

# Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report

January 2023

## Quality information

| Prepared by                             | Checked by                                  | Verified by               | Approved by               |
|---|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| EB<br>Graduate Environmental<br>Planner | CB<br>Principal<br>Environmental<br>Planner | NCB<br>Technical Director | NCB<br>Technical Director |
| CB<br>Principal Environmental Planner   |   |                           |                           |

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Prepared for:

Thriplow and Heathfield Parish Council

Prepared by:

AECOM Limited  
3rd Floor, Portwall Place  
Portwall Lane  
Bristol BS1 6NA  
United Kingdom

T: +44 117 901 7000  
aecom.com

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# Non-Technical Summary (NTS)

AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Plan (THNP).

SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. SEA of the THNP is a legal requirement.<sup>1</sup> This is a Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the SEA Environmental Report.

The THNP is being prepared in the context of the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan. Once ‘made’ the THNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications, alongside the Local Plan.

The THNP SEA Environmental Report (and this NTS) is being published alongside the ‘pre-submission’ version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).

## Structure of the Environmental Report/ this NTS

SEA is undertaken in-line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (‘the SEA Regulations’). In creating a structured approach, SEA reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:

1. What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
  - i.e., in relation to exploring and appraising ‘reasonable alternatives’ (as prescribed by the SEA Regulations<sup>2</sup>).
2. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
  - i.e., in relation to the draft plan that is being consulted on.
3. What happens next?

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

## What is the Plan seeking to achieve?

The THNP has the following vision:

*“Thriplow and Heathfield will grow sustainably whilst remaining a ‘living’ community providing a high quality of life and social cohesion for residents of all ages across the whole parish, respecting its rural roots and enhancing the natural environment.*

<sup>1</sup> Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: a) an environmental report; or, b) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a ‘screening’ process completed in accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (‘the SEA Regulations’). The THNP was subject to screening in 2022 which determined SEA is required.

<sup>2</sup> The SEA Regulations are not prescriptive as to what constitutes reasonable alternatives but identifies that a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that “*identifies, describes, and evaluates*” the likely significant effects of implementing “*the plan, and reasonable alternatives*” considering the plan objectives and geographical scope.

*Access, via non-motorised (active travel) routes, to our surrounding countryside and neighbouring settlements will be improved, bringing with it, social, mental, health, and physical health benefits.”*

Twelve objectives have been identified under the themes ‘*Protecting and enhancing the natural environment and the character of the parish*’, ‘*Living village and sustainable development*’, and ‘*Social cohesion and parish links*’ to support this vision.

## What is the scope of the SEA?

The scope of the SEA is reflected in a list of themes and objectives, which, taken together indicate the parameters of the SEA and provide a methodological ‘framework’ for assessment. The SEA framework for the THNP is provided below.

| SEA theme                       | SEA objective  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Biodiversity                    | Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.   |
| Climate change and flood risk   | Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.                                     |
| Community wellbeing             | Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities. |
| Historic environment            | Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the Neighbourhood Area.   |
| Land, soil, and water resources | Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, protect, and enhance water quality, and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner   |
| Landscape                       | Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.  |
| Transportation and movement     | Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.   |

## Plan-making/ SEA up to this point (Part 1 of the Environmental Report)

An important element of the required SEA process involves assessing ‘reasonable alternatives’ in time to inform development of the draft proposals, and then publishing information on reasonable alternatives for consultation alongside the draft proposals.

As such, **Part 1** of the Environmental Report explains how work was undertaken to develop and assess a ‘reasonable’ range of alternative approaches to the allocation of land for housing, or alternative sites.

Specifically, **Part 1** of the report -

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

The decision was taken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives in relation to the matter of allocating land for housing, given the following considerations:

- THNP objectives, particularly the housing objective to provide small-scale housing development opportunities to meet local needs.
- Housing growth is known to be a matter of key interest amongst residents and other stakeholders; and
- The delivery of new homes is most likely to have a significant effect compared to the other proposals within the Plan. National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.

