

Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan 2025 – 2041

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
Screening Statement - Determination under Regulation 9 of the
Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004**

**Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)
Screening Statement – Determination under Regulation 105 of the
Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)**

Screening Determination – May 2026

Prepared for Barton Mills Parish Council by

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This screening report has been prepared to determine whether the content of the Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan 2025-2041 (pre-submission draft August 2025) requires a strategic environmental assessment in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 1.2 This report also contains a habitats regulations assessment (HRA) screening to determine whether the plan would have a likely significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects as required by the Habitats Directive.
- 1.3 This screening will be issued to the government's statutory conservation consultees, Natural England, Historic England and Environment Agency, for a statutory period of five weeks, after which the report can be confirmed and submitted with the Neighbourhood Plan to West Suffolk Council for examination.
- 1.4 Barton Mills is a small village and civil parish located in West Suffolk. It is set on the River Lark, which is a huge contributor to the character of the landscape of the area. Nearby settlements include Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket, however the town of Mildenhall directly borders the neighbourhood area to the north and its facilities serve the community of Barton Mills.
- 1.5 Barton Mills is defined as a Type A village in the West Suffolk Local Plan (adopted July 2025). This reflects settlements with a more limited range of services but can still meet some of the day-to-day needs of their residents. The Local Plan allocates a site for housing development (Policy AP54 Land east of Church Lane), for about 12 homes, the policy also requires sustainable travel connections and provision of blue and green infrastructure, and to mitigate for its recreational effects on Breckland Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation in the locality.
- 1.6 The Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Barton Mills Parish Council (a qualifying body as defined by the Localism Act 2011). The Neighbourhood Plan area was designated on 4 March 2022, by West Suffolk Council.
- 1.7 The Neighbourhood Plan includes seven policies on a range of topics with a focus on design and environmental protection, no sites are allocated for development.
- 1.8 The Plan is to be subject of consultation under Regulation 14 (pre-submission consultation stage) between 28 August and 17 October 2025 and this screening is based on the information within the Neighbourhood Plan and accompanying documents prepared for the pre- submission consultation.
- 1.9 Information on the Plan content is set out in section two. The legislative background is set out in section three and outlines the regulations that require the screening exercise. Section four provides the screening assessment of the significant environmental effects and habitats regulations assessment (HRA) of the neighbourhood plan, and section five provides the screening outcome.

2. Key information on the emerging neighbourhood plan

Vision, aims and objectives of neighbourhood plan

- 2.1 The vision for Barton Mills is set out in 4.1 of the neighbourhood plan it encompasses the aims and objectives of the residents and is as follows:

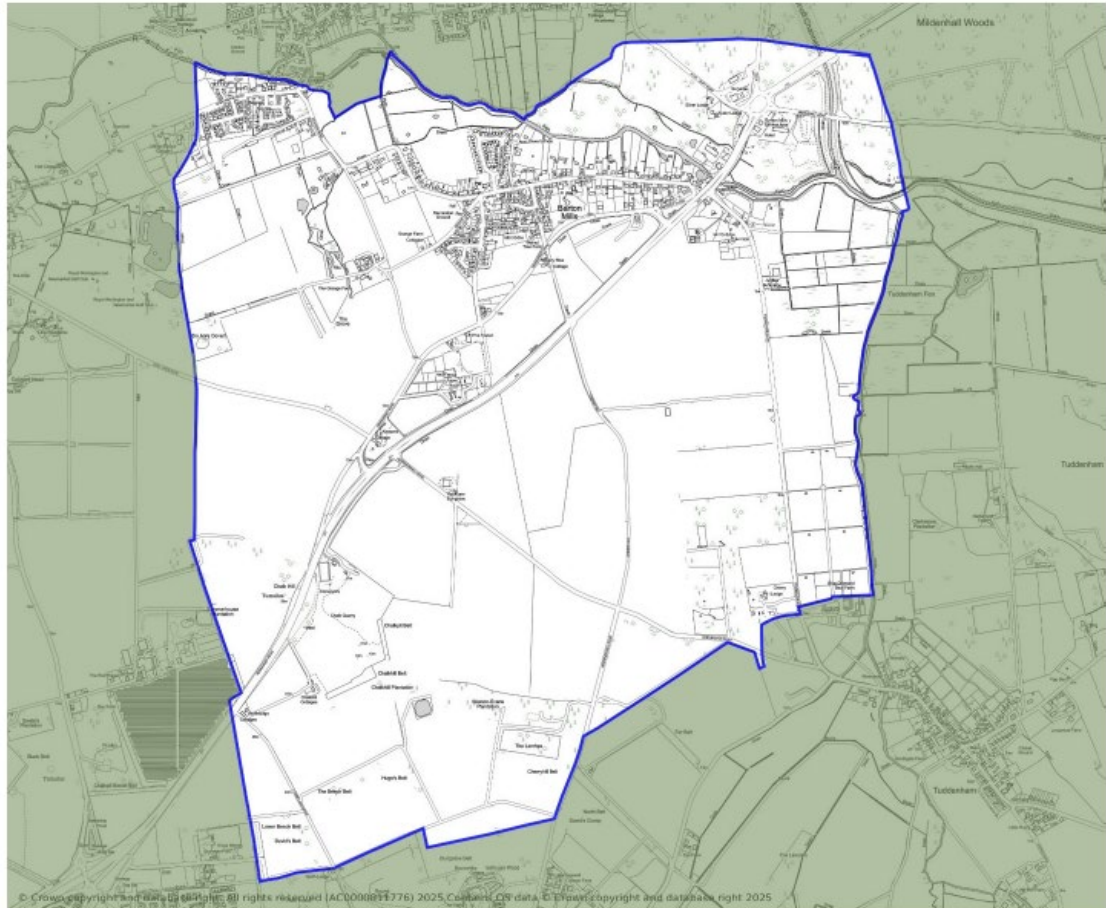
In 2041 Barton Mills will remain an attractive village where the designated historic and natural environments remain protected and, where feasible, enhanced. Limited development will have taken place that respects and maintains the character of the village and its surrounding countryside and does not have a detrimental impact on services and infrastructure

- 2.2 To deliver the vision, the neighbourhood plan has the following objectives in six themes that have provided a benchmark for the preparation of its planning policies.

