



Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This screening report is used to determine whether or not the content of The Cotton End (Neighbourhood) Plan (NP) requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These require an SEA to be undertaken for:
 - i. Plans which are prepared for town and country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive; or
 - ii. Plans which have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive.
- 1.2 Plans which determine 'the use of a small area at local level' or which only propose 'minor modification to a plan' might be exempt if they are unlikely to have significant environmental effects. NPs containing land allocations for development that are not included in the local authority's plan, are more likely to require an SEA. The main determining factor as to whether SEA is required on a NP is if it is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.
- 1.3 Section 2 of this report outlines the regulations that set the need for this screening exercise. Process and criteria of the assessment are set out in Section 3. A brief summary of the draft Cotton End (Neighbourhood) Plan is provided in Section 4.
- 1.4 The screening assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the NP is set out in Section 5 and the decision on the screening is provided in Section 6.



2. Legislative Background

- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC. The Directive is transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Regulation 9 sets out the process as follows:

“Determinations of the responsible authority

9. (1) The responsible authority shall determine whether or not a plan, programme or modification of a description referred to in -

(a) paragraph (4) (a) and (b) of regulation 5;

(b) paragraph (6)(a) of that regulation; or

(c) paragraph (6) (b) of that regulation, is likely to have significant environmental effects.

(2) Before making a determination under paragraph (1) the responsible authority shall -

(a) take into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 to these Regulations; and

(b) consult the consultation bodies

(3) Where the responsible authority determines that the plan, programme or modification is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), it shall prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.

The regulations define that a responsible authority as:

(a) the authority by which or on whose behalf it is prepared; and

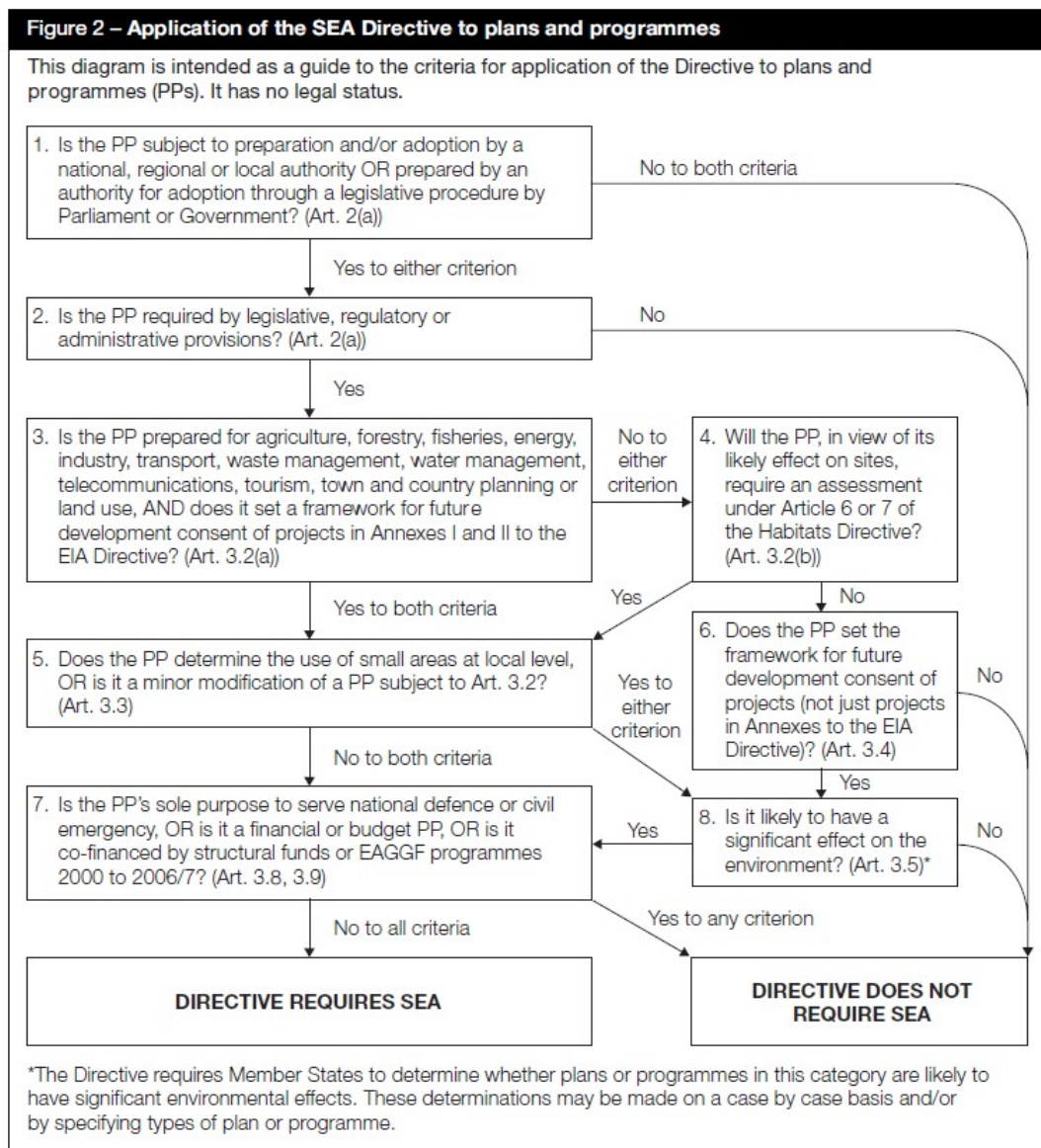
(b) where, at any particular time, that authority ceases to be responsible, or solely responsible, for taking steps in relation to the plan or programme, the person who, at that time, is responsible (solely or jointly with the authority) for taking those steps;