### Establishing the reasonable alternatives

The Environmental Report explains how reasonable alternatives were established after the process of considering the strategic policy context ('top down' factors) and the site options in contention for allocation ('bottom-up' factors).

This work has identified that whilst there is no strategic need to deliver new homes in Thriplow and Heathfield, there is a desire to meet locally identified needs for new affordable homes. Four reasonable options/ sites have been identified that could potentially contribute to meeting those needs and five options/ sites have been discounted as 'unreasonable' due to their location within the Green Belt. The four options taken forward for appraisal are:

- Option 1: 1-3 Lodge Road, Thriplow (with a capacity for up to 38 homes excluding land within the Green Belt)
- Option 2: 34 Lower Street, Thriplow (with a capacity for circa. 1 home)
- Option 3: Rectory Farm, Thriplow (with a capacity for circa. 3-7 homes)
- Option 4: The Manor House, Thriplow (with a capacity for circa. 3 homes)

### Assessing the reasonable alternatives

The main report (Chapter 6) assesses these options and presents detailed findings for the SEA themes. For each of the options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the SEA framework. Red indicates a significant negative effect and green indicates a significant positive effect.

Efforts are also made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and to indicate a rank of preference. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. Numbers are used to highlight the option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective with 1 performing the best. An 'equals' sign ("=") indicates options are ranked on par with

each other and occurs when no significant/ meaningful differences can be drawn between options.

The following summary findings are reached in the appraisal of these options and supporting text can be found within the main report:

| Summary findings                |                     | Option 1: 1-3 Lodge Road, Thriplow | Option 2: 34 Lower Street, Thriplow | Option 3: Rectory Farm, Thriplow | Option 4: The Manor House, Thriplow |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Biodiversity                    | Significant effect? | No                                 | No                                  | No                               | No                                  |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 2                                   | 2                                | 2                                   |
| Climate change and flood risk   | Significant effect? | No                                 | No                                  | No                               | No                                  |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 2                                   | 2                                | 2                                   |
| Community wellbeing             | Significant effect? | Yes – positive                     | Yes – positive                      | Yes - positive                   | Yes - positive                      |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 2                                   | 2                                | 2                                   |
| Historic environment            | Significant effect? | Yes – negative                     | Yes – negative                      | Yes – negative                   | Yes - negative                      |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 2                                   | 2                                | 3                                   |
| Land, soil, and water resources | Significant effect? | No                                 | No                                  | No                               | No                                  |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 2                                   | 2                                | 2                                   |
| Landscape                       | Significant effect? | No                                 | No                                  | No                               | No                                  |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 2                                   | 2                                | 3                                   |
| Transportation and movement     | Significant effect? | No                                 | No                                  | No                               | No                                  |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 3                                   | 2                                | 2                                   |

## Developing the preferred approach

The Parish Council's reasons for developing the preferred approach are:

*“The environmental assessment described in this report demonstrates how Option 1 performs the best against the SEA objectives. In addition, Option 1, presents the best opportunity for delivering sustainable development in the parish in a way that delivers on the NP vision, in particular the plan objectives sitting under two of its three themes; “Theme 1: Protecting and enhancing the natural environment and the character of the parish and Theme 2: Living village and sustainable development”. It will do so by delivering approximately 20 homes, with a sizeable proportion as affordable homes prioritised for local people, on a suitable site. Option 1 is the only one of the available sites which has potential to address Thriplow’s need for affordable homes, as identified in the 2018 Housing Needs Survey. There is little likelihood the other options will address this need. Option 2 at 34 Lower Street would involve one dwelling. Option 4, land in the grounds of the Manor House, has been put forward for up to 3 homes. Land at Rectory Farm (assessed under Option 3) is now (as at 24*

*August 2022) subject to a planning consent “Part demolition of existing barns extensions alterations and conversions of three barns to dwellings and erection of four new dwellings and widening of access”. None of the homes are proposed as affordable homes.*