Location of Development	• Ensure development will be sympathetic to and reflect the existing form of the village • Safeguard designated natural and historic environments from harm caused by development
Housing	• Support for small scale developments that meets local identified housing needs and enables families to remain in the community • Ensure that new housing is designed to maximise opportunities for use of renewable energy • Ensure that new homes are designed to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities
Natural Environment	• Protect and enhance the rural setting of the village • Green spaces will remain valued and enhanced • Protect valued views and links to the wider countryside
Built Environment and Design	• Ensure new development is appropriate to the historic character of the village as well as conserving and enhancing the village's heritage assets • Maintain and enhance a strong rural identity and sense of place for the parish, through designs that reflect local character and incorporate measures that reduce environmental impact
Services and facilities	• Protect and improve the range of existing facilities and services
Highways and Travel	• Reduce the impact of through traffic on the village • Maintain and enhance existing public rights of way to improve safety and routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders while minimising potential impact on designated habitats

Neighbourhood area

- 2.3 The Neighbourhood Plan area was designated on 4 March 2022, by West Suffolk Council. The neighbourhood plan area includes the whole parish of Barton Mills and is shown on the plan below:



Map 1 – Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan Area

Approach to development

- 2.4 The neighbourhood plan for Barton Mills does not seek to allocate land for development but recognises that there may be a limited amount of new development in compliance with adopted development plan policies. As additional sites come forward they could be supported in principle within the housing settlement boundary subject to according with other policies within the development plan. The plan seeks to ensure that new housing development is of a scale and in locations to minimise the impact on the character of the village and its services, facilities and infrastructure in addition to safeguarding the countryside.

Policies

- 2.5 The neighbourhood plan includes 7 draft policies as set out in Table 1 below. All the policies address the types of development that would be supported, and the mitigation or enhancement measures required to protect the character and environment of the parish.

Table 1: Summary of policies in the Barton Mills Pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan

Policy	Summary
Policy BM1 Worlington Road Housing Settlement Boundary	Defines a settlement boundary around an area of recent housing development within the village to enable proposals for new residential development, residential conversion schemes, residential redevelopment and replacement of an existing dwelling with a new dwelling.
Policy BM2 Protection of Important Views	Requires proposals to be supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to ensure the views identified are retained.
Policy WRNP 3 Housing for Older People	The policy supports the provision of a range of accommodation for older people within the settlement boundary and outside the settlement boundary where there is a demonstrable local need. All proposals are required to comply with the criteria expressed including the need for a travel plan, affordable housing and specific design and layout requirements suited to the nature of the accommodation.
Policy BM3 Local Green Spaces	Four local green spaces have been designated and identified on the policies map. Development proposals in these areas will only be supported in very special circumstances.
Policy BM4 Development Design Considerations	A development management checklist is included within the plan, and design considerations are set out. Designs will take account of local green spaces, views, landscape features, topography and include new open space and biodiversity.
Policy BM5 Barton Mills Conservation Area	Requires proposals within the conservation area to conserve and where appropriate enhance the areas special character.
Policy BM6 Community Facilities	The policy seeks to enhance existing services and lists existing facilities. The loss of existing community facilities is to be avoided unless the current use is financially unviable for over 12 months, there is no local demand for other social, community or leisure facilities, or alternative facilities are available in a location accessible by the community.
Policy BM7 Public Rights of Way	Improvements to public rights of way will be supported where their value as biodiversity corridors are safeguarded and enhanced and where the extension is fit for purpose.

3. Legislative background

- 3.1 The basis for strategic environmental assessment (SEA) legislation is European Union Directive 2001/42/EC4 which requires a strategic environmental assessment to be undertaken for certain types of plans or programmes that could have a significant environmental effect. This was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, commonly referred to as the SEA regulations.
- 3.2 To decide whether a draft neighbourhood plan might have significant environmental effects, it must be assessed (screened) at an early stage of the plan preparation according to the requirements set out in regulation nine of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These include a requirement to consult the environmental assessment consultation bodies.
- 3.3 Where it is determined that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for the determination should be prepared. A copy of the statement must be submitted with the neighbourhood plan proposal and made available to the independent examiner.
- 3.4 If likely significant environmental effects are identified, a strategic environmental assessment needs to be carried out and an environmental report must be prepared in accordance with paragraphs two and three of Regulation 12 of those regulations.
- 3.5 In accordance with Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations 2004, Barton Mills Parish Council (the qualifying body) has prepared this draft screening report to consider whether a strategic environmental assessment of the emerging neighbourhood plan is required due to significant environmental effects.
- 3.6 Sustainability appraisal is not legally required for neighbourhood plans, but it must be demonstrated how the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development in the area, in accordance with National Planning Policy.
- 3.7 Strategic environmental assessment is a process for evaluating, at the earliest appropriate stage, the environmental effects of a plan before it is made. A habitats regulations assessment identifies whether a plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This assessment must determine whether significant effects on a European site can be ruled out based on objective information.
- 3.8 European sites are defined in Regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017 and include special areas of conservation and special protection areas, potential special protection areas, and possible special areas of conservation. The National Planning Policy Framework requires decision makers to apply the same protection and process to listed or proposed Ramsar sites. The sites collectively are referred to as habitats sites in this document.
- 3.9 If the conclusion of the habitats regulations assessment screening is that the plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site then an appropriate

assessment of the implications of the plan for the site, in view of the conservation objectives of the site, must be undertaken. If a plan is one which has been determined to require an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Directive, then it will normally also require a strategic environmental assessment.

