

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Harston Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report

Harston Parish Council

July 2024

Quality information

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Figure 1.1: Figure showing the Harston neighbourhood area.

Non-technical Summary

What is Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)?

A strategic environmental assessment (SEA) has been undertaken to inform the Harston Neighbourhood Plan (HNP). This process is required by the SEA Regulations.

Neighbourhood Plan groups use SEA to assess Neighbourhood Plans against a set of sustainability objectives developed in consultation with interested parties. The purpose of the assessment is to help avoid adverse environmental and socio-economic effects through the Neighbourhood Plan and identify opportunities to improve the environmental quality of the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan and the quality of life of residents.

What is the Harston Neighbourhood Plan?

The HNP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and in the context of the local planning framework of South Cambridgeshire District Council. The Parish (Figure 1.1) is within South Cambridgeshire and is being prepared in the context of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) and due regard is given to the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

The HNP is seeking to shape development within the Harston Parish until 2041; located in the central part of South Cambridgeshire, the civil parish and village is around 8km south of Cambridge and has a population of 1,826 (Census, 2021).

Purpose of this Environmental Report

The HNP has been screened in as requiring a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). It is a requirement that the SEA process is undertaken in-line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations). The Regulations stipulate that a 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”. The report must then be considered when finalising the plan.

To align with the SEA Regulations, the report can be structured by answering the following three questions:

- What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
 - including in relation to ‘reasonable alternatives’.
- What are the SEA findings at this stage?
 - i.e., in relation to the current draft plan.
- What happens next?

Identification of reasonable alternatives for the Harston Neighbourhood Plan

The aim of Chapter 5 of the SEA Report is to explain the process that led to the establishment of reasonable alternatives, and thereby present “an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with”.

Strategic parameters (top-down considerations)

The adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan classify Harston as a ‘Group Village’, meaning that sites of up to 8 dwellings would be permitted, with up to 15 dwellings in exceptional circumstances where the development would make the best use of a brownfield site. A calculation based on South Cambridgeshire’s anticipated windfall development need (based on Harston’s population as a proportion of the area) highlights a need for 13 dwellings, which has been met through commitments and completions.

Approach to housing and site options (bottom-up considerations)

In total, 16 sites were identified in the Neighbourhood Area through a local call for sites. After an initial sift, 11 were assessed through a site assessment.

Of the eleven sites considered, the site assessments found one site to be suitable (H8) and four sites to be potentially suitable for allocation (H12, H13, H14 and H15). These sites have capacities of between 1 and 10 dwellings (based on the AECOM derived site capacity estimates from the Site Options Assessment evidence used to support the Harston Neighbourhood Plan).

Considering the fact that site H8 would be considered infill development, with a capacity of one dwelling; the steering group decided against allocating it and it was not considered in the formation of reasonable alternatives.

The basis for the development of reasonable alternatives for the HNP therefore focuses on the likely effects of *allocating* individual sites to support the Plan’s intention to allocate land to deliver small scale housing. The steering group support planning for growth, in order to support local services. As locally identified need in the Local Plan has already been met, the steering group for the HNP deem it unreasonable to *allocate* more than one site for development. Whilst the Plan may support growth on other sites, the more contentious nature of a specific allocation was focused upon in the reasonable alternatives. Therefore, the reasonable alternatives look at the allocation of the following sites under four options:

Option 1: H12 – SIG Roofing site, Station Road – 10 dwellings

Option 2: H13 – Land off High Street – 8 dwellings

Option 3: H14 – 131 High Street – 6 dwellings

Option 4: H15 – Centenary Works, Button End – 2 dwellings

Assessment of reasonable alternatives for the Harston Neighbourhood Plan

Chapter 6 of the main report provides the detailed findings of the assessment of the four alternative spatial strategy options within Harston. The table below provides a summary of the detailed assessment presented in Chapter 6, distinguishing between the prediction of likely significant effects and the rankings of options in terms of how they perform against their relative sustainability merits.

To conclude, it is evident that the reasonable alternative options identified and assessed perform broadly similarly, with only one potential significant effect identified. To distinguish between the options, the assessments have taken note of potential effects outlined above.

Option 2 has the potential to lead to significant effects on designated and non-designated heritage assets. Option 4 is the worst performing alternative, with more pronounced negative effects linked to transport and landscape themes. Option 3 performs preferably in six out of seven SEA themes and therefore ranks best overall. Option 1 scores well overall and preferably in terms of biodiversity and geodiversity, though land scape and transportation and movement related effects would be less favourable compared to Option 3.

Summary of reasonable alternative assessments

Theme		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	No	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	1	2=	2=	2=
Climate change and flood risk	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	No	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	1=	1=	1=	2
Community wellbeing	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	No	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	1=	1=	1=	2
Historic environment	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	Yes	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	1=	2	1=	1=
Land, soil and water resources	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	No	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	1=	2=	1=	1=
Landscape	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	No	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	2	4	1	3
Transportation and movement	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	No	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	2	=1	=1	3

Developing the preferred approach

Considering the HNP vision and objectives, which focus on a range of environmental, social and economic themes (see Chapter 2 for detail), the fact that Option 3 performed preferably across six out of seven SEA themes was a reinforcing factor in the steering group's decision to select Option 3 (opting to allocating the site at 131 High Street for residential uses) as their preferred approach. The housing growth on this site ought to support the vitality of local services, including the Harston and Newton Community primary school.

Assessment findings at this stage

Conclusions

Significant positive effects are concluded in relation to community wellbeing. The draft HNP seeks to deliver a small level of homes to meet local needs and specialist requirements, and supports accessible, cohesive and inclusive communities.

Minor positive effects are predicted in relation to the climate change SEA topic, reflective of the draft HNP policies that support both climate change adaptation and mitigation. This includes delivering a low level of sustainable housing growth, setting requirements for high quality design and construction, and encouraging renewable energy provision and modal shift.

Minor positive effects are predicted in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, assuming recommendations are considered. This reflects the mitigation set out through policy for any adverse effects on biodiversity sites/ features, and support for BNG. **Minor positive effects** are also predicted where the policy framework, supported by the village design codes and LCA, and local and national policy provisions, seeks to protect and enhance Harston's rich historic environment. Similarly, **minor positive effects** are predicted in relation to landscape, reflective of the extensive policy framework dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the local landscape, village character and setting.

The redevelopment of brownfield land and positive management of local water resources is also anticipated to lead to **minor positive effects** for the land, soil and water resources SEA theme.

Neutral effects are predicted in relation to transportation, as while policy provisions support local transport objectives, growth of the parish will inevitably increase road users and lead to a continued reliance on the private vehicle for travel.

Recommendations

The following recommendations for the draft HNP have been made through the assessment presented in Chapter 9 of the main report:

It is recommended that consideration be given through Policy HAR28 (Land at 131 High Street) to the adjacent deciduous woodland priority habitat. Additionally the site allocation is within 200m of Harston Orchard County Wildlife Site which may lead to a level of increased recreational pressure, however given the level of growth proposed through the site allocation (6 homes) effects are unlikely to be of significance. As such 'consideration' through Policy HAR28 could simply be cross referencing to Policy HAR9 (Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity in Harston Parish) and ensuring any proposal for the site align with policy requirements set out.

In line with Policy H6, in all locations, development proposals will also be required to demonstrate “measurable net gain for biodiversity”. Biodiversity ‘net gain’ (BNG) has been introduced through the Environment Act, and mandates that all qualifying schemes secure a net gain of 10%. Now that the mandatory requirement for BNG is in place, there is no technical need to repeat the legal requirements in local policy. The draft HNP therefore presents an opportunity to set policy requiring a higher percentage net gain, where there is evidence to support such an approach. Requiring ‘at least 10% measurable BNG’, or an ambitious ‘20% BNG’, can be calculated using Natural England’s biodiversity metric, to ensure the delivery of maximum biodiversity on site.

It is recommended that consideration of flood risk be included in the site allocation policy (HAR28), or at minimum that the policy require that the scheme align with the wider policy framework. Notably this might include cross referencing to the parish Design Guide, and Policy HAR12 (Managing Flood Risk in Harston Parish) which sets out requirements for water drainage infrastructure and wider SuDS under national policy.

Next steps

This Environmental Report accompanies the HNP for a post-Regulation 14, focused consultation.

Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan and Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the Neighbourhood Plan for submission to the Local Planning Authority, South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC), for subsequent 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 local planning policy.

If the Independent Examination is favourable, the Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a referendum, organised by SCDC. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be ‘made’. Once made, the HNP will become part of the Development Plan for South Cambridgeshire.

Introduction

Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Harston Neighbourhood Plan (HNP).
- 1.2 The HNP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and in the context of the local planning framework of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- 1.3 The neighbourhood area (Figure 1.1), designated in 2022, covers the parish of Harston, located in the central part of South Cambridgeshire. Harston is a civil parish and village, located around 8km south of Cambridge.
- 1.1 The Parish is within South Cambridgeshire and is being prepared in the context of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) ¹ and due regard is given to the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan².

SEA Screening

- 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 potential negative effects and maximising potential positive effects.
- 1.3 The HNP has been screened for SEA by Place Services (directed by South Cambridgeshire District Council), stating:

“As highlighted above in the screening of the Neighbourhood Plan per sustainability theme, the Neighbourhood Plan has not been assessed as having negative effects associated with environmental themes. Nevertheless, the Neighbourhood Plan’s allocation of a site for development purposes in the first instance requires the full application of the SEA Directive, and the possibility of effects should be more thoroughly assessed through that process.

...

The Plan allocates land for development purposes. The site is not however allocated or identified within the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and as such the Local Plan’s Sustainability Appraisal cannot be considered relevant in the selection of the site within the Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore considered that the procedure of exploring ‘reasonable alternatives’ within the context of the SEA Directive should be followed in order to meet the basic condition regarding compatibility with certain Obligations (basic condition ‘f’).”

- 1.4 In light of the above, SEA is required to assess the potential for significant environmental effects and to explore reasonable alternative approaches to delivering the HNP’s objectives.