- 2.2 The Government has stated that Sustainability Appraisals are not needed for Neighbourhood Plans (as outlined in the National Planning Practice Guidance). It must however be demonstrated how the NP contributes to achievement of sustainable development in the area.



3. Screening assessment process

- 3.1 The screening opinion assessment is undertaken in two parts: the first part will assess whether the plan falls into a category of plans requiring SEA. The second part of the assessment will consider whether the NP is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, using criteria drawn from Schedule 1 of the EU SEA Directive and the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 3.2 The government guidance 'A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 2005; sets out the following approach to be taken in determining whether SEA is required, shown in the figure below:





THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

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

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

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

3.4 The three statutory consultation bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England) were consulted to determine whether they agree with the findings and conclusions of this screening opinion, in establishing whether The Cotton End Plan required a SEA and whether it might have a significant environmental effect. The statutory bodies were consulted in November 2022, however at that time the Environment Agency did not respond. The statutory bodies were again consulted between October 2023 and March 2024. The responses to the October 2023/March 2024 consultation from the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England are included in Appendix A, Appendix B and Appendix C.



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

4. Summary of Neighbourhood Plan

The Cotton End Plan Vision & Objectives

Our Vision:

In 2040, Cotton End will have maintained and improved its attractive character as a tranquil verdant village, retaining its heritage, identity and spirit, surrounded by highly cherished tranquil open countryside, maintaining separation from, and does not coalesce with Shortstown and Wilstead, with an active, thriving and diverse community.

This is helped by:

- + A variety of types, sizes and styles of attractive and durable homes positively reflecting the character of the area;
- + Protecting and enhancing the leafy and biodiverse nature of Cotton End's village neighbourhood and surrounding open countryside;
- + Easy access to the open countryside and a well-maintained network of footpaths, bridleways, cycle paths and roads within Cotton End Parish;
- + A broad range of well-kept and highly frequented community and cultural facilities within easy walking distance of public transport, with transport links to other destinations nearby such as shops and services;
- + A diverse mix of local residents and employees of different faiths, ages, ethnicity and socio-economic means being able to live, work, study, and socialise;
- + Good accessibility for public and private modes of transport and sufficient parking for all modes including cars, bicycles and motorbikes.