4. Screening process

- 4.1 The environmental constraints of the Neighbourhood Plan area are set out in appendix one of this document.
- 4.2 The criteria from schedule one of the strategic environmental assessment regulations have been used in the consideration of environmental effects.

SEA Screening assessment

- 4.3 A neighbourhood plan may have a significant effect on the environment depending on the proposals within it and a case-by-case assessment is required. The criteria for undertaking this assessment are drawn from Article 3(5) of Directive 2001/42/EC (Annex 11) and Schedule 1 of the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 as set out in Table two below:

Table 2: Consideration of likely significant effects, using the criteria from schedule one of the strategic environmental assessment regulations

Significant effect criteria	Assessment and outcome
The characteristics of the plan and programmes having regard to:	
1. The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan supports the delivery of appropriately designed and scaled development within defined settlement boundaries. It provides a framework for the consideration of proposals affecting important views, community facilities, open spaces and public rights of way. Detailed design considerations are provided for all development. Overall there would be no significant effect
2. The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	The neighbourhood plan provides policies for the plan area, it does not influence other plans or programmes but supplements them. The Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan must be in conformity with the strategic policies of the local plan and provides local detail of importance to the community.

Significant effect criteria	Assessment and outcome
	Overall there would be no significant effect
3. The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	The neighbourhood plan requires development proposals to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, in accordance with National Planning Policy. The plan includes a strong emphasis on protecting important views and open spaces (Policies BM2, 3) and ensuring development reflects local character (Policies BM4, 5). Policies BM 6 and 7 seek to retain community facilities, and to enable public rights of way in the parish to be improved. Overall there would be no significant effect, and it is likely that the draft policies proposed will result in minor improvements to the local environment.
4. Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	The Breckland SPA is designated because during the breeding season it supports populations of nightjar, woodlark and stone curlew which are of national importance. The SPA designation covers a small part of the parish at the northern end either side of the A11/A1065 road network. The primary 1500m stone curlew buffer covers the western part of the village/parish, and the 400m woodlark and nightjar buffer covers the northern and western parts of the village/parish. The location and form of any development within the neighbourhood plan area, will be restricted by the settlement boundary. The environmental impact of the application of the policies within the Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be minimal due to the scale of development that would come forward

Significant effect criteria	Assessment and outcome
	in line with existing and emerging policy. Flood Zone 3 runs along the northern edge of the River Lark up to and beyond the parish boundary, this also coincides with the northern extent of the settlement boundary. Within this area development opportunities are limited and could be tackled through the implementation of local plan policies. Local Plan policies have been subject to sustainability appraisal and habitats regulations assessment screening. Overall there would be no significant effect, and it is likely that the draft policies proposed will result in improvements to the local environment.
5. The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (for example plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).	The neighbourhood plan is in conformity with the strategic policies of the local plan. The local plan has had regard to European community legislation on the environment. Policy BM4 Development Design Considerations refers to the need for necessary services and drainage infrastructure and for sustainable waste storage management and for the integration of energy efficient technologies. Overall there would be no significant effect, and it is likely that the draft policies proposed will result in improvements to the local environment.
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:	
6. The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	The neighbourhood plan will provide a context and framework to guide future development within the Neighbourhood

Significant effect criteria	Assessment and outcome
	Area and will supplement adopted planning policy up to 2041. It is not seeking to allocate sites, rather it includes policies that seek to protect and improve the environment, and to minimise the effects of development on its immediate surroundings and ensure development is delivered to high levels of sustainability. The neighbourhood plan has been prepared in conformity with the policies of the Local Plan, which has itself been subject to SEA. Development that could come forward through the plan would in general be of such a small scale that any effects are unlikely to be significant in terms of duration, frequency, and reversibility. No significant effects are envisaged due to the scope and duration of the Neighbourhood Plan
7. The cumulative nature of the effects	The neighbourhood plan policies seek to safeguard the plan area from inappropriate development, individually and in combination. No significant effects are envisaged.
8. The transboundary nature of the effects	The plan will not lead to transboundary effects. No allocations for development are proposed and any proposals that arise as windfall development or incidentally will not lead to transboundary effects on interests of acknowledged importance. No significant effects are envisaged.
9. The risks to human health or the environment (for example due to accidents)	The plan does not propose additional development and is unlikely to lead to additional risks to human health or the environment.