¹ South Cambridge District Council (2018) ‘South Cambridge Local Plan’ can be accessed [here](#).

² Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (2023) ‘Greater Cambridge Local Plan’ 2023 can be accessed [here](#).

SEA explained

- 1.5 It is a requirement that the SEA process is undertaken in-line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The Regulations stipulate that a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that “identifies, describes, and evaluates” the likely significant effects of implementing “the plan, and reasonable alternatives”. The report must then be considered when finalising the plan.
- 1.6 More specifically, the report can be structured to address requirements by answering the following three questions:
1. What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
 - including in relation to ‘reasonable alternatives’.
 2. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
 - i.e., in relation to the current draft plan.
 3. What happens next?

This Environmental Report

- 1.7 This report is the Environmental Report for the HNP. It is published alongside the ‘pre-submission draft’ version of the Plan for a focused consultation post-Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) and pre-Regulation 16 (submission stage). The report answers the three questions outlined above in turn, as discrete ‘parts’ of the report. However, before answering these questions, two further introductory sections are presented to further set the scene (Chapters 2 and 3).

2. What is the plan seeking to achieve?

Local Plan Context for the Harston Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.1 The strategic policy context is also set by South Cambridgeshire's Local Development Framework, which consists predominantly of the [South Cambridgeshire Local Plan \(SCLP\)](#), which was adopted in 2018.
- 2.2 Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council are working together to create a joint Local Plan which will be referred to as the [Greater Cambridge Local Plan \(GCLP\)](#). The emerging plan has been ongoing since 2019, with public consultations taking place in 2020, and late 2021, ahead of both councils agreeing the 'Development Strategy Update' in early 2023. The Greater Cambridge Local Plan will seek to guide development across the joint authority area in the period up to 2041.

Harston Neighbourhood Plan vision and objectives

- 2.3 The vision for Harston over the plan period to 2041 is as follows:

To maintain the village's rural charm, where new buildings are in keeping with the rural setting and its historic identity is retained. The environment, located in the green belt, will be enhanced for everyone to enjoy which embracing sustainability and biodiversity,

A cohesive, diverse, vibrant community will be fostered, anchored by a thriving school, improved community facilities and services to make it a great place to call home while being ecologically and environmentally friendly. Any new development should focus on creating affordable housing opportunities and be sensitively and sustainably designed. Improved connectivity will be created through well-designed transport options, with cycleways and footpaths that serve the needs of the community.

- 2.4 The vision is underpinned by a number of Neighbourhood Plan objectives, which have been identified through engagement with the local community. These are as follows:

Village and settlement character

- Objective 1: New development will be designed to a high standard and will reinforce Harston's distinctive rural charm and sense of place.
- Objective 2: Harston's historic identity will be retained and strengthened.
- Objective 3: The vulnerability and sensitivity of Harston's historic core and Button End in terms of heritage significance and settlement/landscape character will be fully considered in all applicable parish-based planning decisions.

Open space

- Objective 4: Existing locally important open spaces within the village will be protected and opportunities will be taken to improve the quality and quantity in this provision.

Parish-wide landscape and biodiversity

- Objective 5: Retain and enhance Harston's wider landscape character for all to enjoy.

- Objective 6: Protect, enhance and increase areas and networks of biodiversity value.

Climate Change and flood management

- Objective 7: New development will achieve high sustainable design and construction standards, ensuring new development will belong in a zero carbon future.
- Objective 8: Support new low carbon and renewable energy infrastructure.
- Objective 9: Flood risk from all sources will be a key consideration in all land use planning decisions and new development will not result in increased risk of flooding.

Housing supply

- Objective 10: Existing affordable housing needs will be addressed through the provision of affordable housing schemes targeted at meeting parish level needs.
- Objective 11: The size, mix and tenure of new residential development will be suitable for attracting young families to the parish and allowing older residents to downsize.

Traffic and parking

- Objective 12: Traffic generation from new development proposals will be fully considered and appropriately mitigated.
- Objective 13: Existing parking infrastructure for motorised vehicles will be improved and better managed in locations associated with village shops and community facilities in order to make our village environment safer and more pleasant.

Active travel

- Objective 14: Different parts of the village will be better connected through an improved rural and village footpath network.
- Objective 15: New development will utilise all opportunities to secure active travel routes to facilitate ease of access to both neighbouring developments, surrounding countryside and village services.

Harston's village hub and community infrastructure

- Objective 16: We will plan to sustain and develop further enhanced community meeting spaces in central locations, to allow for increased opportunities for the community to come together.
- Objective 17: Harston's community infrastructure (comprising our school, health services and community spaces) will be maintained and where necessary expanded to meet the needs of residents.
- Objective 18: We will support shops and businesses along the High Street in order to support parish residents in both their working and leisure time.

3. What is the scope of the SEA?

Summary of SEA Scoping

- 3.1 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”.
- 3.2 In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England . These authorities were consulted on the scope of the SEA in May 2024.
- 3.3 The purpose of scoping was to outline the ‘scope’ of the SEA through setting out the following information:
- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional, and local plans and strategies relevant to the HNP.
 - Baseline data against which the HNP can be assessed.
 - The key sustainability issues for the HNP; and
 - An ‘SEA Framework’ of objectives against which the HNP can be assessed.
- 3.4 Further information on the scope of the HNP, alongside the full SEA framework as consulted on, is presented in Appendix A.
- 3.5 The comments provided by the consultees on the HNP SEA Scoping Report, and how they have been addressed, can be read in Table 3-1 below.

Table 3-1: Scoping consultation responses

Consultation response	How the response was considered and addressed
<p>Historic England – 17th May 2024</p> <p>Representation in support of the Scope.</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>Environment Agency – 11th June 2024</p> <p>Thank you for consulting us on the Harston Neighbourhood Plan SEA Scoping Report. We have reviewed the Scoping Report.</p> <p>We welcome the inclusion of the topics of climate change, flood risk, water quality and water resources/efficiency and have no further comments.</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>Natural England – 11th June 2024</p> <p>Natural England has no specific comments to make on the scope of this neighbourhood plan’s SEA.</p>	<p>No action required</p>

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

4. Introduction (to Part 1)

Overview

4.1 The aim of this part of the report is to explain work undertaken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives. Whilst work on the HNP has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of work undertaken to date, but rather to discuss the evolution of the HNP in association with the SEA process. More specifically, this part of the report presents information on the consideration given to reasonable alternative approaches to a particular issue that is of central importance to the plan, namely the broad location of development in the neighbourhood area.

4.2 Structure of this part of the report:

- **Chapter 5** – explains the process of establishing reasonable alternatives
- **Chapter 6** – presents the outcomes of assessing reasonable alternatives
- **Chapter 7** – explains reasons for establishing the preferred option, in light of the assessment.

5. Establishing alternatives

Introduction

- 5.1 The aim here is to explain a process that led to the establishment of reasonable alternatives, and thereby present “an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with”.

Strategic parameters (top-down considerations)

- 5.2 The adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan classify Harston as a ‘Group Village’, meaning that sites of up to 8 dwellings would be permitted, with up to 15 dwellings in exceptional circumstances where the development would make the best use of a brownfield site. A calculation of South Cambridgeshire’s anticipated windfall development needs highlights a need for 13 dwellings, which has already been met through commitments and completions.

Approach to housing and site options (bottom-up considerations)

- 5.3 The evidence supporting the HNP implies that demand for housing in the Parish is higher than that which has been locally determined as well as identifying a high local need for affordable housing. As such, the HNP is seeking to allocate land to support additional small-scale development, as well as support affordable housing on Rural Exception Sites. As the delivery of new housing development through the HNP is what is most likely to have a significant effect on SEA objectives, it was determined that this issue should be the primary focus of the consideration of alternatives through the SEA process.
- 5.4 The Parish Council have undertaken a call for sites and a site identification exercise which has identified a total of 16 sites that require an assessment of their potential for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. This includes 11 sites without planning permission which have come forward through a call for sites exercise and five additional sites without planning permission in the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA).
- 5.5 In total, 16 sites were identified (Figure 5.1) in the Neighbourhood Area and after an initial sift, 11 were assessed through a site assessment. Site H16 has been built out and was therefore not included in assessments. On the basis of Green Belt policy (NPPF Paragraph 145, 146 and 149), four sites were excluded from assessment; these were: H1, H2, H3 and H4. Sites H12 and H15 are within the Green Belt but comprise of previously developed land and as a result have been included in the assessment. Sites H8, H9, H13 and H14 were not ruled out due to national policy constraints, and so were carried forward for assessment.
- 5.6 In terms of Rural Exception Sites, five Green Belt sites were identified (H5, H6, H7, H10 and H11) as potentially suitable (in whole, or in part) for delivering affordable housing in line with local and national policy requirements. These sites were assessed to consider their suitability. These sites may permit some market housing where this is essential to enable the delivery of affordable housing units. Neighbourhood Plans cannot allocate specific rural exception sites for development, and so these sites did not form part of any reasonable alternatives considered.