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

Our Neighbourhood Plan Objectives:

- + To protect and enhance the tranquil verdant character of Cotton End (Objective 1);
- + To meet new housing demand in a manner that is sensitive to the character of the village, without infringing on green spaces, while preserving the landscape character of the village and remaining within the Settlement Policy Area only, having regard to context and the character of Cotton End (Objective 2);
- + To support the retention of smaller homes available to younger people and older downsizers (Objective 3);
- + To promote the protection and positive use of the Green Space surrounding the village Settlement Policy Area by providing more opportunity for the community to access it by foot, horseback and bicycle (Objective 4);
- + To protect open spaces in the village Settlement Policy Area from development and to ensure that all residents have access to community open spaces for leisure and recreational purposes within a reasonable walking distance (Objective 5);
- + To maintain a modern and vibrant village, by supporting smart and green technologies throughout Cotton End enabling a more connected and mobile community, and improving ease of access to local products and services outside the village (Objective 6);
- + To promote an active community within the village, with improved community and cultural facilities for residents and visitors (Objective 7);
- + To encourage and facilitate the development of community buildings and sites in the village, in order to protect and enhance community facilities and amenities for the community and visitors (Objective 8);
- + To encourage walking and cycling to and from key local destinations by improving the facilities for safe walking and cycling, and adequate parking (dedicated and safe paths, lanes and tracks) within and outside Cotton End (Objective 9);
- + To require any development and public realm improvements to make a positive contribution to the natural, built and historic environment of Cotton End Parish (Objective 10);
- + To support proposals improving access, capacity, appearance and functioning of parking facilities for cars, bicycles and motorbikes; (Objective 11);
- + To seek improvements to roads and transport infrastructure facilitating a smooth traffic flow through the village (Objective 12);
- + To ensure Cotton End Parish Council, Cotton End Residents Group, and all the local community have a meaningful opportunity to engage with any developers and their design teams in the early stages of designing proposals for sites, including the key locations for development as identified in the Key Proposal Map (Objective 13).



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

Our Housing & Design Policies:

- Policy HD1 INCREASING HOUSING CHOICES
- Policy HD2 DEVELOPMENT AT 161 HIGH ROAD
- Policy HD3 RESPECTING AND ENHANCING VILLAGE CHARACTER AND DESIGN
- Policy HD4 DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LAND
- Policy HD5 HEALTHY HIGH QUALITY TREES AND HEDGES
- Policy HD6 DITCHES OR CULVERTED WATERCOURSES
- Policy HD7 THE COTTON END BUNGALOWS

Our Getting Around Infrastructure Policies:

- Policy GA1 WALKING AND CYCLING

Our Open Space & Recreation Policies:

- Policy OS1 PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACES
- Policy OS2 DESIGNATION OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES
- Policy OS3 DEVELOPMENT ADJACENT TO OPEN AND LOCAL GREEN SPACES
- Policy OS4 LOCAL PLAY AREAS



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

5. Assessment

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

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



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
<p>4. Will The Cotton End Plan, in view of its likely effect on sites, require assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>2 of the proposed sites (Key Locations A & C in the Key Proposal Map) are brownfield land. Additionally Location A has been subject to a number of planning applications.</p> <p>Another 2 of the proposed sites (Key Locations D & E in the Key Proposal Map) are garden land.</p> <p>The last proposed site (Key Location B in the Key Proposal Map) has been granted planning approval, but no development has yet taken place.</p> <p>Historic England "<i>Given the likely significant effects (both positive and negative) upon the historic environment, Historic England considers that a Strategic Environmental Assessment <u>will be required.</u></i>" as sites C, D and E have not yet been subject to any planning applications.</p> <p>Lastly the Neighbourhood Plan <u>does not</u> contain any proposed sites on or affecting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural Land • Ancient Woodland • AONBs • Local Nature Reserves • National Parks • National Trails • Priority Habitat Inventory • Public rights way • SSIs • Local Wildlife Sites • NCAs