Significant effect criteria	Assessment and outcome
	Overall there would be no significant effect
10. The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The parish, is relatively small with a population of 1,294 Census 2021. The village of Barton Mills, whilst recognised in planning policy as a Type A village, has limited services and facilities and the neighbourhood plan does not allocate any sites for development. Consequently, the potential development that could occur as a result of the plan is limited in its geographical area and any effects are likely to be local and unlikely to be significant. Overall there would be no significant effect
11. The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: • special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; • exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values • intensive land-use	The Breckland SPA designation covers a small part of the parish at the northern end either side of the A11/A1065 road network. The primary 1500m stone curlew buffer covers the western part of the village/parish, and the 400m woodlark and nightjar buffer covers the northern and western parts of the village/parish. Flood Zone 3 runs along the northern edge of the River Lark up to and beyond the parish boundary, this also coincides with the northern extent of the settlement boundary In terms of the built environment the Conservation Area covers the western part of the village which also encompasses a limited number of <i>Listed Buildings</i>. Overall there would be no significant effect
12. The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognized national, community or international protection status.	Local, national and internationally designated nature conservation sites are listed in appendix one, these lie outside or adjacent to the plan area,

Significant effect criteria	Assessment and outcome
	with exception of the Breckland SPA, 400m Woodlark and Nightjar buffer zone and 1500m stone curlew buffer which cover parts of the north and west of the parish. . Flood Zone 3 runs along the northern edge of the River Lark up to and beyond the parish boundary, this also coincides with the northern extent of the settlement boundary. The neighbourhood plan does not allocate sites for development and there would be no direct effects on these designations. Policies in the plan and in the local plan protect landscape features, and the level of development is unlikely to pose a risk to these sites. Overall there would be no significant effect

SEA Screening Conclusion

- 4.4 A screening assessment has been undertaken by applying the criteria from the SEA Directive and Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations to determine whether or not the Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects when assessed against the topics listed in the SEA Regulations. The Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision and detailed planning policies to shape development in the parish up to 2041 and decision makers will need to consider the criteria of these policies when determining future applications in the village. The Neighbourhood Plan does not directly impact on land use through the allocation of sites for housing or other forms of development.
- 4.5 In light of the fact that the Neighbourhood Plan is not seeking to support development above and beyond that expressed in the adopted development plan for the area, which have been subject to SEA, it is not considered that the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have any significant effects on local heritage assets or nature conservation interests and it is likely that the draft policies proposed will result in minor improvements to the local environment.

SEA Screening Conclusion

- 4.6 **Accordingly, the Parish Council's initial conclusion is that a SEA of the Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan is not necessary under the SEA Directive and Regulations because it has been demonstrated that there will not be significant environmental effects as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan.**

Sustainable Development

- 4.7 In addition, the draft Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan has been written to support policies of the adopted development plan for the area - the West Suffolk Local Plan which will cover the period to 2041. The Local Plan was formally adopted in July 2025. The draft Neighbourhood Plan has been written to support the strategic policies of the Local Plan which was subject to SEA (as part of the sustainability appraisal) at a higher tier.
- 4.8 The draft Neighbourhood Plan also accords with the latest National Planning Policy Framework December 2024.

Table 3: Neighbourhood plan and NPPF Compliance

Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan policies	Relevant NPPF December 2024 themes
Whole plan	2. Achieving Sustainable Development 3. Plan-making 4. Decision making
BM1 Worlington Road Housing Settlement Boundary	5. Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
BM6 Community Facilities	6. Building a strong, competitive economy
No specific policies apply	7. Ensuring the vitality of town centres
BM3 Local Green Spaces BM6 Community Facilities	8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
BM4 Development Design Considerations BM7 Public Rights of Way	9. Promoting sustainable transport
No specific policies apply	10. Supporting high quality communications
BM4 Development Design Considerations	11. Making effective use of land
BM4 Development Design Considerations	12. Achieving well-designed places
No specific policies apply	13. Protecting Green Belt land
BM4 Development Design Considerations	14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
BM2 Protection of Important Views BM3 Local Green Spaces	15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
BM4 Development Design Considerations	16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan policies	Relevant NPPF December 2024 themes
BM5 Barton Mills Conservation Area	
No specific policies apply – not a function of neighbourhood plans	17. Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