5.7 Therefore, 11 sites were ultimately taken forward for assessment.

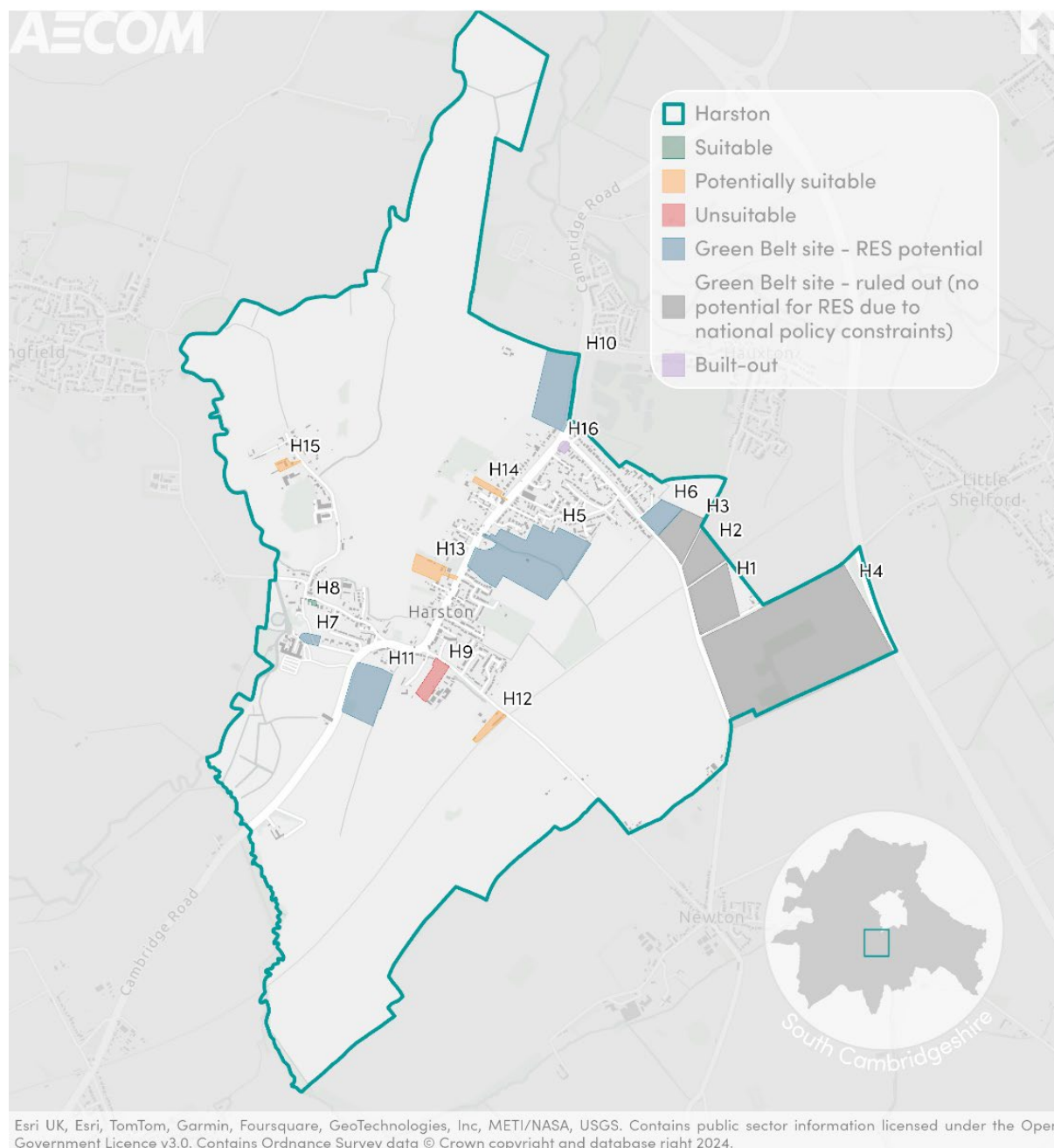


Figure 5.1: Figure showing identified sites.

5.8 Of the eleven sites considered for assessment, the following conclusions were drawn up (further detail on the site assessment findings can be found in the Site Options Assessment Report):

- **H5 The Drift, Harston** [Green Belt- potential rural exception site]

The site is not appropriate for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan due to its location within the Green Belt. However, a smaller northern portion of the site adjacent to the settlement could be a suitable location for rural exception housing.

- **H6 Pinder land (a combination of Church/Parish owned and held by a trust for village), London Road, adjacent to No 67** [Green Belt- potential rural exception site]

The site is not appropriate for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan due to its location within the Green Belt. However, the site could be a potentially suitable location for rural exception housing.

- **H7 Manor Grounds - Mill Road** [Green Belt- potential rural exception site]

The site is not appropriate for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan due to its location within the Green Belt. However, the site could be a potentially suitable location for rural exception housing.

- **H8 Manor Grounds - Church Street** [suitable for allocation]

This site is suitable for housing and therefore appropriate for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. It appears to be in use as a residential front garden with a driveway and car port. Whilst the site lies just within the Green Belt, development of this site, under NPPF paragraph 154, would comprise infill village development between existing houses on Church Street. Any potential development proposals would have to retain the existing deciduous trees on site. Additionally, design proposals would have to mitigate any possible harm to the nearby Grade II* Listed Manor House. The site is otherwise not constrained and would be suitable for 1 dwelling.

- **H9 Land south of Station Road** [unsuitable for allocation]

The site is not currently suitable for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. The site is located within the Green Belt. The site comprises greenfield land with tall hedgerows fronting on Station Road which is an Important Countryside Frontage. The Local Plan explicitly states that planning permission will be refused for development that would compromise the purpose of the Important Countryside Frontage. For this reason, the site would not be considered suitable for market housing or rural exception (affordable) housing.

- **H10 Land south of Rectory Farm** [Green Belt- potential rural exception site]

The site is not appropriate for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan due to its location within the Green Belt. However, the site could be a suitable location for rural exception housing.

- **H11 Land at Royston Road** [Green Belt- potential rural exception site]

The site is not currently suitable for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. The site is located within the Green Belt. The northern field is potentially suitable for rural exception housing.

- **H12 SIG Roofing site, Station Road** [potentially suitable for allocation]

The site is currently used for industrial purposes and comprises previously developed land in the Green Belt which under NPPF paragraph 154 can be redeveloped provided development would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. The site is potentially suitable for housing and is therefore potentially appropriate for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. The site is visually enclosed. Development proposals should retain or enhance the existing boundary

vegetation and design should reflect the character of dwellings located outside the Development Framework. It is noted that there is a level crossing near the site and a high-speed road (60mph reducing to 30mph) at the site entrance. Safe site access should be discussed with the Highways Authority.

- **H13 Land off High Street** [potentially suitable for allocation]

The site is potentially suitable for housing and is therefore potentially appropriate for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan subject to amendment of the Development Framework Boundary to accommodate the site. It is noted that the site is not located within the Green Belt and only the site access lies within the Development Framework Boundary. Access into the site may need to be widened. From the back of the site there may be greater visual sensitivity given the long distance views therefore any proposed housing should be located closest to the site access onto the A10 with screening at the rear.

- **H14 131 High Street** [potentially suitable for allocation]

The site is potentially suitable for housing and is therefore potentially appropriate for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. The site lies partly within the Development Framework Boundary and comprises previously developed land. There is adequate site access. The site is flat and visually enclosed with little/ to no landscape and visual impact. The site is considered potentially suitable if the HELAA constraint on vehicle trips on the Strategic Road Network could be mitigated; this can be discussed with the Highways Authority.

- **H15 Centenary Works, Button End** [potentially suitable for allocation]

This site is potentially suitable for housing and therefore potentially appropriate for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. It appears to be an industrial site which is currently in use as a site for joinery and for storage purposes. Whilst the site lies within Green Belt land it is comprised of previously developed land and is therefore suitable for redevelopment under NPPF paragraph 154 as long as development would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. The site is screened by trees. The site is not connected to the settlement boundary and is remote from services and amenities. The site is located in Button End, a more rural part of Harston Village which is characterised by single detached properties on large plots of land.

Therefore, the site is potentially suitable for 1-2 dwellings.

5.9 The site assessments found one site to be suitable (H8) and four sites to be potentially suitable for allocation (H12, H13, H14 and H15) (Figure 5.2). These sites have capacities of between 1 and 10 dwellings (based on the AECOM derived site capacity estimates from the Site Options Assessment evidence used to support the Harston Neighbourhood Plan). Please note that these capacities may differ from land submission capacity information, however they have been used to ensure consistency across all sites.

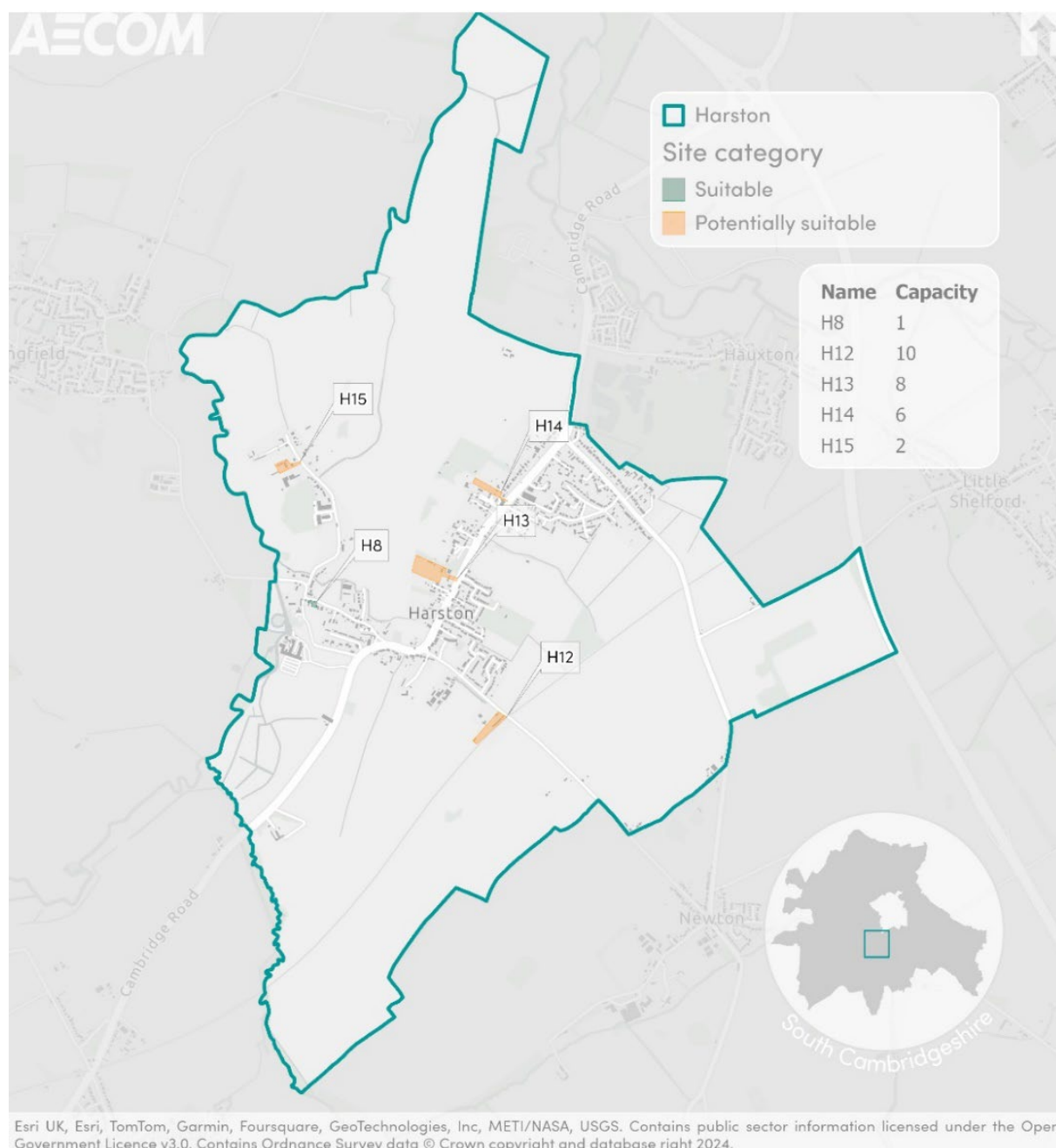


Figure 5.2: Figure showing sites which are suitable or potentially suitable for allocation.