*The site assessment work undertaken to support the plan is itself supported by a landscape and visual sensitivity assessment. This assessed each of the sites with respect to 1) Physical and natural factors 2) Cultural and historic factors 3) Visual sensitivity – views 4) Relationship to settlement/settlement form and edge and 5) Perception aspects. The overall sensitivity result for Option 1 was ‘moderate’, which was the case for the other sites assessed, with the exception of Site Option 4 (the Manor House), which was assessed as having an overall ‘high’ sensitivity. However, the landscape and visual sensitivity indicates that there is good scope for development, if a sensitive and landscape-led scheme were to be brought forward.*

*It states:*

*“Although sensitive in visual terms, this brownfield Site is much less sensitive in landscape terms and has good scope for development. Something of the agricultural language of the Site’s forms and structures could be carried through to any future design proposal. Retain all trees and hedges to help assimilate development and provide maturity. Enclose with a strong boundary along the west side to reinforce the village edge” (quote from the Landscape and visual sensitivity assessment)*

*A landscape-led masterplan was therefore developed for this site and put out to community and stakeholder engagement in November 2021, resulting in amendments which are now reflected in the site allocation policy included in the Regulation 14 version of the plan.”*

## Assessment findings at this stage

**Part 2** of the Environmental Report presents an assessment of the ‘Pre-Submission’ version of the THNP. Assessment findings are presented as a series of narratives under the ‘SEA framework’ topic headings. The following conclusions are reached:

### Conclusions and recommendations

Significant long-term positive effects are considered likely in relation to community wellbeing, due to the plan bringing forward additional dwellings and improvements and enhancements to existing community and public realm features.

Minor long-term positive effects are considered likely in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, land, soil and water resources, and landscape through design stipulations under the site allocation policy that ensure important features within the site and in proximity are fully considered in the site design and incorporated and enhanced through development. Biodiversity and geodiversity, the historic environment and land, soil and water resources are also considered through wider plan policies that work to protect and enhance sites and features of value, which improves the setting and quality of the neighbourhood area and designated features. Minor long-term positive effects are also considered likely for transportation and movement through allocating a site close to sustainable and active transportation



provision and boosting connectivity, safeguarding rights of way, and providing additional parking.

Neutral effects (i.e., no significant deviations from the baseline) are considered likely in relation to climate change and flood risk, and the historic environment. In relation to climate change, whilst development could result in increased emissions, the site allocation policy and wider plan policies work to reduce per capita emissions, include renewable energy infrastructure, and retain and enhance biodiversity. In relation to the historic environment the proposed policy mitigation should ensure residual effects are broadly neutral, however, it is recognised that there remains an element of uncertainty in the absence of detailed design proposals and mitigation strategies.

One recommendation is made for the THNP as follows:

- Recognising previous uses at the proposed allocation site, appropriate ground contamination investigation may be required in development (alongside any necessary remediation), and it is recommended that this need is captured within the site allocation policy.

## Next steps

**Part 3** of the report explains the next steps that will be taken as part of plan-making and SEA.

### Plan finalisation

Following consultation, responses received will be considered and the THNP and SEA Environmental Report will be finalised for submission.

Following submission, the plan and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation, and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

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

### Monitoring

The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by South Cambs District Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Plan that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by the Council.

# 1. Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Plan (THNP).
- 1.2 The THNP is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and in the context of the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan. Once 'made' the THNP will have material weight when deciding on planning applications, alongside the Local Plan.
- 1.3 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. SEA of the THNP is a legal requirement.<sup>3</sup>

## SEA explained

- 1.4 It is a requirement that SEA is undertaken in-line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which transposed into national law EU Directive 2001/42/EC on SEA.
- 1.5 In-line with the Regulations, a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that "*identifies, describes and evaluates*" the likely significant effects of implementing "*the plan, and reasonable alternatives*".<sup>4</sup> The report must then be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
- 1.6 More specifically, the Report must answer the following three questions:
  1. What has plan-making/ SEA involved up to this point?
    - including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.
  2. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
    - i.e., in relation to the draft plan.
  3. What happens next?