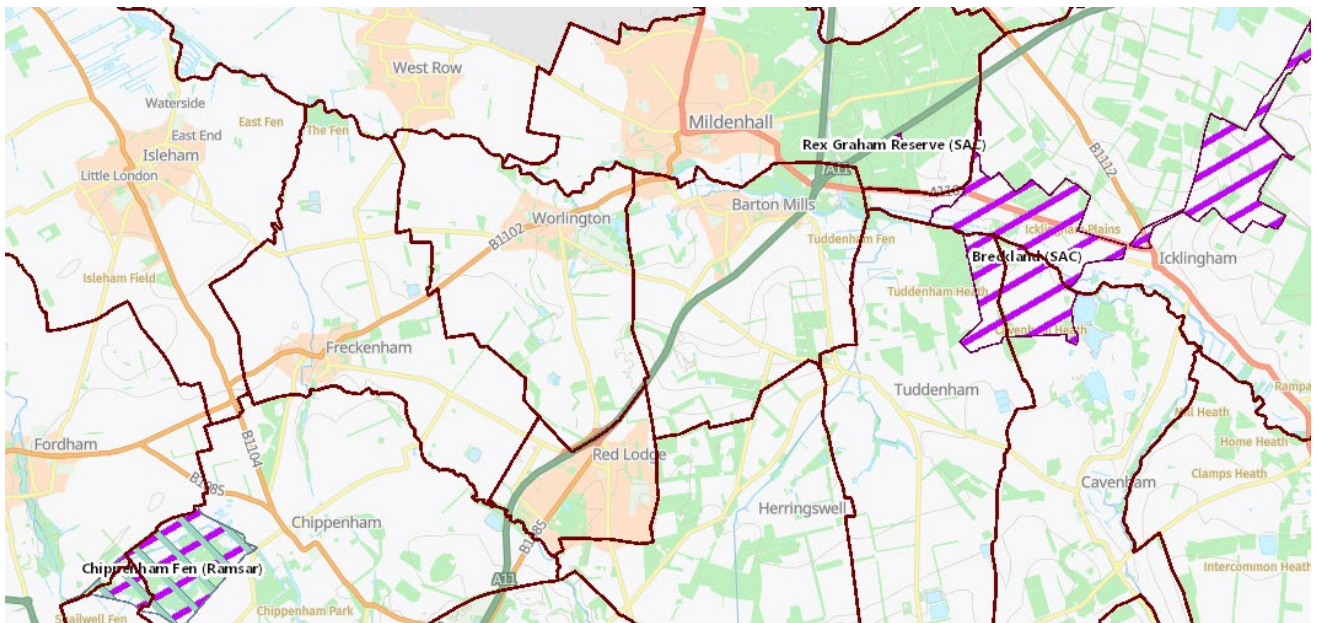
5. Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 5.1 The requirement to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of development plans was confirmed by the amendments to the Habitats Regulations published for England and Wales in 2007. At the time of this Assessment, the Habitats Regulations 2017, as amended, are the applicable version. The requirement for authorities to comply with the Habitats Regulations when preparing a Plan is also noted in the Government's online Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 5.2 Neighbourhood Plans, once 'made' (adopted), become part of the statutory development plan and therefore an HRA is required by law to be carried out by the 'competent authority'. A parish council is deemed a competent authority for this purpose, and it can commission consultants to undertake HRA work on their behalf. A competent authority can usually only progress a Plan if it considers that it will not adversely affect the integrity of any 'European site', as defined below.
- 5.3 HRA refers to the assessment of the potential effects of a development plan, including a neighbourhood plan, on one or more sites afforded the highest level of protection in the UK, namely Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). These were classified under European Union (EU) legislation but, since 1 January 2021, are now protected in the UK by the Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended). The EU Directives from which the UK's Habitats Regulations originally derived are no longer binding, but the UK Regulations make reference to the lists of habitats and species that the sites were designated for, which are listed in annexes to the EU Directives, namely:
- SACs are designated for particular habitat types (specified in Annex 1 of the EU Habitats Directive [See reference 4F5]) and species (Annex II). The listed habitat types and species (excluding birds) are those considered to be most in need of conservation at a European level. Before 'Brexit', designation of SACs also had regard to the coherence of the 'Natura 2000' network of European sites. After 'Brexit', regard is had to the importance of such sites for the coherence of the UK's 'national site network';
 - SPAs are classified for rare and vulnerable birds (Annex I of the EU Birds Directive [See reference 5F6]), and for regularly occurring migratory species not listed in Annex I
- 5.4 Together with Designated Wetlands of International Importance (known as Ramsar sites), SACs and SPAs form what is now known as the 'national site network'.
- 5.5 Government guidance states that: "Any proposals affecting the following sites would also require an HRA because these are protected by government policy:
- Proposed SACs
 - Potential SPAs
 - Ramsar sites – wetlands of international importance (both listed and proposed)
 - Areas secured as sites compensating for damage to a European site."

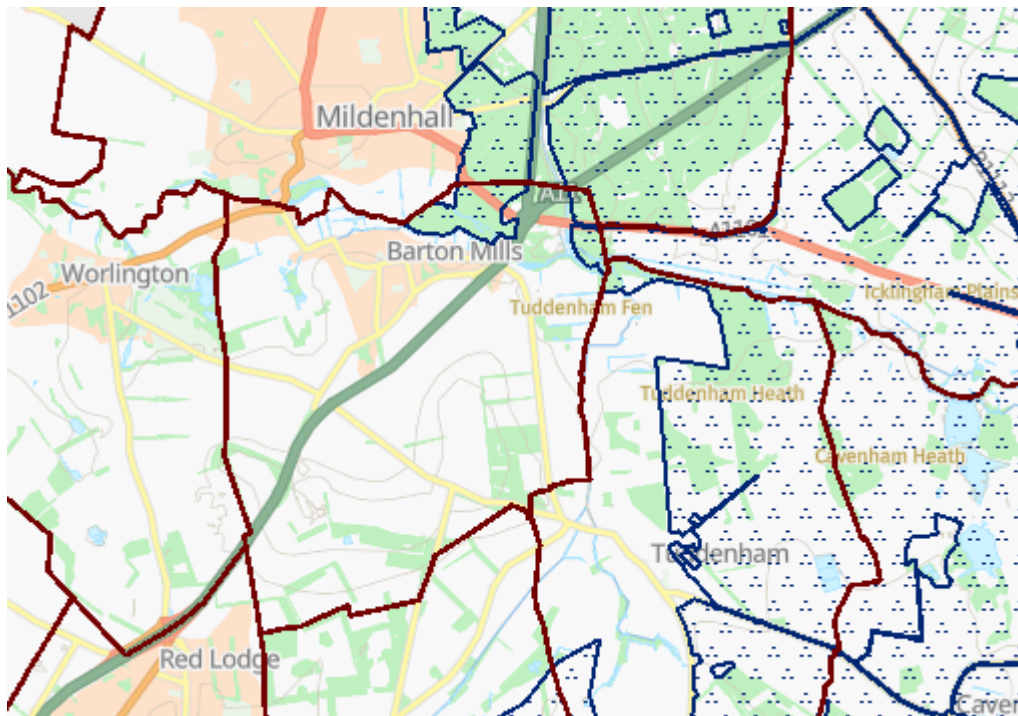
5.6 Within the Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan area, there are 'national sites'. Specifically Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) and its associated buffer zones. Outside the Neighbourhood Plan area lies the Breckland Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Rex Graham Reserve (SAC) Fenland (SAC) and , Chippenham Fen Ramsar. The proximity of these locations is illustrated on the following Maps:

- Breckland SPA is designated because during the breeding season it supports populations of nightjar, woodlark and stone curlew which are of national importance.
- Breckland SAC includes a number of heathland SSSI's (Breckland Forest and Breckland Farmland) and is designated primarily for its dry heath and grassland habitat.