Reasonable alternatives

5.10 Considering the fact that site H8 would be considered infill development within the settlement framework, with a capacity of one dwelling, the HNP steering group determined that the site should not be allocated in the Plan. As such, it was not considered in the formation of reasonable alternatives.

5.11 The basis for the development of reasonable alternatives for the HNP therefore focuses on the likely effects of allocating individual sites to support the Plan's intention to allocate land to deliver small scale housing. The steering group support planning for growth, in order to support local services and infrastructures. Those which were considered can be seen in Figure 5.3. As locally identified need in the Local Plan has already been met, the steering group for the HNP

deem it unreasonable to *allocate* more than one site for development. Whilst the Plan may support growth on other sites, the more contentious nature of a specific allocation was focused upon in the reasonable alternatives, as this is where the Plan would be most likely to lead to significant effects. It is acknowledged that in a review of the Neighbourhood Plan, further land might be allocated for growth and further consideration of alternatives could be considered as and when a Plan review takes place. Therefore, the reasonable alternatives look at the allocation of the following sites under four options:

- **Option 1: H12** – SIG Roofing site, Station Road – 10 dwellings
- **Option 2: H13** – Land off High Street – 8 dwellings
- **Option 3: H14** – 131 High Street – 6 dwellings
- **Option 4: H15** – Centenary Works, Button End – 2 dwellings



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Figure 5.3: Figure showing reasonable site allocation options in Harston.

6. Assessing reasonable alternatives

Introduction

6.1 This chapter provides the detailed findings of the assessment of the four alternative spatial strategy options within Harston (established in the previous chapter). The options are as follows:

- Option 1: H12 – SIG Roofing site, Station Road – 10 dwellings
- Option 2: H13 – Land off High Street – 8 dwellings
- Option 3: H14 – 131 High Street – 6 dwellings
- Option 4: H15 – Centenary Works, Button End – 2 dwellings

Methodology

6.2 For each of the options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability topics and objectives identified through scoping (Appendix A SEA Scoping) as a methodological framework. **Green** shading is used to indicate significant positive effects, whilst **red** shading is used to indicate significant negative effects, however this is also stated in the text. Where appropriate neutral effects, or uncertainty will also be noted. Uncertainty is noted with **grey** shading.

6.3 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, where there is a need to rely on assumptions to reach a conclusion on a 'significant effect' this is made explicit in the appraisal text.

6.4 Where it is not possible to predict likely significant effects based on reasonable assumptions, efforts are made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and to indicate a rank of preference. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. Numbers are used to highlight the option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective with 1 performing the best.

6.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted considering the criteria presented within the Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects.

Assessments

Biodiversity and geodiversity

Objective: Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
No. of homes	10	8	6	2
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Rank	1	2=	2=	2=

- 6.6 Development on any site under the options being explored would be unlikely to lead to effects on internationally or nationally designated sites for biodiversity importance. The impact risk zones for nearby Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) cover the Parish, however residential development in these zones would not trigger consultation with Natural England. All sites include existing boundary vegetation which may have some local value for flora and fauna; though it is likely that this could be retained through scheme design.
- 6.7 Option 1's component site is not in close proximity to any land which is designated or recognised through policy for its importance for nature conservation.
- 6.8 Option 2's component site is adjacent to some deciduous woodland and a small area of traditional orchard which are considered to be priority habitat. Neither of these sites are open access, and so recreational pressures would be unlikely, though some construction related, short-term deteriorations to conditions may be realised. The site is within 200m of Harston Orchard County Wildlife Site which may lead to some potential recreational pressures. However, the managed nature and combined nature conservation and recreational function of the site ought to mean that effects are not significant.
- 6.9 Option 3's component site is adjacent to some deciduous woodland priority habitat, though it is not open access, and so recreational pressures would be unlikely, though some construction related, short-term deteriorations to conditions may be realised. In relation to the nearby County Wildlife Site, similar effects to those discussed under Option 2 would be likely.
- 6.10 Option 4's component site is adjacent to some floodplain grazing marsh and deciduous woodland priority habitat; similar related effects to those discussed under Options 2 and 3 would be likely to be realised. In relation to the nearby County Wildlife Site (Harston Pit (East of Button End)), similar effects to those discussed under Options 2 and 3 would be likely.
- 6.11 All Options perform relatively similarly, with some anticipated short-term construction related effects (i.e. disturbance) on nearby priority habitat, though these are likely to be marginal and uncertain. Where Options 2, 3 and 4 would lead to development in closer proximity to a County Wildlife Site, potential very minor recreational pressures mean that these Options would perform less favourably to Options 1 and 4. No significant effects are likely.

Climate change and flood risk

Objective: Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
No. of homes	10	8	6	2
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Rank	1=	1=	1=	2

6.12 No sites under any option are identified as being within flood zones 2 or 3, meaning that none of the Options are likely to increase vulnerabilities to fluvial flood events in the Parish.

6.13 Sites under Options 2 and 3 small areas of the sites are at risk of surface water flooding, though considering the extent of the at risk land and the scale of proposed housing, scheme design ought to be able to avoid any elevated residential vulnerabilities. Increased development on greenfield or undeveloped land might lead to some local increases in surface water flood risk and as such, Option 2 would score less preferably to other sites due to the largely undeveloped nature of the site. Any related effects would be minor, due to the sustainable drainage requirements set out through local and national policy.

6.14 In terms of carbon emissions and climate change mitigation, the scale of sites across all options mean that energy generation and efficiency measures are unlikely to be delivered, beyond that which is not site/location dependent (eg. solar roof installations or heat pumps). As such, the key focus is on transport related emissions. The rural nature of the village means that under all options, future housing growth is likely to be somewhat reliant upon car use. Option 2 offers growth close to the village's services and amenities, potentially therefore boosting active travel rates. Options 1 and 4 are slightly further out, potentially reducing the likelihood of people accessing services and amenities by active means. Option 3 is further from some services than Option 2, but does still compare preferably to Options 1 and 4 due nearby retail offerings. The greater distance which growth under Option 4 would be from the village centre might make this option less preferable (though it is acknowledged that the scale of growth is very small).

6.15 Overall, no significant effects are expected under any option, especially considering the scale of growth proposed. In terms of flood risk, Options 2 and 3 are likely to perform marginally worse and relating to transport emissions, Options 1 and 4 might perform less preferably, with Option 4 being less favourable. As such, on balance, all options will perform comparably, though Option 4 might be less preferable due to its more isolated location.

Community wellbeing

Objective: Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
No. of homes	10	8	6	2
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Rank	1=	1=	1=	2

- 6.16 All sites would perform well in terms of delivering homes which would help to meet locally established needs. In this respect, higher growth would be associated with better performing effects; Option 1 (Site H12) would be preferable in this regard. Current local affordable housing thresholds require affordable housing on sites of 11 dwellings and over, meaning that no sites under the options would meet this requirement. That said, emerging local policy currently lowers this threshold to 10 dwellings, potentially resulting in site H12 delivering affordable housing.
- 6.17 None of the options would deliver growth of a scale expected to deliver community infrastructure improvements, and so in this respect all options would perform similarly.
- 6.18 Options 2 and 3 would focus growth in close proximity to the village centre, potentially boosting the vitality of the village centre, though the scale of growth would not lead to any significant effects.
- 6.19 Options 1 and 4 would propose growth on sites which are currently in use for employment purposes. Residential development on these sites would lead to the loss of local employment, which would lead to some negative effects.
- 6.20 Overall, the scale of growth proposed under any option would not be likely to lead to significant effects. Whilst Option 1 would be preferable in terms of housing, it would lead to the loss of local employment opportunities (hence ranking the same as options 2 and 3). Options 2 and 3 would perform similarly and Option 4 would be least preferable (given the small scale of growth).

Historic environment

Objective - Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
No. of homes	10	8	6	2
Significant effect?	No	Yes	No	No
Rank	1=	2	1=	1=

6.21 Sites under Options 1, 3 and 4 are largely unconstrained by heritage assets and so sensitively designed development would not be likely to lead to negative effects. Option 2 (Site H12) would be in close proximity to the listed buildings (Grade II) associated with the historic core on the High Street, around Park House. Screening and sensitive development would be likely to mitigate any adverse effects in this respect. However, the proposed site access would be adjacent to 53 High Street (Grade II listed building) and assessments have deemed that it would require its adjacent building (57 High St 'Lincoln House' – a local heritage asset) to be demolished. The development of this site would therefore lead to negative effects to the significance of and setting of both designated and non-designated heritage assets. **Significant negative effects** would be predicted in this respect.