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<sup>3</sup> Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: a) an environmental report; or, b) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a 'screening' process completed in accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations ('the SEA Regulations'). The THNP was subject to screening in 2022 which determined SEA is required.

<sup>4</sup> Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

## This Environmental Report

- 1.7 This report is the Environmental Report for the THNP. It is published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).
- 1.8 This report essentially answers questions 1, 2 and 3 in turn, to provide the required information.<sup>5</sup> Each question is answered within a discrete 'part' of the report. However, before answering Q1, two initial questions are answered to further set the scene; what is the plan seeking to achieve? And what is the scope of the SEA?

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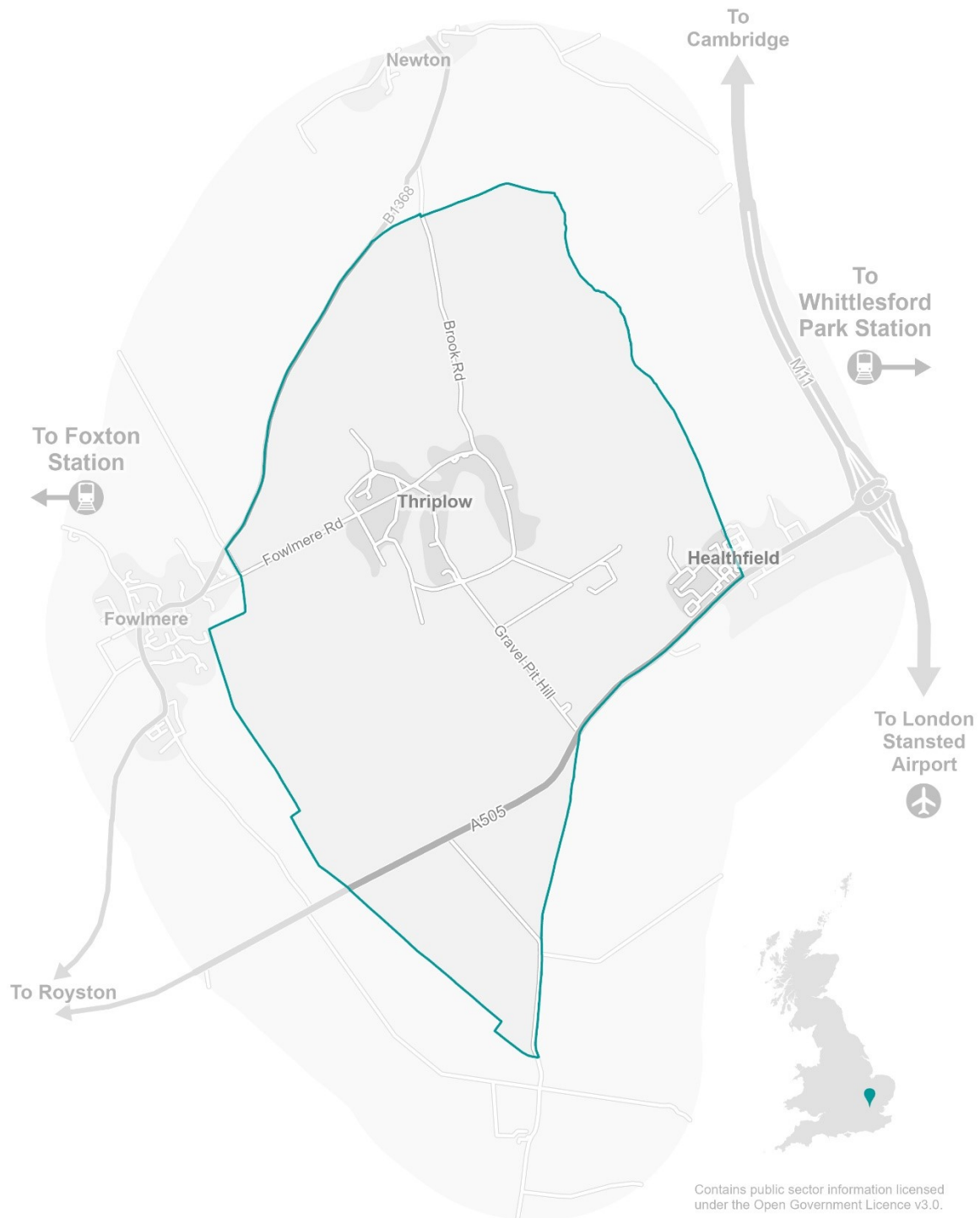
<sup>5</sup> See **Appendix A** for further explanation of the regulatory basis for answering certain questions within the Environmental Report, and a 'checklist' explaining more precisely the regulatory basis for presenting certain information.