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

5. Does The Cotton End Plan determine the use of small areas at local level OR is it a minor modification of a plan/programme? (Article 3.3)	Y	Yes, the Neighbourhood Plan relates to the local area of the designated Neighbourhood Area.
6. Does The Cotton End Plan set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Article. 3.4)	N	N/A

Stage	Y/N	Reasons
7. Is The Cotton End Plan's sole purpose to serve national defence or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Article. 3.8 & Article. 3.9)	N	N/A
8. Is The Cotton End Plan likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Article. 3.5)	N	See the following table.

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



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected:

Environmental criteria	Assessment of effects			Comments
	Short	Medium	Long	
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	None	None	None	<p>The Cotton End Plan sets out policies which focus on improving the public realm for green infrastructure enhancements. While the benefits arise for resident from a well-designed Neighbourhood Plan have the potential to be wide-ranging, these are not deemed to be significant with regards to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.</p> <p>The Cotton End Plan Neighbourhood Area does not contain any Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It does contain around 75% of Shocott Spring, part of the Forest of Marston Vale, however as The Cotton End Plan does not seek to allocate any housing outside the village SPA, this limits the scope of any significant effects on biodiversity as a result of potential Neighbourhood Plan proposals.</p> <p>A key facet of the Cotton End Plan is the enhancement of green infrastructure networks, the protection of agricultural land and the provision of new, retention of existing trees, woodland and hedges.</p>
Population and Human health	None	None	None	<p>The population estimated from the 2021 census was 830, with 340 households. The area of the parish is 552 hectares which equates to a population density of 0.66 people per hectare.</p> <p>The Cotton End Plan sets out policies which focus on improving the public realm for green infrastructure enhancements. While the benefits arise for resident from a well-designed Neighbourhood Plan have the potential to be wide-ranging, these are not deemed to be significant with regards to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.</p>



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

Environmental criteria	Assessment of effects			Comments
	Short	Medium	Long	
Soil	None	None	None	Given The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land outside the village SPA for development, The Neighbourhood Plan policies will not lead to the loss of any areas of productive agricultural land in Cotton End Parish. The Cotton End Plan provides protection to agricultural land from housing allocation, so the effect on soil resources is deemed to be insignificant with regards to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.
Water	None	None	None	Development proposals influenced by The Cotton End Plan policies may lead to very limited changes in water demand in the Neighbourhood Plan area. In the context of water management in the East of England, and wider population pressures, the effect on water resources is deemed to be insignificant. Given the small amount of allocations within the Neighbourhood Plan, impacts on water quality in the Neighbourhood plan area from The Cotton End plan are unlikely to be significant.
Air	None	None	None	As noted within The Cotton End Plan, there are no Air Quality Areas present in the Neighbourhood Plan area. While The Cotton End Plan does allocate sites for development, it is unlikely to significantly increase traffic and congestion in Cotton End Parish. As such, effects on air quality as a result of The Cotton End Plan are unlikely to be significant.



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

Environmental criteria	Assessment of effects			Comments
	Short	Medium	Long	
Climatic factors	None	None	None	<p>In terms of climate change mitigation, while The Cotton End Plan does allocate land for development, the Neighbourhood Plan will not lead to increases in greenhouse gas emissions from a significant increase in the built footprint of the parish. In terms of emissions from transport, the objectives and policies of the plan actively seek to encourage sustainable modes of transport, discourage private car use and reduce the need to travel. This will help limit potential increases in greenhouse gas emissions from transport that may arise as a result of the plan.</p> <p>Parts of the parish are served by drainage ditches, which increases the potential risk of flooding. Whilst statutory requirements (including the requirements of the NPPF) will help ensure that flood risk is addressed in new development proposals, drainage ditches are not covered by national planning policy or local plans. The Cotton End Plan therefore contains a policy specifically aims to protect the watercourses in the Parish and their associated habitats, and any development adjacent to ditches or culverts should be designed with a naturalised buffer zone from the ditch to any property in order to protect and enhance the conservation value of the ditch and ensure access for flood defence maintenance and avoid flood risk.</p> <p>The Cotton End Plan additionally includes policies to ensure that new development harvests rainwater and provide new, and retain existing, healthy high quality trees, woodland and hedges as additional tools for helping to manage flood risk and to protect the natural functioning of the natural environment. When these policies are combined, any significant impacts of flood risk are not anticipated as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan. Effects in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation are therefore unlikely to be significant with regard to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.</p>



