritage Assets
SASM HA3	Archaeology
SASM HA4	Protected Views
SASM NE1	Local Green Space (LGS)
SASM NE2	Nature Conservation

Policy reference	Policy name
SASM NE3	Valued Hedgerows and Trees
SASM NE4	Environmental Impact of Flooding
SASM CL1	Existing Community Facilities
SASM CL2	Loss of Existing Facilities
SASM CL3	Additional Leisure Facilities
SASM CL4	Facilities to Meet and Identified Need
SASM B1	Local Employment Areas
SASM B2	The High Street
SASM B3	Flexible Working
SASM B4	Farm Diversification and Tourism Related Business
SASM B5	Design of Employment Premises
SASM TR1	Safe and Sustainable Transport
SASM TR2	Traffic Impact of Major Development
SASM TR3	Parking Standards
SASM IM1	Spending Priorities

Methodology

- 8.3 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see **Table 3.1**) 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. Appraisal of the SASMNP

Plan contents, aims, and objectives

- 9.1 A key aim of the SASMNP is to identify land to deliver the forecasted housing need over the Plan period. This need is identified through the East Hertfordshire District Plan (EHDP) as 94 homes in the period up to 2033. Accommodating these homes entirely within the existing settlement boundary is not an option for the SASMNP as there are not enough suitable sites, and on this basis, planning for a Green Belt boundary amendment at the settlement edge has become a necessary proposal in the development of the Plan.
- 9.2 The SASMNP Policies SASM H1 to H9 identify the spatial strategy of the Plan, which includes allocations at the following locations:
- Land east of Netherfield Lane/ south of Roydon Road for approximately 60 homes (Policy H3).
 - Land south of South Street for up to 9 homes (Policy H4).
 - Land to the west of Amwell Lane for up to 8 homes (Policy H5).
 - Two garage sites on Abbots Way for approximately 6 homes (Policy H6); and
 - Land to the east of Amwell Lane for approximately 2 homes (Policy H7).
- 9.3 The remainder of the housing need has been met through sites permitted or currently under construction (Policy H8) or completed since adoption of the EHDP (Policy H9).
- 9.4 The Netherfield Lane site (Policy H3) is the largest allocation site in the Plan and the only site that will require a Green Belt boundary adjustment. It is in the south east of the settlement area off Roydon Road.
- 9.5 A key consideration in relation to Green Belt boundary amendment has been the role of the land and its relationship with the settlement and settlement edge. Crucially, the Netherfield Lane site can allow for settlement expansion whilst protecting important countryside gaps that lie between Stanstead Abbots and Great Amwell, and between Stanstead Abbots and Hoddesdon.
- 9.6 Alongside the site allocation policies, Policies SASM H10 and H11 seek to guide housing delivery in relation to housing type, mix, and tenures, and Policies SASM D1 to D4 seek to influence development design. Additional development guidance has been proposed in relation to riverside development, including floating structures (Policies SASM R1 and R2).
- 9.7 Another important element of the spatial strategy relates to economic development supporting a thriving local community. The EHDP identifies three local employment areas within the neighbourhood area, which the SASMNP in turn seeks to further protect and enhance. The SASMNP extends proposed policies in relation to business and employment (Policies SASM B1 to B5) seeking to provide further protection for the High Street, and support for farm diversification and tourism related business, and to accommodate greater levels of home working/ flexible working. In this respect, the SASMNP responds to immediate uncertainties in relation to working patterns, which have

undergone significant change since the start of the pandemic. In particular, the importance of thriving High Streets supporting local communities has been brought to the forefront through recent years, and many local businesses have been significantly impacted by previous lock-down measures. Policy SASM B2 (The High Street) recognises the importance of accommodating changing retail requirements, and creating a mix of retail, commercial, leisure, and community uses within the High Street to ensure its long-term viability and vitality.