## 2. What is the plan seeking to achieve?

### Introduction

2.1 This section considers the strategic planning policy context provided by the adopted South Cambs Local Plan and the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, before then presenting the vision and objectives of the THNP. Figure 2.1 below presents the neighbourhood area.

**Figure 2.1: Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area**



## Strategic planning policy context

- 2.2 The THNP is being prepared in the context of the adopted and emerging planning policy framework for South Cambs.
- 2.3 The adopted South Cambs Local Plan (2018) sets out planning policies and land allocations to guide future development in the district up to 2031. It recognises Thriplow as a 'Group Village' where small scale development sites of up to eight homes are sought, or up to 15 homes on brownfield sites. Heathfield is identified as an 'Infill Village' where schemes are limited to infill development delivering no more than two dwellings, or up to eight dwellings on brownfield sites.
- 2.4 The emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan seeks to plan for development across both the Cambridge City Council and South Cambs District Council authority areas over the next 20 years. The emerging plan is still in early stages of development. An initial Call for Sites was undertaken in 2019 and extended into 2020, and initial evidence base findings were shared in 2020. A 'First Proposals' consultation was undertaken at the end of 2021 but no updated housing requirement has been published for the neighbourhood area at this stage.

## Neighbourhood Plan vision and objectives

- 2.5 The THNP has the following vision:

*"Thriplow and Heathfield will grow sustainably whilst remaining a 'living' community providing a high quality of life and social cohesion for residents of all ages across the whole parish, respecting its rural roots and enhancing the natural environment. Access, via non-motorised (active travel) routes, to our surrounding countryside and neighbouring settlements will be improved, bringing with it, social, mental, health, and physical health benefits."*

- 2.6 The following twelve objectives have been identified under three themes to support this vision:

*Theme 1: Protecting and enhancing the natural environment and the character of the parish.*

- Objective 1: The character and quality of the built environment and landscape in Heathfield will be protected and improved.
- Objective 2: The existing built environment and landscape character of Thriplow village will be protected and enhanced.
- Objective 3: New development will be sensitive to our rural environment and reflect out rural roots.
- Objective 4: Recognise and protect accordingly all valued open spaces in the parish.
- Objective 5: Seek to reverse the decline of the natural environment in the parish by protecting and increasing biodiversity.

*Theme 2: Living village and sustainable development.*

- Objective 6: We will continue to be a living community, which sustains the primary school, shop, and facilities.
- Objective 7: There will be a limited small scale additional housing development, focused in Thriplow near to existing shops and services.
- Objective 8: All development to use sustainable building materials and consider energy efficiency.
- Objective 9: Plan for improved outdoor recreational facilities in the parish.
- Objective 10: A safer less congested parish.
- Objective 11: The quality and quantity of our rural footpath network and interconnectivity with neighbouring settlements will be improved.

*Theme 3: Social cohesion and parish links.*

- Objective 12: There will be more cohesion between the two communities of Thriplow and Heathfield.