6.22 Considering the above, Options 1, 3 and 4 would perform preferably.

Land, soil and water resources

Objective - Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
No. of homes	10	8	6	2
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Rank	1=	2	1=	1=

6.23 Sites under all options are located within land categorised as Grade 2 Agricultural Land (best and most versatile) according to provisional data. However, none of the sites would be considered suitable for agricultural uses and so all options would perform equally in this respect. In terms of focusing on efficient uses of land, Options 1, 3 and 4 propose site allocations on brownfield sites, making efficient use of the Parish's land with potential benefits relating to land remediation. Option 2 would see the allocation of a site which is comprised of both green and brownfield land, and hence is less preferable.

6.24 In terms of minerals, all sites proposed under each option would require consultation with the Minerals Planning Authority for development proposals, due to their location within chalk, sand and gravel safeguarding areas. That said, the locations of the sites would be unsuitable for mineral extraction and so effects are unlikely.

6.25 All sites fall within land categorised as a nitrate vulnerability zone (surface water) which could be considered to be susceptible to nitrate pollution, most likely from agricultural practices. Change of use from agricultural uses can be positive in terms of reducing potential pollution; however, as none of the proposed sites under any option is currently in agricultural use, effects are not anticipated. Considering this, it is not possible to differentiate between the options.

6.26 Overall, the options differ in terms of land use efficiency, with Options 1, 3 and 4 performing favourably. No significant effects are predicted.

Landscape

Objective - Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
No. of homes	10	8	6	2
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Rank	2	4	1	3

6.27 While sites under Options 1 and 4 are located within the Green Belt, in line with national policy requirements, development on these brownfield sites would be expected (and acceptable under policy compliance) to lead to have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. Considering this, effects in relation to the Green Belt are not likely to be realised under any option. Whilst planning inspector comments have suggested that previous planning application design may impact the Green Belt, the consideration of reasonable alternatives must be consistent and consider sites on their objective merit, without the influence of development design. The established 'village framework' for Harston delineates the extent of the built-up area of the settlement, helping to prevent incremental peripheral growth in unsustainable locations. Growth on sites under Option 1, 2 and 4 would lead to development outside of the village framework; although this is permitted under local policy and the scale of proposed growth would be small, the expansion of the village footprint might lead to some minor effects on the wider urban-rural balance within the landscape character.

6.28 None of the site are considered to be highly sensitive in terms of the visual impact of development. Development of the scale considered when assessing sites would not be expected to lead to significant effects under Options 1 and 3 due to boundary vegetation and surrounding land use providing screening. Option 2 would potentially lead to some disruption to long distance views; though this is dependent upon scheme design. Option 4 would potentially result in development on a more rural and isolated site, with some intervisibility with the surrounding landscape. That said, the low level of growth (two dwellings, as recommended by the objective site assessments) proposed under this option would minimise the potential for significant effects.

6.29 In terms of tree preservation orders (TPO), growth proposed under Option 2 contains individual and area-based TPOs. Development might result in the loss

of these trees, resulting in negative impacts relating to the loss of an asset which is protected for its contribution to the local landscape.

6.30 Overall, significant effects would not be likely to be realised under any option. Option 3 performs most favourably, with visual screening, growth within the village framework and a lack of potential disruption to TPOs. Options 1, 2 and 4 are all more constrained, with Option 2 performing worse due to the potential for disruption to views, the presence of TPOs and proposals which would alter the current village framework boundary.

Transportation and movement

Objective - Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
No. of homes	10	8	6	2
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Rank	2	=1	=1	3

6.31 All growth in the neighbourhood area would be expected to see a degree of car dependency, due to the rural nature of the village, its public and active travel services and infrastructure and network of services and amenities. The scale of growth proposed under each option would be unlikely to lead to significant effects on the road network, with any increases in traffic being minor. As such, differences between the options are linked to the potential for growth to encourage active means of travel, particularly within the village. Option 4 would focus growth in a more isolated area of the village, reducing the likelihood of encouraging active means of travel. This location (along Button End) has been identified as seeing some transport issues relating to congestion and poor access, which could be exacerbated by new development, including in the short-term during construction phases. Options 2 and 3 both propose growth in more central areas, which have better access to key local services, transport, and employment opportunities. Option 1's location for growth would see effects in between those set out under Options 2 and 3 and Option 4; the site is less well connected to the bulk of services, but does have some nearby public transport options and retail offerings.

6.32 Overall, whilst significant effects are unlikely, Options 2 and 3 would be expected to perform preferably due to their more accessible locations for proposed growth. Options 1 and 4 would result in more isolated development, potentially promoting less sustainable forms of local transport choices.

Summary

6.33 Table 6-1 shows a summary of the above assessments, distinguishing between the prediction of likely significant effects and the rankings of options in terms of how they perform against their relative sustainability merits.

6.34 To conclude, it is evident that the reasonable alternative options identified and assessed perform broadly similarly, with only one potential significant effect

identified. To distinguish between the options, the assessments have taken note of potential effects outlined above.

6.35 Option 2 has the potential to lead to significant effects on designated and non-designated heritage assets. Option 4 is less preferable for a greater number of topics than alternatives, with more pronounced negative effects linked to transport and landscape themes. Option 3 performs preferably in six out of seven SEA themes and therefore ranks best overall.

Table 6-1: Summary of reasonable alternative assessments.

Theme		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	No	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	1	2=	2=	2=
Climate change and flood risk	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	No	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	1=	1=	1=	2
Community wellbeing	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	No	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	1=	1=	1=	2
Historic environment	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	Yes	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	1=	2	1=	1=
Land, soil and water resources	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	No	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	1=	2=	1=	1=
Landscape	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	No	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	2	4	1	3
Transportation and movement	<i>Significant effect?</i>	No	No	No	No
	<i>Rank</i>	2	=1	=1	3

7. Establishing the preferred approach

- 7.1 Considering the HNP vision and objectives, which focus on a range of environmental, social and economic themes (see Chapter 2 for detail), the fact that Option 3 performed preferably across six out of seven SEA themes was a reinforcing factor in the steering group's decision to select Option 3 (opting to allocating the site at 131 High Street for residential uses) as their preferred approach. The below quote from the HNP outlines the reasons for selecting the site.

'This is a brownfield site, a closed garden nursery with old greenhouses which are gradually being removed, half within village framework and half in white land. It is already surrounded by other residential development. AECOM have accepted the 6 dwellings estimate. As long as the highways constraint on vehicle trips on strategic road network can be dealt with, Harston Parish Council considers this to be a suitable site for development which will become available within next 4-5 years.'

- 7.2 The HNP Policy 'HAR28: 131 High Street' provides support for the residential allocation, as seen below.

Policy HAR28: 131 High Street

1. The land shown on Map 24 is allocated for the development of approximately 6 small 1 – 3 bedroom dwellings. Development is expected to come forward in the medium term (approximately 2030 onwards).
2. The following criteria apply: • The scheme must demonstrate safe highway access, that meets the satisfaction of the local highway authority. • Mitigate for recreational pressure on Eversden & Wimpole Woods SAC, Fenland SAC and Wicken Fen Ramsar site by promotion of circular walking routes of at least 2.7km, dedicated dogs off lead areas and dog waste bins.

- 7.3 The housing growth on this site ought to support the vitality of local services, including the Harston and Newton Community primary school.
- 7.4 The HNP notes the suitability of SIG Roofing Site (Option 1) and supports its redevelopment in line with local and national policy, though it does not specifically allocate the land for a specific use.

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

8. Introduction (to Part 2)

Introduction

8.1 The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the current 'pre-submission' version of the HNP. This chapter presents:

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

HNP Policies

8.2 The draft HNP puts forward a number of policies to guide development in the neighbourhood area. These are set out in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1 HNP policies

Policy no. Title

<i>Village and Settlement Character</i>	
HAR1	New Development and Design
HAR2	Protecting and Enhancing Important Landscape Features within the Built-Up Environment
HAR3	Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character and Setting in and around Harston Village
HAR4	Conserving and Enhancing Heritage Assets in Harston
HAR5	Preserving the Special Character of Harston's Historic Core and Button End
<i>Open space</i>	
HAR6	Harston's Local Green Spaces
HAR7	Improving Open Space Provision in Harston
<i>Parish-wide Landscape and Biodiversity</i>	
HAR8	Protecting and Enhancing Harston's Wider Landscape Character
HAR9	Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity in Harston Parish
<i>Climate Change and Flood Management</i>	
HAR10	Delivering Sustainable Design and Construction in Harston

HAR11 Supporting Renewable Infrastructure in Harston Parish

HAR12 Managing Flood Risk in Harston Parish

Housing Supply

HAR13 Supporting Rural Exception Sites to Meet Harston's Affordable Housing Needs

HAR14 Housing Mix, Including 'First Homes' in Harston

Traffic and Parking

HAR15 Managing the Movement of People and Vehicles arising from New Development

HAR16 Recognising and Mitigating the Impacts of Development on Church Street

HAR17 Traffic from Employment Uses at Button End

HAR18 Parking Provision in New Development

HAR19 The Footpath Safeguarded Land for Future Off-Street Parking

HAR20 Telephone Exchange Site

Active Travel

HAR21 Connecting our Village through an Improved Network of Rural Routes

HAR22 Delivering Active Travel Infrastructure as part of New Development

Harston's Village Hub and Community Infrastructure

HAR23 Harston Community Pavillion

HAR24 Harston and Newton Community Primary School

HAR25 Harston's Community Infrastructure Priorities

HAR26 Supporting Shops and Services along Harston's High Street

Sites

HAR27 Land at Station Road (SIG Roofing Site)

HAR28 Land at 131 High Street

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. Assessment of the draft Harston Neighbourhood Plan

Biodiversity and geodiversity

Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.