Map 2 – proximity of 'National Sites' Ramsar and SAC's to Barton Mills Neighbourhood Area Source: Extract Defra Magic Map

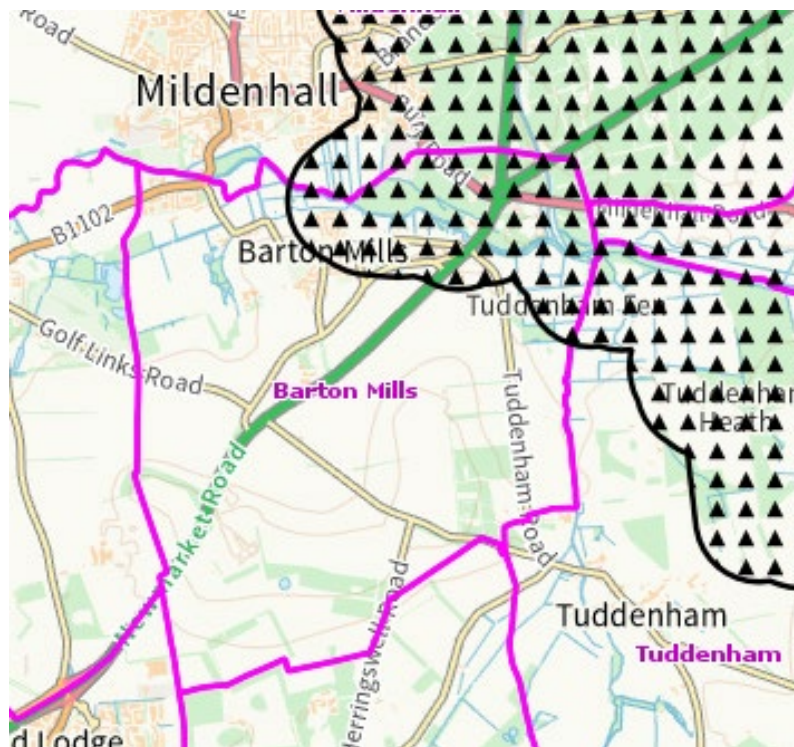


Map 3 – proximity of 'National Sites' SPA's to Barton Mills Neighbourhood Area Source: Extract Defra Magic Map

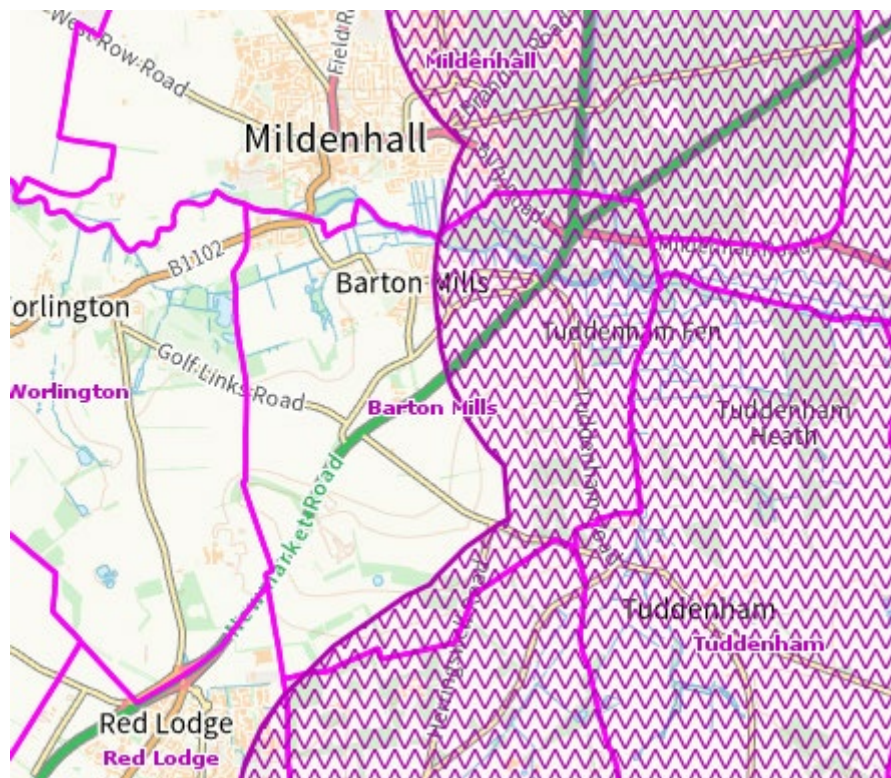


- 5.7 The [Habitats Regulations Assessment](#) (consolidated adoption HRA) (July 2025) highlighted possible effects associated with the international sites as follows:
- Urbanisation (changes in species distribution)
 - Recreational pressure
 - Disturbance or Loss of functionally linked land
 - Water quality (hydrological changes and water pollution)
 - Air quality
- 5.8 Since the Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any sites for development, it is not considered there are any likely potential pathways for impacts on the national sites, even those within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 5.9 The West Suffolk Local Plan woodlark and nightjar 400m buffer covers the north east part of the parish, as illustrated on the plan below:

Map 5 – Extent of Local Plan designated SPA woodlark and nightjar 400 metre buffers. Source: Extract West Suffolk online mapping



Map 6 – Extent of Local Plan designated SPA stone curlew 1500 metre buffer. Source: Extract West Suffolk online mapping



- 5.10 The Local Plan notes that all development that leads to a net increase in residential development on sites within the 400m buffer which could support or is capable of supporting the woodlark and/or nightjar would require a project level HRA. This also applies to development within the 1500m stone curlew buffer. The neighbourhood plan does not propose any built development in or near the 400m buffer or the 1500m buffer.
- 5.11 In addition the potential for effects to occur in combination with the development in the local plan and with other projects has been considered. However, it is judged that the scale of additional development likely to occur as a result of the plan is unlikely to lead to in-combination effects.