## 3. What is the scope of the SEA?

### Introduction

- 3.1 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA, i.e., the sustainability themes and objectives that should be a focus of the assessment of the plan and reasonable alternatives. Further information, i.e., the key issues which supported the development of the objectives, is presented in Appendix B.

### Consultation

- 3.2 The SEA Regulations require that “*when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies*”. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England.<sup>6</sup> As such, these authorities were consulted in October 2022. Responses were received from both Natural England and Historic England, the details of which are provided in Appendix B. No response was received from the Environment Agency.

### The SEA framework

- 3.3 The SEA scope is summarised in a list of themes and objectives, known as the SEA framework. Table 3.1 presents the SEA framework as broadly agreed in 2022.

**Table 3.1: SEA framework**

| SEA theme                       | SEA objective  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Biodiversity                    | Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.   |
| Climate change and flood risk   | Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area and increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.                                     |
| Community wellbeing             | Ensure growth in the neighbourhood area is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities. |
| Historic environment            | Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the Neighbourhood Area.   |
| Land, soil, and water resources | Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, protect, and enhance water quality, and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner   |
| Landscape                       | Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.  |
| Transportation and movement     | Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.   |

<sup>6</sup> These consultation bodies were selected “*by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes*” (SEA Directive, Article 6(3)).

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



## 4. Introduction (to Part 1)

### Overview

- 4.1 Whilst work on the THNP has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of all the work carried out to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives.
- 4.2 More specifically, this part of the report presents information on the consideration given to reasonable alternative approaches to addressing a particular issue that is of central importance to the Plan, namely the allocation of land for housing, or alternative sites. Land is currently being identified to meet locally identified housing needs.

### Why focus on sites?

- 4.3 The decision was taken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives in relation to the matter of allocating land for housing, given the following considerations:
- THNP objectives, particularly the housing objective to provide small-scale housing development opportunities to meet local needs.
  - Housing growth is known to be a matter of key interest amongst residents and other stakeholders; and
  - The delivery of new homes is most likely to have a significant effect compared to the other proposals within the Plan. National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.

### Structure of this part of the report

- 4.4 This part of the report is structured as follows:
- **Chapter 5** - explains the process of establishing reasonable alternatives.
  - **Chapter 6** - presents the outcomes of appraising reasonable alternatives; and
  - **Chapter 7** - explains reasons for selecting the preferred option, considering the appraisal.

## 5. Establishing reasonable alternatives

### Introduction

- 5.1 The aim here is to explain the process that led to the establishment of alternative sites and thereby present “*an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with*”.<sup>7</sup>
- 5.2 Specifically, there is a need to explain the strategic parameters that have a bearing on the establishment of options (in relation to the level and distribution of growth) and the work that has been undertaken to date to examine site options (i.e., sites potentially in contention for allocation in the THNP). These parameters are then drawn together in order to arrive at ‘reasonable alternatives’.

### Strategic parameters

- 5.3 To reiterate, the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) sets out planning policies and land allocations to guide future development in the district up to 2031. It provides the main strategic context for the THNP recognising that the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan is in early development stages, and consultation on ‘first proposals’ has not identified any development sites within the neighbourhood area.
- 5.4 The adopted plan recognises Thriplow as a ‘Group Village’ where small scale development sites of up to eight homes are sought, or up to 15 homes on brownfield sites. Heathfield is identified as an ‘Infill Village’ where schemes are limited to infill development delivering no more than two dwellings, or up to eight dwellings on brownfield sites. Thriplow is tightly bound by designated Green Belt land as an ‘inset village’ and the adopted Local Plan also designates ‘Important Countryside Frontages’. Heathfield is also bound by Green Belt land where it intersects the neighbourhood area. Land south of the A505 is not designated Green Belt.
- 5.5 A Housing Needs Survey was undertaken in 2018<sup>8</sup> to support the evidence base underpinning the THNP. This work has identified 22 households in need of affordable housing who either live in or have a local connection to Thriplow. However, the report recognises that this constitutes a large scheme, whereas a smaller scheme may be appropriate (including in the strategic context of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan).