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

Environmental criteria	Assessment of effects			Comments
	Short	Medium	Long	
Material assets	None	None	None	<p>The Cotton End Plan is unlikely to lead to significant increases in the Neighbourhood Plan area’s waste management requirements, particularly given its small number of allocations. Effects are likely to be further limited by statutory requirements regarding waste management.</p> <p>There are no mineral sites within, or currently planned in the Neighbourhood Plan area which would be affected as a result of The Cotton End Plan. Effects are therefore likely to be insignificant in the context of the SEA Regulations and their requirements.</p>
Cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage	Low	Low	Low	<p>While The Cotton End Plan seeks to allocate small sites for housing, it does not allocate any sites for employment.</p> <p>However, The Cotton End Plan sets out a range of provisions to conserve and enhance the fabric and setting of the historic environment. This includes the Designated Heritage Assets and recording of Non-Designated Heritage Assets. In addition, the policies in The Cotton End Plan are focussed on protecting and enhancing the verdant character of the village, the setting of the historic environment, and on implementing high quality housing design.</p> <p>As such, any effects of these are unlikely to be significant in the context of the SEA Regulations and their requirements.</p> <p>However, Historic England state that “Given the likely significant effects (both positive and negative) upon the historic environment, Historic England considers that a Strategic Environmental Assessment will be required.”</p>



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

Environmental criteria	Assessment of effects			Comments
	Short	Medium	Long	
Landscape	None	None	None	<p>No nationally or locally designated areas of landscape value such as AONBs, Local Nature Reserves, National Parks, National Trails, Priority Habitat Inventory, SSIs Local Wildlife Sites or NCAs are present in the Neighbourhood Plan area.</p> <p>The Cotton End Plan does not seek to allocate sites for housing outside the Settlement Policy Area nor does it allocate land for employment.</p> <p>In addition, the policies of The Cotton End Plan have a focus on protecting and enhancing the local landscape, the villagescape character, the designated and non-designated historic environment, and on high quality design.</p> <p>As such, any effects are unlikely to be significant in the context of the SEA Regulations and their requirements</p>



6. Summary of Screening Opinion

6.1 This screening opinion has considered whether the Cotton End Plan is likely to lead to significant environmental effects in conjunction with the SEA Regulations. The screening has considered a number of potential environmental effects that may arise as a result of this Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst some limited environmental effects have the potential to take place as a result of The Cotton End Plan, it is considered that these are unlikely to be significant in the context of the SEA Regulations and their requirements.

6.2 The SEA topics where effects have the most potential to be significant relates to the historic environment and biodiversity. This relates to the historic environment and biodiversity constraints present in the Neighbourhood Plan area. Due to the locations of, small size, and the small number of allocations taken forward in The Cotton End Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have any significant adverse effects on the fabric and/or setting and significance of the key heritage assets in Cotton End Parish. In addition, the small scale of development can be designed to complement and enhance the historic settings. More importantly the site allocation policies make provision for a small number new homes appropriate to the scale and needs of the village and the Design Code seeks to establish design principles relevant to the design character of Cotton End. However, Historic England have stated that *“Given the likely significant effects (both positive and negative) upon the historic environment, Historic England considers that a Strategic Environmental Assessment will be required.”*

6.3 In addition, a central element of the Neighbourhood Plan’s policies is to limit potential environmental effects and secure environmental enhancements. This will further limit the potential for any environmental effects.