HRA Screening of policies

Policy BM1 – Worlington Road Housing Settlement Boundary **Potential likely significant effects None**

- 5.12 This policy establishes a settlement boundary around a concentration of existing residential development within the parish which lies beyond the boundaries of any of the national designations and their associated buffers. Accordingly, and in accordance with the strategic policies of the West Suffolk Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Area will accommodate development commensurate with the policies of the West Suffolk Local Plan. No sites are allocated for housing development in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy BM2 - Protection of Important Views **Potential likely significant effects None**

- 5.13 This policy requires those developments that accord with other development plans policies to consider visual and landscape impacts within the built-up area or into or out of the surrounding countryside. It will not directly result in new housing development.

Policy BM3 – Local Green Spaces **Potential likely significant effects None**

- 5.14 The policy identifies four local open spaces of importance for protection from development. It will not directly result in new housing development.

Policy BM4– Development Design Considerations **Potential likely significant effects None**

- 5.15 The policy sets criteria to be considered for all planning applications. The policy will not directly result in new housing development.

Policy BM5– Barton Mills Conservation Area **Potential likely significant effects None**

- 5.16 The policy requires proposals within the conservation area to make a positive contribution to its features and character. The policy will not directly result in new housing development.

Policy BM6– Community Facilities

Potential likely significant effects None

- 5.17 The policy promotes the provision and enhancement of community facilities and services and sets criteria for when proposals for the loss of facilities would be supported. The policy will not directly result in new housing development.

Policy BM7– Public Rights of Way

Potential likely significant effects None

- 5.18 The policy promotes the protection and enhancement of the existing public rights of way network in the parish. The policy will not directly result in new housing development.

HRA Screening Conclusion

- 5.19 Since none of the Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan policies are expected to directly result in development (for the reasons detailed above), they will not result in significant effects on European sites. Therefore, consideration does not need to be given to the potential impact pathways to each European site. It is concluded that, given the nature of the Neighbourhood Plan, in that it does not allocate any sites for development and adds local detail to existing strategic policies, it is unlikely that the outcomes of this would change the outputs of the Local Plan HRA for Neighbourhood Plan purposes. **Accordingly likely significant effect on any European site can be screened out.**

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Consultation with statutory consultees; Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, was undertaken between 26 September and 31 October 2025. Consultation responses were received from Natural England and Historic England. No response was received to either the Pre-submission consultation or the Screening Opinion consultation from the Environment Agency.
- 6.2 Natural England commented “on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that:
- significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,
 - significant effects on Habitats sites¹, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.
- (See full response attached in appendix 2).
- 6.3 Historic England commented: On the basis of the information supplied, and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of ‘SEA’ Directive], Historic England concurs with the Council that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required. (See full response attached in appendix 2).

7. Screening Determination

- 7.1 This report contains the detail of the assessment of the need for the Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan to be subject to strategic environmental assessment as required by Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC) and appropriate assessment as required by the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).
- 7.2 The assessment for both these requirements has been undertaken on the basis of the levels of growth expressed in the Neighbourhood Plan. Based on the environmental information, and the scope of the policies in the Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan, the outcome of the assessment is:
- **In respect of strategic environmental assessment, significant environmental effects can be screened out (section four).**
 - **In respect to habitats regulations assessment, likely significant effects can be screened out (section five).**
- 7.3 This report has been informed through consultation with statutory consultees, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England.

Appendix 1 – Environmental Constraints

Data Sources: DEFRA Magic (magic.defra.gov.uk)

West Suffolk online mapping (maps.westsuffolk.gov.uk)

Internationally Designated Sites

The following internationally important site lies partially within the neighbourhood plan area.

- Breckland SPA – 0 km from Neighbourhood Area (on north and western boundary see Map 3)

Other Internationally Designated Sites in close proximity to the neighbourhood plan boundary (taken from the nearest point of the site to the plan boundary), include:

- Breckland SAC – 0.8 km from Neighbourhood Area
- Rex Graham Reserve SAC – 0.4km from Neighbourhood Area
- Chippenham Fen Ramsar - 5.0 km from Neighbourhood Area
- Fenland SAC - 5.0 km from Neighbourhood Area

Nationally Designated Sites

The following nationally designated sites (SSSI's) lie within the plan area.

- Breckland Forest - on north and western edges of the parish
- Cherry Hill and the Gallops – Worlington/Herringswell Road

Nationally important sites in the vicinity¹ include:

SSSI's (those marked with * are also NNR's)	Closest distance from Neighbourhood Area (km)
Red Lodge Heath	4.28km
Breckland Farmland	3.07km
Cavenham-Icklingham Heaths *	1.6km
Rex Graham Reserve	0.8km
Deadman's Grave, Icklingham	5km
How Hill Track	4km