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<sup>7</sup> Schedule 2(8) of the SEA Regulations

<sup>8</sup> Undertaken by Cambridgeshire ACRE and available at the [THNP website](#)

## Site options

- 5.6 As a starting point, the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) (2021) supporting the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan identified a total of five sites within and adjoining the neighbourhood area arising from an initial Call for Sites in 2019 and an extended Call for Sites in 2020:
- 1-3 Lodge Road, Thriplow
  - Land north of A505 – Site B1 (east of Gravel Pit Hill), Duxford
  - Land north of A505 – Site B2 (north of Heathfield), Duxford
  - Land north of A505 – Site B3 (north of Heathfield and east, south of Thriplow), Duxford
  - Land north of the A505 – Site A5 (north of Heathfield), Duxford (though this site falls within the Whittlesford Parish area).
- 5.7 The four sites at the ‘Land north of the A505’ are large-scale development sites, which in the case of Sites B2, B3, and A5, extend the designated neighbourhood area (with Site A5 falling entirely outside of the neighbourhood area).
- 5.8 A further Call for Sites was undertaken locally by the THNP Steering Group in 2020, which identified five sites, one of which has already been identified through the HELAA (1-3 Lodge Road/ Site 1: Lodge Road):
- Site 1: Lodge Road
  - Site 2: 34 Lower Street
  - Site 3: West of Heathfield Recreation Area
  - Site 4: Rectory Farm
  - Site 5: The Manor, Middle Street

## Establishing reasonable alternatives

- 5.9 Whilst there is no strategic requirement for the THNP to identify land to meet housing needs, the evidence base has identified a local need for more affordable housing which the THNP seeks to address.
- 5.10 The large sites at the ‘Land north of A505’ (Sites B1, B2, B3, and A5) constitute large-scale development within the Green Belt, in some cases beyond the neighbourhood area boundary too. ‘Site 5: The Manor, Middle Street’ also lies entirely within the Green Belt.
- 5.11 These sites are not deemed reasonable options to progress further as alternatives due to their location within the Green Belt. Notably, there are alternative sites outside of the Green Belt, which reduce the potential to argue ‘exceptional circumstances’ as required when proposing changes to Green Belt boundaries, and secondly, there is little local support for development within the Green Belt.

5.12 The remaining four sites are identified as alternative options to deliver small-scale development and contribute to meeting locally identified affordable housing needs. The four sites/ options are:

- Option 1: 1-3 Lodge Road, Thriplow (with a capacity for up to 38 homes excluding land within the Green Belt)
- Option 2: 34 Lower Street, Thriplow (with a capacity for circa. 1 home)
- Option 3: Rectory Farm, Thriplow (with a capacity for circa. 3-7 homes)
- Option 4: The Manor House, Thriplow (with a capacity for circa. 3 homes)

5.13 These options are taken forward for appraisal.

## 6. Assessing reasonable alternatives

6.1 As established in the previous chapter, the following options are taken forward for appraisal:

- Option 1: 1-3 Lodge Road, Thriplow (with a capacity for up to 38 homes excluding land within the Green Belt)
- Option 2: 34 Lower Street, Thriplow (with a capacity for circa. 1 home)
- Option 3: Rectory Farm, Thriplow (with a capacity for circa. 3-7 homes)
- Option 4: The Manor House, Thriplow (with a capacity for circa. 3 homes)

6.2 This chapter presents the summary findings for the appraisal of these options.

### Methodology

6.3 For each of the options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability themes and objectives identified through scoping (see Table 3.1) as a methodological framework. Where appropriate neutral effects, or uncertainty will also be noted.

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

6.5 Where it is not possible to predict likely significant effects based on reasonable assumptions, efforts are made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and to indicate **a rank of preference**. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. Numbers are used to highlight the option or options that are preferred from an SEA perspective with 1 performing the best. An 'equals' sign ("=") indicates options are ranked on par with each other and occurs when no significant/ meaningful differences can be drawn between options.