6.4 For these reasons, it is considered that The Cotton End Plan may be subject to the requirements of the SEA Regulations. As such, as a result of Historic England’s opinion, a full SEA process meeting the requirements of the SEA Regulations is deemed to be required to accompany The Cotton End Plan.



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

7. Screening Outcome

7.1 The screening assessment undertaken in Section 5 concludes that there is potential for negative effects on the historic environment arising from The Cotton End Plan.

8. Determination

8.1 Based on the above information and the responses from the Statutory Consultees, the 'Responsible Body' being Cotton End Parish Council, concludes that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

Appendix A – Response to SEA Screening from Environment Agency

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Tue, Mar 26, 2024 at 4:02 PM
Subject: RE: Neighbourhood Plan - Cotton End Bedford
To: [REDACTED]

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for consulting us on the reg 15 HRA. I can see that Cotton End does not have any constraints that fall into our remit and therefore we have no comments to supply.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Sustainable Places Planning Advisor | East Anglia area
Environment Agency | Brampton Office, Bromholme Lane, Brampton PE28 4NE

Megan.Turnpenney@environment-agency.gov.uk

Direct line: [REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED]

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



Creating a better place
for people and wildlife



From: Clerk [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 5, 2024 8:22 PM
To: EastAnglia, Planning [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: Neighbourhood Plan - Cotton End Bedford

MT

working You don't often get email from [REDACTED] [Learn why this is important](#)
on

You very kindly responded to our Neighbourhood plan Regulation consultation in late 2022. The updated plan was submitted to Bedford Borough Council, but they have asked for a Habitat Regulation Assessment which should include your comments on the updated plan.

The latest version on the plan can be viewed using the links below:

The Neighbourhood Plan website where all documents can be found:

<https://cottonendplan.wordpress.com/>

Direct link to download a PDF copy of the Neighbourhood Plan:

<https://cottonendplan.files.wordpress.com/2023/11/cotton-end-parish-neighbourhood-plan-submission-regulation-15.pdf>

I would be very grateful if you could send you comments to me by the end of March if possible and if there's anything else you need please let me know.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] FSLCC
Clerk to Cotton End Parish Council
07592 471859

Any personal data will be processed in line with the Data Protection legislation. Please consider the environment and don't print this email unless you really need to. All Cotton End Parish Council emails and attachments are private and intended solely for the use of the individual or organisation to whom they are addressed. Unauthorised use (e.g. disclosure, storage or copying) is not permitted. If you are not the intended recipient please destroy all copies and inform the sender by return email. This email and any attachments are strictly confidential and intended solely for the addressee. It may contain information which is privileged. If you are not the intended addressee, you must not disclose, forward, copy or take any action in reliance of this email or attachments. If you have received this email in error, please delete it and notify us as soon as possible. The anti-virus software used by Cotton End Parish Council is updated regularly in an effort to minimise the possibility of viruses infecting our systems. However, you should be aware that there is no absolute guarantee that any files attached to this email are virus free. As a public body, the Council may be required to disclose this email (or any response to it) under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 unless the information in it is covered by one of the exemptions in the Act.

Information in this message may be confidential and may be legally privileged. If you have received this message by mistake, please notify the sender immediately, delete it and do not copy it to anyone else. We have checked this email and its attachments for viruses. But you should still check any attachment before opening it. We may have to make this message and any reply to it public if asked to under the Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act or for litigation. Email messages and attachments sent to or from any Environment Agency address may also be accessed by someone other than the sender or recipient, for business purposes.



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

Appendix B – Response to SEA Screening from Natural England

Date: 27 March 2024
Our ref: 469052
Your ref: Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan



Ms [REDACTED]
Cotton End Parish Council

Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ
T 0300 060 3900

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear [REDACTED]

Cotton End neighbourhood Plan - Updated Plan Regulation 15 Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 05 March 2024.

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.

Natural England is a statutory consultee in neighbourhood planning and must be consulted on draft neighbourhood development plans by the Parish/Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums where they consider our interests would be affected by the proposals made.

Natural England does not have any specific comments on this neighbourhood plan.

However, we refer you to the attached annex which covers the issues and opportunities that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and to the following information.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Further information on protected species and development 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 a Strategic Environmental Assessment. 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 Strategic Environmental Assessment 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 an Strategic Environmental Assessment is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

For any further consultations on your plan, please contact: consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Consultations Team

Annex 1 - Neighbourhood planning and the natural environment: information, issues and opportunities

Natural environment information sources

The [Magic](#)¹ website will provide you with much of the nationally held natural environment data for your plan area. The most relevant layers for you to consider are: **Agricultural Land Classification, Ancient Woodland, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Local Nature Reserves, [National Parks \(England\)](#), National Trails, Priority Habitat Inventory, public rights of way (on the Ordnance Survey base map) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (including their impact risk zones)**. Local environmental record centres may hold a range of additional information on the natural environment. A list of local record centres is available from [the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres](#).

Priority habitats are those habitats of particular importance for nature conservation, and the list of them can be found [here](#)². Most of these will be mapped either as **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**, on the Magic website or as **Local Wildlife Sites**. Your local planning authority should be able to supply you with the locations of Local Wildlife Sites.

National Character Areas (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each character area is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. NCA profiles contain descriptions of the area and statements of environmental opportunity, which may be useful to inform proposals in your plan. NCA information can be found [here](#)³.

There may also be a local **landscape character assessment** covering your area. This is a tool to help understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify the features that give it a sense of place. It can help to inform, plan and manage change in the area. Your local planning authority should be able to help you access these if you can't find them online.

If your neighbourhood planning area is within or adjacent to a **National Park** or **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (AONB), the relevant National Park/AONB Management Plan for the area will set out useful information about the protected landscape. You can access the plans on from the relevant National Park Authority or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty website.

General mapped information on **soil types** and **Agricultural Land Classification** is available (under 'landscape') on the [Magic](#)⁴ website and also from the [LandIS website](#)⁵, which contains more information about obtaining soil data.

Natural environment issues to consider

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#)⁶ sets out national planning policy on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. [Planning Practice Guidance](#)⁷ sets out supporting guidance.

Your local planning authority should be able to provide you with further advice on the potential impacts of your plan or order on the natural environment and the need for any environmental assessments.

Landscape

Your plans or orders may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes. You may want to consider identifying distinctive local landscape features or characteristics such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls and think about how any new development proposals can respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness.

If you are proposing development within or close to a protected landscape (National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or other sensitive location, we recommend that you carry out a landscape assessment of the proposal. Landscape assessments can help you to choose the most appropriate sites for development and help to avoid or minimise impacts of development on the landscape through careful siting, design and landscaping.

¹ <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making>

⁴ <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

⁵ <http://www.landis.org.uk/index.cfm>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

⁷ <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/>

Wildlife habitats

Some proposals can have adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites or other priority habitats (listed [here](#)⁸), such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or [Ancient woodland](#)⁹. If there are likely to be any adverse impacts you'll need to think about how such impacts can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

Priority and protected species

You'll also want to consider whether any proposals might affect priority species (listed [here](#)¹⁰) or protected species. To help you do this, Natural England has produced advice [here](#)¹¹ to help understand the impact of particular developments on protected species.

Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services for society. It is a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution. If you are proposing development, you should seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of a higher quality in line with National Planning Policy Framework para 112. For more information, see [Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land](#)¹².

Improving your natural environment

Your plan or order can offer exciting opportunities to enhance your local environment and should provide net gains for biodiversity in line with the [National Planning Policy Framework](#). If you are setting out policies on new development or proposing sites for development, you should follow the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy and seek to ensure impacts on habitats are avoided or minimised before considering opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. You may wish to consider identifying what environmental features you want to be retained or enhanced or new features you would like to see created as part of any new development and how these could contribute to biodiversity net gain and wider environmental goals.

Opportunities for environmental enhancement might include:

- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Think about how lighting can be best managed to reduce impacts on wildlife.
- Adding a green roof to new buildings.
- Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.

Site allocations should be supported by a baseline assessment of biodiversity value. The statutory [Biodiversity Metric](#) may be used to understand the number of biodiversity units present on allocated sites. For small development allocations the [Small Sites Metric](#) may be used. This is a simplified version of the statutory [Biodiversity Metric](#) and is designed for use where certain criteria are met. Further information on biodiversity net gain including [planning practice guidance](#) can be found [here](#)

You may also want to consider enhancing your local area in other ways, for example by:

- Setting out in your plan how you would like to implement elements of a wider Green Infrastructure Strategy (if one exists) in your community.
- Assessing needs for accessible greenspace and setting out proposals to address any deficiencies or enhance provision. Natural England's [Green Infrastructure Framework](#) sets out further information on green infrastructure standards and principles
- Identifying green areas of particular importance for special protection through Local Green Space designation (see [Planning Practice Guidance](#)¹³).
- Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks or on verges, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-land-assess-proposals-for-development/guide-to-assessing-development-proposals-on-agricultural-land>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space>

- Planting additional street trees.
- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition, or clearing away an eyesore).

Natural England's [Environmental Benefits from Nature tool](#) may be used to identify opportunities to enhance wider benefits from nature and to avoid and minimise any negative impacts. It is designed to work alongside the statutory [Biodiversity Metric](#) and is available as a beta test version.



THE COTTON END PLAN 2023 to 2040

Appendix C – Response to SEA Screening from Historic England

Subject: Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Opinion

From: "[REDACTED]@HistoricEngland.org.uk">

Date: 15/04/2024, 14:18

To: "[REDACTED]@cottonend-pc.gov.uk" <[REDACTED]@cottonend-pc.gov.uk>

Dear [REDACTED],

Further to your recent correspondence with [REDACTED], East of England Regional Director, I am writing regarding an updated SEA Screening Opinion for the Cotton End Neighbourhood Plan. I can again echo [REDACTED]'s response and apologise for the inconvenience this delay has caused the Parish Council.

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.

For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question, "Is it (the 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 supporting information (screening report and draft neighbourhood plan) supplied with the consultation indicates that within the plan area there are designated historic environment assets. There is also likely to be other features of local historic, architectural or archaeological value, and consideration should also be given to the wider historic landscape.

The documents indicate the Neighbourhood Plan proposes to allocate a number of sites for housing as shown in the Policy Map on p.26 of the Plan, several of which are in close proximity to designated and non-designated heritage assets. We also note the SEA Screening document advises that of these, site 'B' has planning permission, and site 'A' has been 'subject to a number of planning applications', the remaining proposed sites do not.

Given the likely significant effects (both positive and negative) upon the historic environment, Historic England considers that a Strategic Environmental Assessment will be required.

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.

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.

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 SA/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/guidance) where we consider that, despite the SA/SEA, these would have an adverse effect upon the environment.

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

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Historic Places Adviser

Mobile no –

East of England Region

Partnerships Team

Historic England | Brooklands

24 Brooklands Avenue | Cambridge | CB2 8BU

Tel: 01223582709

Follow us on Twitter at [@HE_EoE](#)



Work with us to champion heritage and improve lives. Read our Future Strategy and get involved at historicengland.org.uk/strategy.

Follow us: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) Sign up to our [newsletter](#)

This e-mail (and any attachments) is confidential and may contain personal views which are not the views of Historic England unless specifically stated. If you have received it in error, please delete it from your system and notify the sender immediately. Do not use, copy or disclose the information in any way nor act in reliance on it. Any information sent to Historic England may become publicly available. We respect your privacy and the use of your information. Please read our full [privacy policy](#) for more information.