¹ Distance measured from centre of village

SSSI's (those marked with * are also NNR's)	Closest distance from Neighbourhood Area (km)
Foxhole Heath, Eriswell	4.7km
Bemer's Heath, Icklingham	7.3km
Weather and Horn Heaths, Eriswell	6.77km
Brackland Rough	8.37km
Chippenham Fen and Snailwell Poor's Fen*	8.37km
Newmarket Heath	15.24km
Soham Wet Horse Fen	11.75km
Wicken Fen*	16.52km
Delph Bridge Drain	16.54km
Ely Pitts and Meadows	17.66km
Shippea Hill	14.18km
Stallode Wash, Lakenheath	12.18km
London road Industrial Estate, Brandon	11.57km
Weeting Heath	13.99km
Wangford Warren and Carr	10.47km
Pashford Poor's Fen, Lakenheath	9.48km
Lakenheath Poors Fen	8.7km
Maidscross Hill	8.44km
RAF Lakenheath	8.96km
Lord's Well Field	6.18km
Lakenheath Warren	7.67km
Eriswell Low Warren	5.51km
Wilde Street Meadow	5.26km
Grime's Graves	17.59km

SSSI's (those marked with * are also NNR's)	Closest distance from Neighbourhood Area (km)
Thetford Golf Course and Marsh	15.36km
Elm Road Field, Thetford	15.51km
Barnhamcross Common	15.78km
Thetford Heaths*	14.67km
Barnham Heath	16.67km
Little Heath, Barnham	13.72km
Lackford Lakes	9.04km
West Stow Heath	6.85km
Black Ditches	7.81km
Horringer Court Caves	15.66km

Designated county wildlife sites² within the plan boundary are:

Norah Hanbury – Kelk Memorial Meadows
 Barton Mills Meadows
 Barton Mills Chalk Pit

Designated county wildlife sites³ on the plan boundary and nearby are:

Worlington Golf Course and surrounding habitat
 Worlington Chalk Pit
 Worlington Heath
 Tuddenham Pit
 Joan's Meadow
 Cavenham Heath
 Mildenhall New Cemetery
 RNR 152
 College Heath Road
 Hurst Fen and Howlett Hills
 Old Town Tip

² As identified in the Forest Heath Core Strategy

³ As identified in the Forest Heath Core Strategy

Ancient woodland

There are no sites within the neighbourhood plan area

Agricultural land

The parish is either grade 3 or 4 agricultural land.

Water

The northern part of the parish is extensively Flood Zone 3, coinciding with the corridor of the River Lark. There are also extensive areas of Flood Zone 2 within the parish, particularly to the south of the residential development south of Worlington Road, coinciding with a number of drains in the locality. around some of which coincides with the corridor of the River Lark. The whole parish falls within a source protection zone.

Air quality

There are no air quality management areas within the plan area.

Noise

The main sources of noise pollution in the plan area include RAF Mildenhall, to the north of the parish, and there is potential for traffic noise from the A11 which runs through the parish and clips the edge of the village. A major interchange lies in the north east corner of the parish linking A11, A1101 and A1065.

Access and recreation

There are few public rights of way within the parish, these are mainly focussed along the corridor of the River Lark and south of Worlington Road.

The parish also has the benefit of a village hall, which provides space for indoor activities and clubs, and has an extensive area for formal sports, there is also a children's play area.

Cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage

To the south of the village is the Bowl Barrow on Chalk Hill, a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Listed buildings – Grade II are individual properties typically farmhouses, and within the village St Mary's Church and the Bull Inn.

Landscape sourced from Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment:

The neighbourhood plan area is comprised typically as :-

- Rolling Estate Chalklands
 - very gently rolling or flat landscape of chalky free draining loam
 - Dominated by large scale arable production
 - "Studscape" of small paddocks and shelterbelts
 - Large uniform fields enclosed by low hawthorn hedges
 - Shelter belt planting, often ornamental species
 - A "well kept" and tidy landscape

- Open views
- Clustered villages with flint and thatch vernacular houses
- Estate Sandlands
 - Flat or very gently rolling plateaux of free-draining sandy soils, overlying drift deposits of either glacial or fluvial origin
 - Chalky in parts of the Brecks, but uniformly acid and sandy in the south-east
 - Absence of watercourses
 - Extensive areas of heathland or acid grassland
 - Strongly geometric structure of fields enclosed in the 18th & 19th century.
 - Large continuous blocks of commercial forestry
 - Characteristic 'pine lines' especially, but not solely, in the Brecks
 - Widespread planting of tree belts and rectilinear plantations
 - Generally a landscape without **ancient woodland**, but there are some isolated and very significant exceptions
 - High incidence of relatively late, estate type, brick buildings
 - North-west slate roofs with white or yellow bricks. Flint is also widely used as a walling material

Appendix 2 – Responses from Statutory Bodies

Natural England Response

Date: 23 October 2025
Our ref: 528906
Your ref: Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan

Ms Naomi Alecock
Barton Mills Parish Council

BY EMAIL ONLY
clerk@bartonmills-pc.gov.uk



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

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Ms Alecock

Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan - SEA/HRA Screening Opinion Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 26 September 2025.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle
Consultations Team

Historic England Response

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on this consultation. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process. Therefore, we welcome this opportunity to review the Screening Report for this plan. For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the Barton Mills Neighbourhood Plan) likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment?". Our comments are based on the information supplied with the Screening Opinion.

The Screening Report indicates that the Council considers that the plan will not have any significant effects on the historic environment. We note that the plan does not propose to allocate any sites for development.

On the basis of the information supplied, and in the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment Regulations [Annex II of 'SEA' Directive], Historic England concurs with the Council that the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required.

The views of the other two statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for an SEA is made.

I should be pleased if you can send a copy of the determination as required by REG 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

We should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by you with your correspondence. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on later stages of the SEA process and, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan) where we consider that, despite the SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the relevant local authorities are closely involved throughout the preparation of the plan and its assessment. They are best placed to advise on; local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the Historic Environment Record (HER), how the allocation, policy or proposal can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets.