



Renhold Neighbourhood Development Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

June 2025

**Prepared by Renhold Neighbourhood
Plan Working Group for Renhold Parish
Council**

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1. Introduction

1.1 This screening report has been prepared to determine whether or not the content of the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan (NP) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These require an SEA to be undertaken for: (i) Plans which are prepared for Town and Country Planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive; or (ii) Plans which have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive.

1.2 Plans which determine ‘the use of a small area at local level’ or which only propose ‘minor modification to a plan’ might be exempt if they are unlikely to have significant environmental effects. Neighbourhood Plans containing land allocations for development that are not included in the local authority’s plan, are more likely to require an SEA. The main determining factor as to whether an SEA is required on a Neighbourhood Plan is if it is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

1.3 Section 2 of this report outlines the regulations that set the need for this screening exercise. The process and criteria of the assessment are set out in Section 3. A brief summary of the draft Renhold Neighbourhood Plan is provided in Section 4.

1.4 The screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan is set out in Section 5 and the outcome of the screening is provided in Section 6. Section 7 contains the determination as to whether an SEA is required.

2. Legislative Background

2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC which was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations. The Regulations continue to apply after the end of the transition period following the UK's formal departure from the EU. Regulation 9 sets out the process as follows:

'Determinations of the responsible authority

- (1) The responsible authority shall determine whether or not a plan, programme or modification of a description referred to in
 - (a) paragraph (4) (a) and (b) of regulation 5;
 - (b) paragraph (6)(a) of that regulation; or
 - (c) paragraph (6) (b) of that regulation, is likely to have significant environmental effects.
- (2) Before making a determination under paragraph (1) the responsible authority shall –
 - (a) take into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 to these Regulations; and
 - (b) consult the consultation bodies.
- (3) Where the responsible authority determines that the plan, programme or modification is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, 3 accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), it shall prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.

The regulations define a responsible authority as:

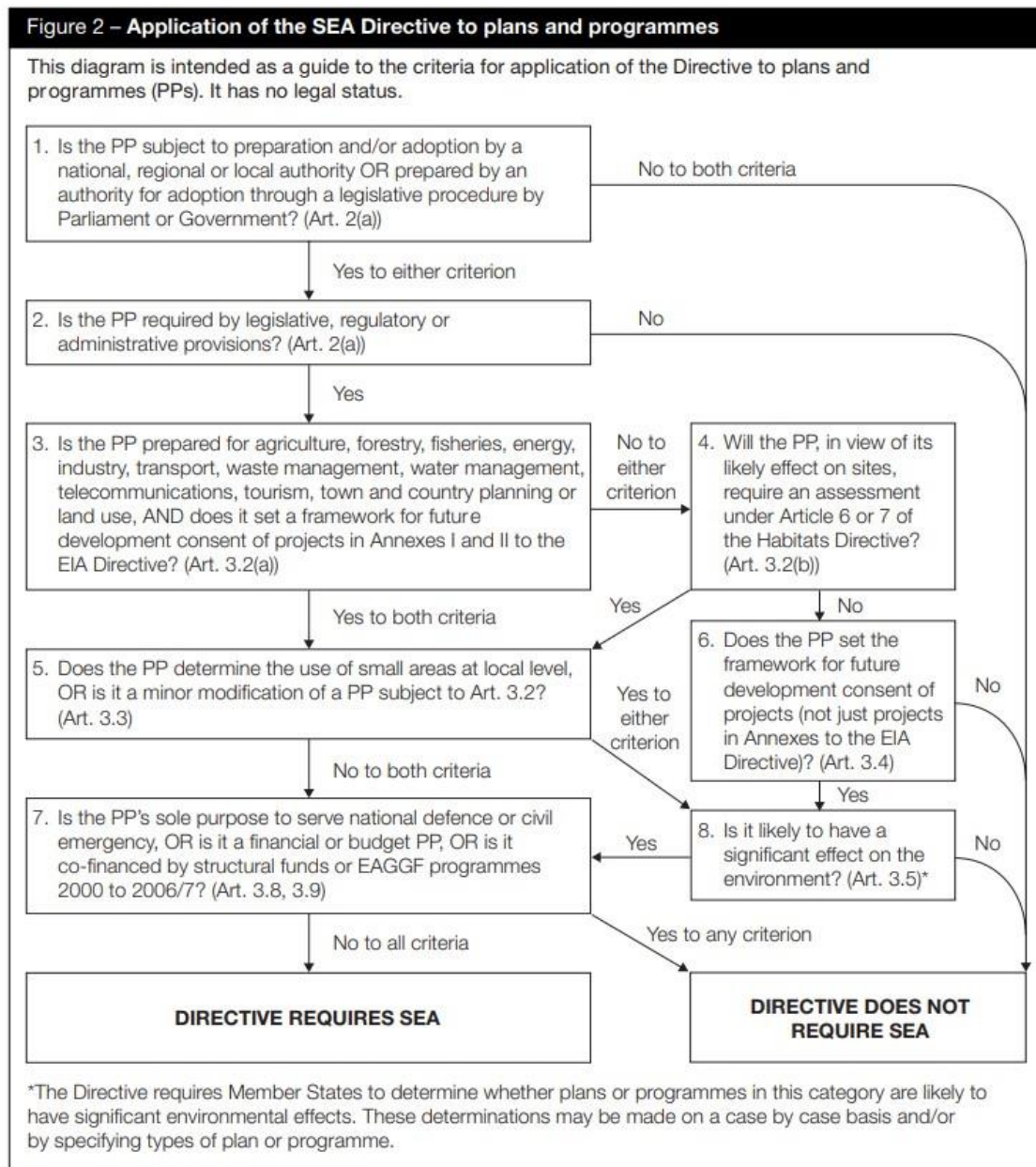
- (a) the authority by which or on whose behalf it is prepared; and
- (b) where, at any particular time, that authority ceases to be responsible, or solely responsible, for taking steps in relation to the plan or programme, the person who, at that time, is responsible (solely or jointly with the authority) for taking those steps'.

2.2 The Government has stated that Sustainability Appraisals are not needed for Neighbourhood Plans (see NPPG). It must however be demonstrated how the NP contributes to achievement of sustainable development in the area.

3. Screening Assessment Process

3.1 The screening opinion assessment is undertaken in two parts: the first part will assess whether the plan falls into a category of plans requiring SEA; and the second part of the assessment will consider whether the NP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, using criteria drawn from Schedule 1 of the EU SEA Directive and the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

3.2 The government guidance 'A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 2005' sets out the approach to be taken in determining whether an SEA is required.



3.3 The criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC and Schedule 1 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 are set out below:

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

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

3.4 The three statutory consultation bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England) are required to be consulted to determine whether they agree with the findings and conclusions of this screening opinion, in establishing whether the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan requires an SEA and whether it may have a significant environmental effect. The statutory bodies were consulted in October 2024 and, when the responses to the consultation are received, they will be included in Section 8.

4. Summary of the draft Renhold Neighbourhood Plan

4.1 Renhold's Neighbourhood Plan sets out a Vision which encompasses three strands: Countryside, Community and Connectedness. It seeks to preserve the distinctive character of the Parish, to ensure that the needs and aspirations of our residents are reflected in the appropriate provision of community facilities and infrastructure, and that it enhances the natural environment and biodiversity of the Parish. The Neighbourhood Plan contains nine objectives and nine policies that are aimed towards achieving the Plan's Vision. The document is divided into nine chapters which explain the description of the Parish, the community consultations which have taken place and the key issues which have arisen, the Vision and Objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan, planning policies, and arrangements for implementation, monitoring and review, together with other (non land-use) actions and aspirations.

4.2 The Housing Needs Survey identified a local need for a small-scale housing development for affordable housing and, for that reason, seven of the sites identified in the Call for Sites Submission for the Bedford Local Plan 2030 were assessed to see if any of them would be suitable. None of them were considered suitable.

4.3 A key policy in the Plan concerns development design and sustainability principles, which should be demonstrated in all future development proposals wherever possible – Design Codes have been prepared by AECOM as an Appendix to the Plan to add depth and illustration to that policy; and to enhance the character and local distinctiveness and suggest measures to improve the overall cohesiveness and sustainability of the Parish. The Plan seeks to retain the rural character of the Parish as well as protecting and enhancing its natural and historic assets.

5. Assessment

5.1 The first part of the assessment is to establish the need for the SEA. The table below shows the assessment determining whether the NP falls into a category of plans requiring SEA. The references to Articles are from Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Council on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
1. Is the NP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Article. 2(a))	Y	The Local Authority has a statutory obligation to make a Neighbourhood Plan once it has successfully passed the stages as set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Article. 2(a))	Y	While it is not mandatory for a Neighbourhood Plan to be prepared, however once made, it is part of the development plan for assessing planning applications.
3. Is the NP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Article. 3.2(b))	N	The NP is prepared for town and country planning and land use purposes but does not explicitly set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I or II of the EIA Directive.
4. Will the NP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	N	An appropriate Assessment screening has been carried out to show that an assessment is not required.

5. Does the NP determine the use of small areas at local level OR is it a minor modification of a plan/programme (Article 3.3)	Y <i>If yes, go to Q8</i>	Yes, the Neighbourhood Plan relates to the local area of the designated Neighbourhood Area.
6. Does the NP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Article. 3.4)		N/A
7. Is the NP's sole purpose to serve national defence or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Article. 3.8 & Article. 3.9)		N/A
8. Is the NP likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Article. 3.5)	N	See the following table

5.2 The next step in the screening assessment is to establish whether the NP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The criteria for determining the likely significance of effects are drawn from the Annex II of SEA Directive 2001/42/EC and is also set out in Schedule 1 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Criteria for determining the likely significant effects (Annex II SEA Directive)	Summary of significant effects	Likely to have significant environmental effects Y/N
Plan Characteristics		
1a. The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size, and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	Following an assessment of the seven smallest sites identified in the 2030 Local Plan Call for sites submission, none of the sites were deemed to be suitable to meet the local housing need of small-scale affordable homes.	N
1b. The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The NP will be complementary to the Bedford Borough Development Plan, including the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 which has been subject to SEA.	N
1c. The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	The achievement of sustainable development is one of the basic conditions that a Neighbourhood Plan must meet.	N
1d. Environmental problems relevant to the plan.	There are no environmental problems relevant to the NP in this Parish	N
1e. The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection or renewable energy generation)	The plan does not relate to waste management or water protection. Amongst other things, the Design and Sustainability Policy encourages energy efficiency such as the installation of renewable and low carbon sources.	N

Effects and Area Characteristics		
2a. The probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects		N/A
2b. The cumulative nature of the effects		N/A
2c. The transboundary nature of the effects	It is not considered that the proposals will have any material impact outside the parish. Any effects will be mitigated within the area.	N
2d. The risks to human health or environment (e.g. due to accidents)	The allocations are only for local green space and it is not considered that they will cause a risk to human health or the environment. On the contrary, implementation of the design and sustainability and local greenspace policies will reduce risks to health or the environment.	N
2e. The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The population estimated from the 2021 census was 3400 and the dwellings' estimate was 1300. The area of the Parish is 884 hectares which equates to a population density of - 3.85 people per hectare.	N
2f. The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or Intensive land use	The plan includes policies to ensure that cultural heritage is either preserved or enhanced. There are no special natural characteristics that are related to the Parish. No potential development site is within the immediate setting of the Grade I listed All Saints Church.	N
2g. The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	There are no national or internationally recognised areas or landscapes within the Parish.	N

6. Screening Outcome

6.1 The screening assessment undertaken in Section 5 concludes that it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Renhold Neighbourhood Plan.

7. Determination

7.1 Based on the above information, the 'Responsible Body' being Renhold Parish Council, concludes that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

8. Responses received from Statutory Consultees

8.1 Natural England

8.2 Historic England

8.3 Environment Agency

Date: 04 November 2024
Our ref: 490448
Your ref: Renhold Neighbourhood Development Plan SEA/HRA Screening



Amanda Quince
Renhold Neighbourhood Plan

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

T 0300 060 3900

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Amanda Quince

Thank you for your consultation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent

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

as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's [standing advice](#) on protected species.

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

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

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

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

Yours sincerely

Ben Jones
Consultations Team

From: **Turnpenney, Megan** <Megan.Turnpenney@environment-agency.gov.uk>

Date: Tue, Nov 5, 2024 at 9:22 AM

Subject: RE: Thank you for contacting the Environment Agency Sustainable Places Team, East Anglia

To: AJ Q <pace.quince@gmail.com>

Good morning,

Thank you for consulting us on the Draft Neighbourhood Plan for Renhold.

We regret that at present, we are unable to review this consultation. We have had to prioritise our limited resource and must focus on influencing plans where the environmental risks and opportunities are highest.

For the purposes of neighbourhood planning, we have assessed those authorities who have “up to date” local plans (plans adopted within the previous 5 years) as being of lower risk, and those authorities who have older plans (adopted more than 5 years ago) as being at greater risk. We aim to reduce flood risk and protect and enhance the water environment, and with consideration to the key environmental constraints within our remit, we have then tailored our approach to reviewing each neighbourhood plan accordingly.

We note the Bedford Borough Local Plan was recently adopted in 2020, and that there are not any important environmental constraints, within our matrix for currently screening neighbourhood plans, that affect this Neighbourhood Plan Area. At this time, therefore, we are unable to make any detailed input on neighbourhood plans being prepared within this local planning authority area.

We encourage you to seek ways in which your neighbourhood plan can improve the local environment. For your information, together with Natural England, Historic England and Forestry Commission, we have published joint guidance on neighbourhood planning, which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans. This is available at: [How to consider the environment in Neighbourhood plans - Locality Neighbourhood Planning](#)

The Local Authority will be able to advise if there are areas at risk from surface water flood risk (including groundwater and sewerage flood risk) in your neighbourhood plan area. The Surface Water Management Plan will contain recommendations and actions about how such sites can help reduce the risk of flooding. This may be useful when developing policies or guidance for particular sites and sustainable drainage measures can complement other objectives such as enhancing green spaces.

Kind regards,

Megan

Megan Turnpenney

Sustainable Places Planning Advisor | East Anglia area

Environment Agency | Brampton Office, Bromholme Lane, Brampton PE28 4NE

Megan.Turnpenney@environment-agency.gov.uk

Direct line: 020 3025 1463

Typical working pattern: 09 :00 – 17 :00 Monday to Friday

By e-mail to:
Ms A Quince
Chair,
Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Our ref: PL00797217
Your ref:
Date: 18/06/2025

Direct Dial: 01223 582709
Mobile: 07766 206210

Dear Ms Quince,

Ref: Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Early Draft Consultation

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on the early draft of this Neighbourhood Plan.

We welcome the production of this neighbourhood plan and are pleased to see the historic environment features throughout the draft plan.

We welcome the inclusion of heritage policy RNP7. We note its inclusion within Section 6 as part of thematic group of complementary policies. We are pleased to see that within this section, the Plan consider ways to enhance the historic environment through improved access.

We would, however, recommend that the historic environment section is included as a standalone section to emphasise and reinforce the community value and interest in the historic environment. This would also ensure that the policy and rationale is clear for its intended audience.

We are pleased to see reference to non-designated assets within the document and policy RNP7. We recommend that your non-designated assets are shown within the plan. This could be included as an appendix. We also recommend including a map showing designated and non-designated heritage assets as this is a simple yet effective way to highlight the historic environment to your audience.

Further advice on successfully incorporating historic environment considerations into your neighbourhood plan can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/plan-making/improve-your-neighbourhood/>.

For further specific advice regarding the historic environment and how to integrate it into your neighbourhood plan, we recommend that you consult your local planning authority conservation officer, and if appropriate the Historic Environment Record at Bedford Borough Council.

To avoid any doubt, this letter does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on or, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise as a result of the proposed plan, where we consider these would have an adverse effect on the historic environment.

Please do contact me, either via email or the number above, if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Ross McGivern
Historic Places Adviser, East of England
Ross.mcgivern@HistoricEngland.org.uk