- 9.1 The draft HNP has undergone Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening, reflective of the four Habitats sites which lie within 20 km of the Harston Neighbourhood Plan area. The HRA screening concluded that likely significant effects on Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, Fenland SAC and Wicken Fen Ramsar site cannot be ruled out resulting from the Harston Neighbourhood Plan. Two potential impact pathways have been identified – impacts on protected species outside the protected sites e.g. Barbastelle bats, and predicted recreational pressure from residential development. As the Harston Neighbourhood Plan allocates land for residential development, there are potential effects from the Plan alone and also predicted effects to consider in combination with other plans and projects.
- 9.2 The second stage of HRA is to undertake an ‘Appropriate Assessment’ (AA) of the implications of the Plan (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and establish whether there may be an Adverse Effect on Integrity (AEI) of any Habitats sites in view of their Conservation Objectives. The HRA AA made the following recommendations to be embedded within the Plan’s policy framework:
- 9.3 “It is recommended that the policy text for HAR28 is amended to require mitigation for recreational pressure. This amendment should read:
- 9.4 *‘Mitigate for recreational pressure on Eversden & Wimpole Woods SAC, Fenland SAC and Wicken Fen Ramsar site by promotion of circular walking routes of at least 2.7km, dedicated dogs off lead areas and dog waste bins.’*
- 9.5 It is recommended that the following policy text should be embedded within policy HAR9:
- 9.6 New text in Biodiversity clause 1 and reference on Maps 13/14 in relation to woodland habitats): *‘avoid significant impact on hedgerows or any severance of bat flight lines to protect foraging and commuting habitat for Barbastelle bats which could belong to the population protected by Eversden & Wimpole Woods SAC.’*”
- 9.7 The above recommendations have subsequently been incorporated into the draft HNP (Policy HAR28), and with mitigation now embedded, the HRA concludes that *“the Harston Neighbourhood Plan is not predicted to have an Adverse Effect on Integrity of the Habitats sites within scope, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects”*. The SEA supports this conclusion.
- 9.8 In terms of the wider local biodiversity resource, Policy HAR9 provides the overarching policy direction in terms of protection and enhancement, supplementing Local Plan policies NH4, NH5 and NH6. Policy HAR9 performs positively overall, requiring development proposals to apply the mitigation hierarchy where development could directly or indirectly impact a site of

biodiversity (as shown within Maps 17 and 18 of the draft HNP). Furthermore if harm cannot be avoided, planning permission will be refused.

- 9.9 In this respect, it is recommended that consideration be given through Policy HAR28 (Land at 131 High Street) to the adjacent deciduous woodland priority habitat. Additionally the site allocation is within 200m of Harston Orchard County Wildlife Site which may lead to a level of increased recreational pressure, however given the level of growth proposed through the site allocation (6 homes) effects are unlikely to be of significance. As such 'consideration' through Policy HAR28 could simply be cross referencing to Policy HAR9 (Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity in Harston Parish) and ensuring any proposal for the site to align with policy requirements set out.
- 9.10 Merit is also given to Policy HAR6 in terms of improving connectivity and delivering "biodiversity enhancements", including supporting "opportunities to create or strengthen links between existing and/or new habitats through development sites." In all locations, development proposals will also be required to demonstrate "measurable net gain for biodiversity". Biodiversity 'net gain' (BNG) has been introduced through the Environment Act, and mandates that all qualifying schemes secure a net gain of 10%. Now that the mandatory requirement for BNG is in place, there is no technical need to repeat the legal requirements in local policy. The draft HNP therefore presents an opportunity to set policy requiring a higher percentage net gain, where there is evidence to support such an approach. Requiring 'at least 10% measurable BNG', or an exceedingly ambitious '20% BNG', can be calculated using Natural England's biodiversity metric, to ensure the delivery of maximum biodiversity on site.
- 9.11 Policies HAR1 – HAR3 seek to protect village and settlement character, which can in turn support the local biodiversity resource. Policy HAR1 notably recognises the importance of design features that can encourage local wildlife and biodiversity to thrive (linking to the Harston Design Guide). Positive effects are also likely to be delivered in this respect through Policies HAR7 (Harston's Local Green Spaces) and HAR7 (Improving Open Space Provision in Harston) which will protect and enhance green infrastructure/ green spaces that create and enhance habitats for wildlife.
- 9.12 Overall, no significant impacts are predicted for biodiversity. The draft HNP policy framework performs broadly positively through ensuring the mitigation of any adverse effects on biodiversity sites/ features, and setting out support for BNG. There is the potential for **minor positive effects** assuming recommendations set out above are considered.

Climate change and flood risk

Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change.

- 9.13 The parish includes areas of medium to high risk of fluvial flooding (Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3) associated with the River Rhee in the northern tip of the area, as well as the area along the western boundary. This river also impacts upon surface water risk along its course. Due to the drainage pattern in the neighbourhood area, there are medium levels of flood risk especially centrally to Harston, mainly adjacent to Royston Road and High Street. This risk includes small areas of site allocation 131 High Street; however considering the extent of

the at risk land and the scale of proposed housing, scheme design ought to be able to avoid any elevated residential vulnerabilities.

- 9.14 With a climate emergency declared in South Cambridgeshire in 2019, and a recently adopted Cambridgeshire County Council's 'Net Zero Cambridgeshire 2045', the draft HNP recognises the importance of planning for climate change mitigation. Of note in this respect is Policy HAR10 (Delivering Sustainable Design and Construction in Harston) and HAR11 (Supporting Renewable Infrastructure in Harston Parish) which feature many development requirements that will contribute to increasing capacity to reduce contributions to climatic changes. This includes adopting design and construction approaches that deliver low or zero carbon homes and buildings that demonstrate sustainable use of resources and high energy efficiency levels, as well as the creation of stand-alone renewable energy infrastructure. Many of these requirements are also detailed in individual policies, notably Policy HAR1 which sets design principles for new development (linked to the Harston Design Guidance and Codes).
- 9.15 Also of merit in respect of climate objectives are those policies which seek to protect and enhance biodiversity (Policy HAR9, HAR6 and HAR7) to deliver nature based solutions; and policies HAR21 and HAR22 which seek to improve and extend active travel infrastructure, supporting reduced emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Particulate matter (PM) and CO₂.
- 9.16 Overall, the draft HNP is likely to lead to **minor positive effects** in relation to the climate change SEA topic. The draft HNP sets out policies that support both climate change adaptation and mitigation; delivering a low level of sustainable housing growth, setting requirements for high quality design and construction, and encouraging renewable energy provision and a modal shift in transport choices.

Community wellbeing

Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.

- 9.17 There is no residual housing need figure for Harston to meet, however the draft HNP seeks to allocate a single site for a small level of residential development to help to meet Harston specific housing needs. Land at 131 High Street is previously developed, allocated through Policy HAR28 for six small 1 – 3 bedroom dwellings, reflecting current and future needs of the parish.
- 9.18 The draft HNP also supports in principle the re-development of Station Road (SIG roofing site), specifically “smaller homes suitable for those looking for their first home and homes suitable for families with children or affordable homes that meet the needs of local people whose needs are not met by the market”. This site is currently used for industrial purposes and comprises previously developed land in the Green Belt.
- 9.19 Sites are supported by policies which seek to align housing delivery with varied local housing needs, including affordable housing, leading to long term positive effects. Policies HAR13 and HAR14 are noteworthy in this respect, supporting an appropriate housing mix, and rural exception sites where certain criteria is met.

- 9.20 Future residents will benefit from access to the village's services. Land at 131 High Street is well located to access the village centre in terms of the local service offer, transport, and employment opportunities. Furthermore, any development scheme must demonstrate safe highway access (Policy HAR 28).
- 9.21 The draft HNP seeks more broadly to sustain and enhance the community, supporting shops and services along Harston's High Street (Policy HAR26) and establishing community infrastructure priorities which all development proposals in the plan area should contribute towards (Policy HAR25). Specifically, support is set out for an extension to the community pavilion (Policy HAR23), as well as proposals which address the shortfall in pre-school and primary school infrastructure in the parish (Policy HAR24).
- 9.22 The draft HNP proposes additional measures which will help to protect settlement identity and community cohesion in the long-term. This includes in relation to development size/ density, and maintaining the interrelationship between the settled area and wider countryside. For example, consideration is given to retention of elements which define Harston's village gateways, including views and sensitive areas of the settlement fringe. More widely, the draft HNP framework prioritises the protection and enhancement of the wider landscape, the environment and heritage, which will lead to positive effects supporting attractive places.
- 9.23 The draft HNP seeks to protect and enhance access to the Neighbourhood Area's rich green and blue infrastructure, designating local green spaces, strengthening nature networks, and delivering improvements to open space provision. The village has a reasonable Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network, providing connectivity within the parish and to neighbouring villages. However a high reliance on the private vehicle for travel is likely to be seen, as discussed further under the transportation and movement SEA theme.
- 9.24 Overall, considering the points above, **significant positive effects** are considered a likely outcome in relation to community wellbeing.

Historic environment

Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.

- 9.25 The parish is rich in designated and non-designated assets, including Listed Buildings and a Scheduled Monument. It is recognised that designated heritage assets in the plan area will be conserved or enhanced in line with the Local Plan and national policy and guidance. Policy HAR4 (Conserving and Enhancing Heritage Assets in Harston) seeks to supplement higher level policy, and conserve and enhance the significance and setting of all assets. While the policy references both designated and non-designated assets for completeness, merit is given to listing buildings, structures and open spaces that are of local historic importance. Policy HAR4 performs positively through the preservation/ enhancement of assets, and the important role this has in retaining or strengthening Harston's historic identity.
- 9.26 Consideration is also given under this theme to the historic character of the area. Policy HAR2 (Protecting and Enhancing Important Landscape Features in the Built-Up Environment) and Policy HAR3 (Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character and Setting in and around Harston Village) are noteworthy in this

respect, seeking to ensure that development proposals within the parish reinforce Harston's characteristic features and defined character areas. This includes both from landscape and villagescape perspectives, as described through the aforementioned Harston Design Codes and Guidance and Harston Landscape Character Appraisal. The design codes notably promote principles of good design and quality that encourage the local context, underpinning Policy HAR1 (New Development and Design). Design principles set out reflect local architecture and the rural village; supporting development that is appropriate to the site and immediate surroundings.