- 9.8 Accessibility and movement are also important considerations for the proposed spatial strategy. The neighbourhood area benefits from its strategic links to nearby Hoddesdon, Hertford, and Ware, connecting residents with higher tier settlements and employment opportunities. The nearby A10 also provides a direct connection to London. Rail access is provided at St Margarets Station, and the settlement contains services and facilities which provide a degree of self-containment. Policies CL1 to CL4 seek to protect and enhance services and facilities that support self-containment, and Policies TR1 to TR3 identify the transport priorities in accommodating growth.
- 9.9 Recognising that the neighbourhood area has a valued historic environment, objectives of the SASMNP are to “*deliver accessible guidance and information to inform residents about heritage requirements and assets in the neighbourhood planning area*” and “*identify specific designated and non-designated heritage assets and provide for their protection*”. Proposed Policies SASM HA1 to HA4 seek to address these objectives, notably providing additional policy protections for identified non-designated assets across the settlement area, ‘Areas of Archaeological Significance’, and identified important views into and from the designated conservation area.
- 9.10 The plan further seeks to protect and enhance the natural environment through policies NE1 to NE4. Notably this includes additional protection in terms of managing surface water, additional protection for hedgerows and trees (as important landscape features), and the identification and protection of Local Green Spaces.

Appraisal of the SASMNP

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- 9.11 Growth in the neighbourhood area is immediately constrained by the proximity of the internationally designated biodiversity site Lee Valley Ramsar site and Special Protection Area (SPA). A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been undertaken to assess the likely significant effects of the SASMNP in relation to this site. The HRA has concluded following Appropriate Assessment that, “*with the implementation of the East Herts District Plan Policy WAT6, the Stanstead Abbots Neighbourhood Plan would contain sufficient policy framework to ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites will occur in isolation or in combination with other projects and plans.*” Despite this, a recommendation is made within the HRA to link with EHDP requirements by introducing a new policy to state that support for new dwellings is contingent on the delivery of housing keeping pace with upgrades to Rye Meads Wastewater Treatment Works. It is anticipated that this recommendation will be incorporated into the SASMNP policy framework prior to submission.

- 9.12 Rye Meads Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies within the Lee Valley site, no direct impacts are considered likely given the A414 lies between the designated site and the settlement area, however, the Netherfield Lane site is captured as part of its Impact Risk Zone as a type of development requiring further consultation with Natural England. Indirect impacts are judged likely to arise due to increased vehicle use along the A414 and consultation with Natural England should also seek to agree suitable mitigation in this respect.
- 9.13 The spatial strategy of the SASMNP directs most growth to the south east of the settlement area, reducing the potential for negative effects of significance in relation to Amwell Quarry SSSI north of the settlement area.
- 9.14 Growth within the settlement area is considered low risk in relation to habitat fragmentation. The emerging Living England Habitat Map²¹ identifies that the Netherfield Lane site (Policy H3) is likely to support grassland and woodland habitats but is largely surrounded by built up areas. The area is not identified as part of any National Habitat Network enhancement or expansion zones.
- 9.15 All development proposals (with or without the SASMNP) are also now expected to deliver demonstrable 10% net gains in biodiversity in support of nature recovery (in line with the Environment Act 2021).
- 9.16 Overall, broadly neutral effects are considered achievable should Natural England concur that development can avoid or suitably mitigate impacts in relation to Rye Meads SSSI. Recognising that these discussions are yet to occur, **uncertainty** is noted at this stage.

Climate change and flood risk

- 9.17 Flood risk is a significant constraint for future growth in the neighbourhood area, with much of the built settlement vulnerable to the impacts of flooding. Highest risk areas are located within the floodplain of the River Lee, particularly east of the river between The Maltings and Marsh Lane. Road infrastructure is also particularly vulnerable to surface water flooding. The Netherfield Lane site (Policy H3) lies adjacent to medium and high fluvial and surface water flood risk areas. There is a need to be mindful therefore of future flood risk.
- 9.18 When considering the additional policy protections provided by SASM NE4 (Environmental Impact of Flooding), particularly the requirement for a Flood Risk and Water Management Plan showing a demonstrable reduction in surface water run-off, no significant effects are anticipated as a result of the proposed spatial strategy. The broad support provided through this policy for restoration of land within the floodplain is notably of positive influence.
- 9.19 The SASMNP does not contain proposals that significantly influence climate mitigation and carbon neutral targets. The level of growth within the neighbourhood area is set by the EHDP and there are limited opportunities for measurable changes in terms of per capita emissions. Wider policy directions which seek to increase levels of self-containment (e.g., through the development of new community facilities or adaptable spaces for homeworking) and expand green infrastructure have minor positive influences in relation to this theme.