- 9.27 Policy HAR5 (Preserving the Special Character of Harston's Historic Core and Button End) supplements those discussed above, reflecting the vulnerability and sensitivity of Harston's historic core and Button End in terms of heritage significance and settlement/landscape character. Button End is the name of the lane that transitions between the edge of Harston village and the open countryside, and is therefore sensitive in historic landscape terms. Policy HAR5 provides specific guidance for both the historic core and Button End, guided by the Harston Design Guidance & Codes 2023 and the Harston Landscape Character Assessment (2024). Specific consideration is given to historical open spaces in the village core, and the visual sensitivity of Button End.
- 9.28 In terms of the site allocation, 131 High Street is not constrained by designated nor non designated assets. Furthermore, the wider policy framework supports development that is of high quality design that is landscape led and protects local identity. Protection and enhancement of green and blue infrastructure will also support local heritage objectives in terms of delivering improvements to the public realm.
- 9.29 Overall, it is considered that the policy framework, supported by the village design codes and LCA, and local and national policy provisions, will protect and enhance Harston's rich historic environment. **Minor positive effects** are considered achievable and likely.

Land, soil and water resources

Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a sustainable manner.

- 9.30 The site allocation (Land at 131 High Street) and supported site (Land at Station Road) are brownfield sites, making efficient use of the Parish's land with potential benefits relating to land remediation.
- 9.31 More widely, the draft HNP includes policies that protect the neighbourhood area from inappropriate development. Policy HAR3 notably seeks to protect and enhance landscape character and setting in and around Harston village, defining areas of "settlement fringe" and "village gateways" to guide development. This will indirectly protect areas of high quality agricultural (best and most versatile) land surrounding the settlement.
- 9.32 The draft HNP policy framework set out the need for developers to understand, respond, and adhere to the Harston Design Guidance Codes document, which will help to improve land, soil, and water resources in the neighbourhood area. Furthermore, wider neighbourhood plan policies seek to ensure development is considerate of local character, environment and key characteristics including village views and green spaces. While these policies do not specifically seek to

address land, soil, and water resources, the policies will indirectly help promote and protect these resources, which will help support the capacity of the landscape and the neighbourhood area to regulate soil and water.

- 9.33 Further attention is given to water resources, recognising that foul water drainage and surface water drainage are key issues for the neighbourhood area. The draft HNP highlights that when new development takes place in the parish it is essential that there is adequate foul wastewater infrastructure and water supply capacity to serve the development. Where capacity is not in place and cannot be provided a development proposal would not be permitted under Local Plan policy TI/8: Infrastructure and New Developments. The draft HNP also sets out applicable policies from the Local Plan (Policy CC7 Water Quality and Policy CC8 Sustainable Drainage Systems), which development will be required to align with, as well as national policy.
- 9.34 Given higher level planning policy in place, the draft HNP policy HAR12 (Managing Flood Risk in Harston Parish) focuses specifically on artesian wells (a distinctive feature of the parish) and ensuring that the drainage infrastructure that is necessary to avoid future flood events from these wells is either protected or improved when applicable development proposals come forward.
- 9.35 Overall, it is considered that the draft HNP contributes positively towards land, soil and water objectives, supporting the redevelopment of brownfield land and managing local water resource issues. **Minor positive effects** are predicted.

Landscape

Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.

- 9.36 Harston is a village enveloped by the Cambridge Green Belt. It is surrounded by flat arable farmland rising up to the gently rolling chalk hills/ridge to the south-east. Policy HAR1 (New Development and Design) provides an overarching policy for guiding development in the parish, requiring that a design-led approach should be taken for all development proposals. In doing so, development proposals are required to recognise and reinforce Harston's distinctive character, as described in the Harston Design Guidance and Codes (HDG&C) 2023 and the Harston Landscape Character Appraisal (HLCA) 2024.
- 9.37 The preservation and enhancement of Harston's village landscape and settlement character is further addressed through Policy HAR2 (Protecting and Enhancing Important Landscape Features within the Built-up Environment) and Policy HAR 3 (Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character and Setting in and around Harston). These policies are also underpinned by the Village Design Code, and seek to ensure development is landscape-led and sensitive to key views and features, where it occurs in the settlement or its fringes.
- 9.38 Policy HAR2 requires new development to recognise, protect and enhance important landscape features within and around the built up areas of the village. Policy HAR3 focuses on protecting and enhancing Harston's landscape character and setting more widely (view, village gateways and settlement fringe areas). This reflects key issues drawn out through community consultation, notably that the rural nature of the area and countryside has been gradually eaten away by development, the heavy flow of A10 traffic, and loss of green infrastructure.

- 9.39 Most of the land which surrounds the village of Harston is part of the Cambridge Green Belt and this has both protected the countryside setting from development and restricted opportunity for growth. In terms of the site allocation, Land at 131 High Street is nearby to the Green Belt, but separated and screened by a woodland; the site is brownfield and small in nature (allocated for 6 homes). The site is flat and visually enclosed (with boundary screening), thereby limiting landscape and visual impacts in the surrounding area.
- 9.40 The draft HNP also supports growth at Station Road, which is currently used for industrial purposes and comprises previously developed land in the Green Belt. Policy HAR27 supports residential development at the site subject to the proposal meeting the exceptional circumstances set out for Green Belt land in the NPPF 2023, and compliance with other policies in the draft HNP (Policy HAR27). Specifically, any development proposal should either retain the existing boundary treatment or enhance it.
- 9.41 The draft HNP recognises that the landscape in the wider parish is also sensitive to development. This particularly applies to the chalk ridge areas. Policy HAR8 (Protecting and Enhancing Harston's Wider Landscape Character) therefore sets requirements for development that might come forward in Harston's most sensitive landscape character areas (as set out in the Harston Landscape Character Appraisal 2024 (HLCA 2024)). Proposals are required to conserve and enhance key characteristic as set out in the LCA; as well as locally defined important landscape views.
- 9.42 Finally, it is noted that the wider policy framework performs positively in terms of meeting landscape objectives and supporting village amenity. This includes policies HAR6-7 which protect and improve open/ green spaces, policies HAR21-HAR22 which support improvements to the parish's rural routes and active travel networks, and HAR9-11 which protect and enhance biodiversity and deliver climate solutions.
- 9.43 Overall, **minor positive effects** are predicted, reflective of the extensive policy framework dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the local landscape, village character and setting. Furthermore, policies are underpinned by a comprehensive set of design guidance and codes, and informed by the LCA. New housing is brownfield and of small scale, and would not impact upon the Green Belt surrounding the built up area. In this respect, due consideration is given to national policy, and this is reflected through the policy underpinning Land at Station Road.

Transportation and movement

Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.

- 9.44 Harston has limited sustainable transport opportunities. Buses do serve the parish however the rail station is over 2km away and the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and cycle network are not overly extensive. There is a single cycle route along the A10 and limited PRoW connectivity to neighbouring villages. Policies HAR21 and HRA22 seek to support the uptake of active travel in the parish where possible, supporting connectivity through improved rural routes and setting requirements for the delivery of active travel infrastructure as part of new development. Policies supporting green infrastructure delivery (HAR6 and HAR7) are also noteworthy in this respect, delivering attractive places to incentivise modal shift.
- 9.45 The site allocation (131 High Street) and supported site at Station Road are proposed in accessible locations in terms of key local services, transport, and employment opportunities. However, the allocation of small sites may also lead to increased pressures on the road network, as development is unlikely to be supported by necessary infrastructure often seen with larger development proposals. Key concerns in this respect include traffic pinch points particularly at peak journey times, and along the A10.
- 9.46 The wider policy framework (particularly policies HAR15 – HAR18) seeks to address local transport issues within the remit of the Neighbourhood Plan. Notably this includes managing traffic problems at Church Street that are exacerbated due to demand for on-street parking generated by the GP surgery, 200m west of the junction with the A10. The situation currently causes road safety issues as well as congestion.
- 9.47 In line with Policy HAR16 (Recognising and mitigating the impacts of development on Church Street), any development proposal in the plan area likely to lead to additional traffic movements along Church Street will be assessed in terms of their likely impact on road safety and residential amenity. Additionally, any development that could lead to an increase in HGV movement will not be supported.
- 9.48 Policy HAR15 (Managing the Movement of People and Vehicles arising from new Development) seeks to address conflict between vehicles and pedestrian/cyclists, and sets requirements for new developments in this respect. This includes identifying measures to improve safety such as increasing visibility at the exit points of driveways. In this context, it is noted that any scheme for Land at 131 High Street must demonstrate safe highway access, that meets the satisfaction of the local highway authority (Policy HAR27).
- 9.49 Button End is a well-used, narrow highway with PRoW access, connecting to Church Street with limited capacity. Policy HAR17 (Traffic from Employment Uses at Button End) seeks to ensure the impact of any proposal in Button End, including as part of the Button End commercial area, is fully considered in terms of impact on the highway and safety.
- 9.50 Policy HAR18 (Parking Provision in New Development) recognises the importance of ensuring that any new proposals do not increase pressure for further on-street parking demand, reflective of existing highway safety and

congestion issues. Policy HAR18 therefore sets parking standards for new development, broadly supports curtilage parking, and identifies key streets in the parish that cannot facilitate additional on-street parking. The policy also considers positive design to support the street scheme.

- 9.51 It is further recognised that to complement Policies HAR 15 to HAR 18, Harston Parish Council will continue to work with stakeholders to investigate and deliver interventions that result in safer streets in Harston village.
- 9.52 Overall, growth associated with the development in the neighbourhood area will lead to a small increase in vehicles on the road, particularly within the village where traffic is a key concern. However, it is recognised that the draft HNP policy framework, supported by higher level policy provisions, will support a safer, accessible neighbourhood with increased active travel uptake where possible. In this way, **neutral effects** are anticipated under the draft HNP.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- 10.1 **Significant positive effects** are concluded in relation to community wellbeing. The draft HNP seeks to deliver a small level of homes to meet local needs and specialist requirements, and supports accessible, cohesive and inclusive communities.
- 10.2 **Minor positive effects** are predicted in relation to the climate change SEA topic, reflective of the draft HNP policies that support both climate change adaptation and mitigation. This includes delivering a low level of sustainable housing growth, setting requirements for high quality design and construction, and encouraging renewable energy provision and modal shift.
- 10.3 **Minor positive effects** are predicted in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, assuming recommendations are considered. This reflects the mitigation set out through policy for any adverse effects on biodiversity sites/ features, and support for BNG. **Minor positive effects** are also predicted where the policy framework, supported by the village design codes and LCA, and local and national policy provisions, seeks to protect and enhance Harston's rich historic environment. Similarly, **minor positive effects** are predicted in relation to landscape, reflective of the extensive policy framework dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the local landscape, village character and setting.
- 10.4 The redevelopment of brownfield land and positive management of local water resources is also anticipated to lead to **minor positive effects** for the land, soil and water resources SEA theme.
- 10.5 **Neutral effects** are predicted in relation to transportation, as while policy provisions support local transport objectives, growth of the parish will inevitably increase road users and lead to a continued reliance on the private vehicle for travel.

Recommendations

- 10.6 The following recommendations for the draft HNP have been made through the assessment presented in Chapter 9 above:
- 10.7 It is recommended that consideration be given through Policy HAR28 (Land at 131 High Street) to the adjacent deciduous woodland priority habitat. Additionally the site allocation is within 200m of Harston Orchard County Wildlife Site which may lead to a level of increased recreational pressure, however given the level of growth proposed through the site allocation (6 homes) effects are unlikely to be of significance. As such 'consideration' through Policy HAR28 could simply be cross referencing to Policy HAR9 (Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity in Harston Parish) and ensuring any proposal for the site align with policy requirements set out.
- 10.8 In line with Policy H6, in all locations, development proposals will also be required to demonstrate "measurable net gain for biodiversity". Biodiversity 'net gain' (BNG) has been introduced through the Environment Act, and mandates that all qualifying schemes secure a net gain of 10%. Now that the mandatory requirement for BNG is in place, there is no technical need to repeat the legal

requirements in local policy. The draft HNP therefore presents an opportunity to set policy requiring a higher percentage net gain, where there is evidence to support such an approach. Requiring 'at least 10% measurable BNG', or an exceedingly ambitious '20% BNG', can be calculated using Natural England's biodiversity metric, to ensure the delivery of maximum biodiversity on site.

- 10.9 It is recommended that consideration of flood risk be included in the site allocation policy (HAR28), or at minimum that the policy require that the scheme align with the wider policy framework. Notably this might include cross referencing to the parish Design Guide, and Policy HAR12 (Managing Flood Risk in Harston Parish) which sets out requirements for water drainage infrastructure and wider SuDS under national policy.

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.

Next steps

11.2 This Environmental Report accompanies the HNP Plan for a post-Regulation 14, focused consultation.

11.3 Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan and Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the Neighbourhood Plan for submission to the Local Planning Authority, South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC), for subsequent Independent Examination.

11.4 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 local planning policy.

11.5 If the Independent Examination is favourable, the Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a referendum, organised by SCDC. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the HNP will become part of the Development Plan for South Cambridgeshire.

Monitoring

11.6 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.

11.7 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by South Cambridgeshire 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 HNP that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Appendix A SEA Scoping

Introduction

This appendix presents additional information on the SEA scope, namely key issues under each of the SEA framework headings. As set out in the Scoping Report, these key issues were identified following a review of the context and baseline.

Additionally, this appendix presents a summary of responses received as part of the scoping consultation, followed by the SEA Framework.

Air quality

- The neighbourhood area is approximately 3.9km southwest of the Cambridge Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), designated due to high NO₂ emissions. As Cambridge is the nearest city to the neighbourhood area, it is likely that most residents will access key services and facilities there.
- The HNP is seeking to allocate sites for housing, potentially leading to increased traffic generation. Whilst this could have potential impacts on local congestion, the scale of likely development proposed within the HNP would not be expected to lead to significant additional impacts upon air pollution. As such, it is proposed that air quality is not a consideration in this SEA and is accordingly scoped out of the SEA for the HNP.

Biodiversity

- Harston is in proximity of some European and nationally designated biodiversity sites within and surrounding the neighbourhood area. New development that comes forward within the neighbourhood area has the potential to directly and indirectly impact designated sites for biodiversity.
- Ecological networks, including Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats, may be impacted by new development which comes forward within the neighbourhood area, which may result in the fragmentation of important natural corridors.

Climate change and flood risk

- It is likely CO₂ emissions originating from the neighbourhood area will increase as the population grows. It will be important for any new development to adopt best building practices to limit the increase in emissions, such as using sustainable materials and incorporating renewable energy infrastructure.
- CO₂ emissions associated with the transport sector remain higher than other sectors in South Cambridgeshire. This highlights the importance of accessible development and the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure.
- Following South Cambridgeshire designating a climate emergency, a precedent has been set to proactively respond to the climate crisis through plan making. Therefore, the HNP should acknowledge this, and take

decisive action in addressing the climate emergency within its own framework.

- New development in the HNP neighbourhood area has the potential to exacerbate flood risk if built in areas at high risk of fluvial and surface water flooding. In line with sequential testing, development should be focused away from these areas where possible.

Community wellbeing

- Barriers to housing and services within the neighbourhood area is a key concern, including with respect to housing affordability and availability (in terms of types and tenures to meet local needs). The HNP presents an opportunity to reduce deprivation by supporting accessibility, connectivity and the delivery of housing that meets local needs (type and tenure).
- The neighbourhood area is limited in terms of access to some essential community infrastructure, services, and facilities – for example healthcare and education. The HNP provides an opportunity to encourage the delivery of new/ improved provision in the area and support accessibility to neighbouring centres.
- Any new development in the area could exacerbate capacity of existing facilities and should be supported by necessary infrastructure delivery/ upgrades where necessary; particularly given the ageing nature of the population.

Historic environment

- There are several designated heritage assets in the neighbourhood area, all of which present a constraint to future development due to the need to avoid impacts to the features and their settings. The HNP can help maintain and enhance the historic environment by ensuring that any new development in the area is sensitive to the historic setting of these assets in terms of design and layout.
- The HNP presents an opportunity to provide policy and guidance that protects the key historic characteristics of the neighbourhood area, which could extend to protecting non-designated assets and their settings.
- Planning for future growth through the HNP will support the delivery of development that is appropriate to its surroundings. This is likely to be underpinned by detailed design and masterplanning in accordance with local and national policy (including the National Design Guide). Planned growth further provides an opportunity for public realm improvements, and accessibility improvements which can indirectly benefit access to and enjoyment of the historic environment.

Land, soil and water resources

- New development in the neighbourhood area could influence changes to land, soil and water resources. Development in Harston may lead to the loss of productive agricultural land, especially if it were to come forward on land identified as Grade 2 or 3a agricultural land. It will be important for development to be focused away from Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land and consider potential impacts on the overlapping waterbody catchments

and water quality. This could include implementing mitigation measures to ensure water pollution does not occur throughout the development phases.

- The HNP provides an opportunity to improve the waterbody quality of the River Rhee, and therefore should seek to enhance and protect waterbodies from pollution. This could include implementing mitigation measures to ensure water pollution does not occur throughout the development phases.

Landscape

- TPOs are important features that contribute to local landscape and villagescape character. Any new development within the neighbourhood area should have due consideration to these (and other landscape features identified above), avoiding adverse effects and supporting the landscape qualities of the area.
- The majority of the non-developed areas of Harston are covered by the Cambridge Green Belt, which means that the neighbourhood area will have restricted growth options.
- Protecting and enhancing the local landscape through the emerging HNP, including its coherence and characteristics, can bring benefits to other SEA themes. This includes biodiversity and climate change, by maintaining features which support wildlife and natural processes, such as gardens and groups of trees.
- The interplay between the existing built environment and open countryside is an important consideration for plan making.

Transportation and movement

- Harston does have some public transport connectivity via the public bus services, running to the larger settlements of Royston, and Cambridge. That said, the Parish has a high rate of car dependency, and no train station within the neighbourhood area.
- The intention to allocate sites to deliver housing growth in the Parish has the potential to lead to increased pressures on the road network, especially at traffic pinch points and at peak journey times in and around the A10. New housing growth has the potential to also deliver some improved infrastructure and services which may support an increase in sustainable transport usage.

SEA framework

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance nationally and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites? • Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats as well as priority habitats

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
		<p>and species, including ancient woodland?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve biodiversity and environmental net gains and support the delivery of ecosystem services and multifunctional green infrastructure networks? • Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?
<p>Climate change and flood risk</p>	<p>Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel? • Promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport, and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure? • Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? • Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources, or reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources? • Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the neighbourhood area? • Sustainably manage water run-off, and reduce runoff where possible? • Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?
<p>Community wellbeing</p>	<p>Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing? • Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
	improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support opportunities to enhance the resilience and diversity of the local economy? • Meet the needs of all sectors of the community? • Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people’s needs, particularly the needs of an ageing population? • Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including health infrastructure? • Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities? • Facilitate green infrastructure enhancements, including improved access to open space? • Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing residents?
Historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings? • Protect the integrity of the historic setting of key monuments of cultural heritage interest as listed in the Cambridgeshire HER? • Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the neighbourhood area?
Land, soil, and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance water quality, using water resources in a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of previously developed land wherever possible? • Identify and avoid the development of the BMV land? • Support the minimisation, reuse, and recycling of waste?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
	sustainable manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid any negative impacts on water quality and support improvements to water quality? • Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside proposed development? • Protect waterbodies from pollution? • Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/or water recycling? • Avoid any negative impacts on mineral and waste infrastructure?
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and / or enhance local landscape character and quality of place? • Seek to prevent detriment to the openness of the Cambridge Green Belt? • Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character? • Identify and protect locally important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place? • Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the water setting, or rural setting, including trees and hedgerows?
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the objectives within the South Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan to encourage the use of more sustainable transport modes? • Encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of travel and enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements? • Improve local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement? • Facilitate working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles to access workplaces outside of the neighbourhood area?

SEA theme	SEA objective	Supporting assessment questions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce the impact of the transport sector on climate change?• Improve road safety and reduce pollution from vehicles?