²¹ DEFRA [Magic Map application](#) – with the Living England project led by Natural England

- 9.20 Overall, with no significant deviations from the baseline anticipated, **broadly neutral to minor positive effects** are deemed most likely.

Health and wellbeing

- 9.21 The neighbourhood area is considered conducive to positive health outcomes given it is rich in green and blue infrastructure which residents benefit from good access to. Most growth is directed to the Netherfield Lane site, which is located with excellent access to Abbots Lake housing the Yacht Club. New residents would be further supported with access to the marina, riverside paths, and open spaces as well as local services and facilities and the train station at an estimated 15-minute walk away. There are no significant proposals (or opportunities) for new facilities that lead to deviations in the baseline and **broadly neutral effects** are considered most likely in relation to this theme.

Historic environment

- 9.22 Growth within and surrounding the settlement area is largely constrained by designated heritage assets. Any spatial strategy is deemed likely to put pressure on the conservation area, including via increased vehicle use and congestion within it. Whilst development of listed buildings can be and is being avoided, the settings of these assets are still vulnerable to the proposed changes.
- 9.23 New sites are proposed adjacent to the conservation area. The larger scale development proposal at Netherfield Lane (Policy H3) is judged to have greatest potential for impacts, given the proposed development of around 60 homes at the edge of the conservation area and adjacent to listed buildings in the north off Roydon Road, including the Baesh Almshouses (Grade II*). The site has greater capacity than it is being allocated for, and notably the SASMNP aims for additional space at the site to be given over to green infrastructure development with design concepts being “*sympathetic*” to heritage settings (Policy SASM H3). There is therefore likely to be good opportunities to design a scheme that minimises impacts on the settings of designated assets. The identification and protection provided for important views to and from the conservation area (Policy HA4) also reduce the potential for impacts arising from the spatial strategy. The site is also identified by the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Unit as within an Area of Archaeological Importance and notably, residents are pursuing a dig this Spring which will inform significance and potential mitigation strategies for development.
- 9.24 Wider heritage protection policies which identify and protect non-designated heritage assets and areas of archaeological significance will also benefit this theme over the long-term.
- 9.25 Overall, it is recognised that the spatial strategy has the potential to impact heritage settings in the neighbourhood area. Whilst plan policies identify measures which help to reduce the significance of impacts, in the absence of detailed planning applications and further archaeological evidence, the overall effects remain **uncertain** at this stage.

Land, soil, and water resources

- 9.26 All available brownfield sites form part of the spatial strategy for the SASMNP. As previously identified, accommodating 94 homes within the settlement boundary is not an option available to the SASMNP, and a Green Belt boundary amendment is a necessary proposal. On this basis, any spatial strategy for the SASMNP is deemed highly likely to lead to permanent minor negative effects in relation to soil resources, because of development of greenfield land that could potentially support arable use. With regards to the Netherfield Lane site (Policy H3), whilst greenfield, the southern extent has already gained outline planning permission, and with development in this section, the northern extent of the site would be surrounded by the built-up area significantly reducing its potential use as arable land. On this basis, and with all other new allocation sites located within the settlement boundary, the spatial strategy performs well in avoiding loss of high-quality land that supports agricultural or mineral uses.
- 9.27 The effects of increased traffic along Netherfield Lane on water quality, in the vicinity of Abbots Lake and the River Lee beyond, need consideration in development. Policy SASM NE4 (Environmental Impact of Flooding) requires mitigation measures in major development proposals to avoid impacts arising in this respect, notably requiring demonstrable surface water runoff reductions.
- 9.28 The growth level proposed through the SASMNP aligns with that planned for through the EHDP in consultation with water companies. On this basis no departure from the baseline is anticipated in relation to water resources.
- 9.29 Overall, despite inevitable **permanent minor negative effects** arising from greenfield development, the spatial strategy and plan policies perform well in relation to this theme, particularly through avoidance measures.

Landscape

- 9.30 The spatial strategy of the SASMNP maximises use of available brownfield sites within the settlement boundary. However, as noted previously, with the level of growth set by the EHDP and a Green Belt boundary amendment inevitable, there will no doubt be a degree of landscape impact in implementing any spatial strategy.
- 9.31 Most importantly, the SASMNP directs most growth to the Netherfield Lane site (Policy H3) and in doing so, avoids development within important/ strategic countryside gaps between Stanstead St Margarets and Great Amwell, and Stanstead St Margarets and Hoddesdon. The southern extent of the Netherfield Lane site has already gained outline planning permission for a mixed-use development, and the additional land in the north will contribute to connecting the new development area with the existing settlement area.
- 9.32 Considering these points, the proposed spatial strategy is judged to perform well in relation to minimising potential landscape impacts.
- 9.33 Supported by the wider design policies of the plan, **minor long-term negative effects** are concluded as most likely in relation to the spatial strategy.
- 9.34 Notably in relation to the natural environment, important hedgerows and trees, and Local Green Spaces are identified and protected, recognising their

contribution to biodiversity, settlement identity, and landscape character. **Minor positive effects** can be drawn on this respect.

Population and communities

- 9.35 By allocating land to meet the forecasted housing need over the plan period, the SASMNP performs positively in relation to this theme. Additional policies which seek to align housing delivery with varied housing needs enhance these positive effects. Future residents will benefit from a good local service, leisure, and recreational offer, as well as strategic links to nearby higher tier settlements and employment areas, and London slightly further south.
- 9.36 The SASMNP proposes additional measures which will help to protect settlement identity and community cohesion in the long-term. This includes policy protection for strategic countryside gaps between Stanstead Abbots and Great Amwell, and between Stanstead Abbots and Hoddesdon, and retention of elements which define entries and exits into the village (e.g., important hedgerows or views to and from the conservation area).
- 9.37 Considering these points, **significant positive effects** are considered a likely outcome in relation to this theme.

Transportation and movement

- 9.38 As a relatively well-connected settlement, containing a train station, growth with the neighbourhood area is judged strategically to perform relatively well in relation to this SEA theme. Notably, the proposed settlement expansion still lies with a 15 to 20-minute walk of the train station, and the settlement is served by local buses and a comprehensive network of footpaths/ public rights of way. Future residents will be supported by relatively good opportunities to use more sustainable modes of transport, as well as active travel opportunities and connections to surrounding countryside.
- 9.39 Supported by a reasonable range of existing services and facilities, a continued degree of self-containment is likely, alongside a continued reliance to some degree on higher-tier settlements nearby. In this respect, bus services connect the area with nearby Hoddesdon and Great Amwell, and rail services provide direct connections with London as a significant employment base.
- 9.40 In respect of major development proposals at the Netherfield Lane site (Policy H3), Policy TR2 requires a Traffic Impact Assessment which should ensure that localised impacts to the road network are sufficiently mitigated in development.
- 9.41 Further of note, SASMNP Policy TR1 seeks to protect and enhance active travel networks and increase their safety.
- 9.42 Overall, with growth anticipated in the neighbourhood area with or without the SASMNP, increases in vehicle use on local roads are an inevitable evolution of the baseline. Despite this the settlement is relatively well connected to support future residents with opportunities to use more sustainable modes of transport and provides a degree of self-containment. Supported by the policies of the SASMNP which seek to address any localised impacts of growth and enhance active travel opportunities, **minor long-term positive effects** are anticipated.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

- 10.1 Overall, the SASMNP is not judged likely to lead to any significant negative effects in relation to any of the SEA themes. Significant positive effects are considered likely through the proposed spatial strategy which allocates sufficient land to meet the forecasted housing needs over the plan period. Notably the settlement area is well-connected in terms of its sustainable transport offer as well as its proximity to higher-tier settlements. In this respect future residents will be supported by local services and facilities, bus connections to nearby settlements, and rail connections to significant employment bases.
- 10.2 Minor negative effects are considered likely due to localised impacts in relation to landscape, and soil resources. This is largely due to an element of greenfield development which is inevitable in any spatial strategy for the plan.
- 10.3 Notably, impacts in relation to the historic environment at the Netherfield Lane site (Policy H3) are uncertain at this stage. However, there is notable potential for significant negative effects to be avoided through good design, supported by the policy requirements for significant green infrastructure enhancement at the site and design concepts which are sympathetic to heritage settings. A good way to ensure significant negative impacts are avoided in this respect is to develop the proposed masterplan for the site in consultation with Historic England.
- 10.4 Uncertainty is noted in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, recognising the need to consult with Natural England and agree suitable mitigation in relation to potential impacts on Rye Meads SSSI, particularly due to increased vehicle use along the A414. It is recommended that this consultation occurs prior to plan finalisation.

Cumulative effects

- 10.5 Alongside the provisions of the EHDP and NPPF, the SASMNP seeks to support housing delivery in line with forecasted needs over the Plan period. **Positive cumulative effects** are anticipated in this respect.
- 10.6 By delivering a level of growth planned for through the EHDP, no cumulative impacts are anticipated in relation to broader river basin catchments and water resource management plans.

Part 3: What are the next steps?

11. Next steps and monitoring

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

Plan finalisation

11.2 Following Regulation 14 consultation and consideration of responses, the SASMNP 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 Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

11.4 If the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the Neighbourhood Plan will then be subject to a referendum, organised by East Hertfordshire District Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once 'made', the SASMNP will become part of the Development Plan for East Hertfordshire District, 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 East Hertfordshire District 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 SASMNP that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by the District Council.

Appendices

Appendix A Regulatory requirements

As discussed in **Chapter 1**, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) explains the information that must be contained in the Environmental Report; however, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. **Table AA.1** overleaf links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst **Table AA.2** explains this interpretation. **Table AA.3** identifies how and where within the Environmental Report the regulatory requirements have/ will be met.

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

	Questions answered		As per regulations... the Environmental Report must include...
Introduction	What's the plan seeking to achieve?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes
	What's the SEA scope?	What's the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance
		What's the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance
		What are the key issues and objectives that should be a focus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment
Part 1	What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach) The likely significant effects associated with alternatives Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives assessment / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan
Part 2	What are the SEA findings at this current stage?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan
Part 3	What happens next?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A description of the monitoring measures envisaged

Table AA.2: Questions answered by this Environmental Report, in-line with regulatory requirements

Schedule 2	Interpretation of Schedule 2		
The report must include...	The report must include...		
(a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	i.e. answer - <i>What's the plan seeking to achieve?</i>	i.e. answer – <i>What's the scope of the SA?</i>
(b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'context'?</i>	
(c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>	
(d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan'		
(e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected		
(f) the likely significant effects on the environment including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues & objectives?</i>	
(g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;	Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal		
(h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information	An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (i.e. an explanation of the 'reasonableness of the approach')	i.e. answer - <i>What has Plan-making / SA involved up to this point?</i> [Part 1 of the Report]	
(i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	The likely significant effects associated with alternatives, including on issues such as... ... and an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives considered / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan.		
	The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan	i.e. answer - <i>What are the assessment findings at this current stage?</i> [Part 2 of the Report]	
	The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan		
	A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring	i.e. answer - <i>What happens next?</i> [Part 3 of the Report]	

Table AA.3: ‘Checklist’ of how (throughout the SA 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?’).
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.;	
5. The environmental protection, objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The SEA framework is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA’). Also, the SEA Scoping Report presents key messages from the context review. With regards to explaining “ <i>how...considerations have been taken into account</i> ”, 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.
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects);	Chapter 6 presents alternatives appraisal findings (in relation to housing growth, which is a ‘stand-out’ plan policy area). Chapters 9 presents an appraisal of the plan. With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 8 explains the role of the SEA framework/scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions, e.g., timescale.
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;	The assessment highlights certain tensions between competing objectives, which might potentially be actioned by the Examiner, when finalising the plan.
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;	Chapters 4 and 5 deal with ‘Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with’, in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues and options. Also, Chapter 7 explains the Parish Council’s ‘reasons for selecting the preferred option’ (in light of alternatives assessment).

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10;	Chapter 11 presents measures envisaged concerning monitoring.
10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings	The NTS is provided at the beginning of this Environmental Report.
The SA Report must be published alongside the Draft Plan, in accordance with the following regulations	
authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2)	At the current time, this Environmental Report is published alongside the Regulation 14 consultation version of the SASMNP, with a view to informing consultation.
The SA must be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.	
The environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 shall be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure.	Assessment findings presented within this Environmental Report, and consultation responses received, have been fed back to the Steering Group and have informed plan finalisation.

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