6.6 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted considering the criteria presented within Regulations.<sup>9</sup> So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects.

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<sup>9</sup> Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 20004.

## Summary findings

| Summary findings                |                     | Option 1: 1-3 Lodge Road, Thriplow | Option 2: 34 Lower Street, Thriplow | Option 3: Rectory Farm, Thriplow | Option 4: The Manor House, Thriplow |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Biodiversity                    | Significant effect? | No                                 | No                                  | No                               | No                                  |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 2                                   | 2                                | 2                                   |
| Climate change and flood risk   | Significant effect? | No                                 | No                                  | No                               | No                                  |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 2                                   | 2                                | 2                                   |
| Community wellbeing             | Significant effect? | Yes – positive                     | Yes – positive                      | Yes - positive                   | Yes - positive                      |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 2                                   | 2                                | 2                                   |
| Historic environment            | Significant effect? | Yes – negative                     | Yes – negative                      | Yes – negative                   | Yes - negative                      |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 2                                   | 2                                | 3                                   |
| Land, soil, and water resources | Significant effect? | No                                 | No                                  | No                               | No                                  |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 2                                   | 2                                | 2                                   |
| Landscape                       | Significant effect? | No                                 | No                                  | No                               | No                                  |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 2                                   | 2                                | 3                                   |
| Transportation and movement     | Significant effect? | No                                 | No                                  | No                               | No                                  |
|                                 | Rank                | 1                                  | 3                                   | 2                                | 2                                   |

## Biodiversity

- 6.7 All four sites are within 1km of two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) – the Whittlesford-Thriplow Hummocky Fields to the west and the Thriplow Meadows to the north / northeast. Whilst all sites overlap with SSSI Impact Risk Zones the type of development proposed does not require further consultation with Natural England.
- 6.8 In terms of habitat type, Option 1 is mostly comprised of a built-up area and garden and acid, calcareous and/ or neutral grassland. Option 2 is a mix of acid, calcareous and/ or neutral grassland and broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland. Options 3 and 4 are completely acid, calcareous and/ or neutral grassland. It is noted that the whole of the site under Option 1 and the northern half of the site under Option 2 fall within a National Habitat Network Enhancement Zone 2. Natural England indicates that such areas should target improvements to biodiversity through land management changes and/ or green infrastructure provision.
- 6.9 Option 1 has a small section of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat within its southern extent – the deciduous woodland habitat type. The other options do not have BAP Priority Habitats within the site perimeter; however, Option 2 is located adjacent to deciduous woodland to the north, east and west.

It is noted that the site under Option 2 includes broadleaved woodland, and the site under Option 4 has mature tree and vegetation coverage within its area that will be of value to local biodiversity.

- 6.10 Pre-mitigation, the potential for minor negative effects is identified for all options given the potential for habitat loss. However, no significant negative effects are deemed likely for any of the options. Option 1 is judged to rank most favourably given the previously developed nature of the land and the potential for development to contribute to improvements to the National Habitat Network.

## Climate change and flood risk

- 6.11 All options are predominantly within Flood Zone 1. Option 4 is within an area of Flood Zone 2 on its eastern and southern perimeters. Furthermore, Options 1, 2 and 3 are at very low/ no risk of surface water flooding. However, Option 4 is at low risk of surface water flooding on its eastern and southern perimeters (coinciding with Flood Zone 2). The incorporation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) (in line with national and local planning policy) in the areas with an increased risk of surface water flooding under Option 4 will likely avoid residual effects.
- 6.12 In terms of connectivity, pre-mitigation, all sites perform poorly given the lack of pavement on their closest roads to provide for safe active transportation around the village (i.e., walking and cycling). This could easily translate to an increase in emissions linked to transport options. However, it is noted that Option 1 does have a pavement link on Fowlmere Road which is adjacent to the site to the north which could help to facilitate active and sustainable transportation links to the settlement centre. The scale of development proposed under Options 2, 3, and 4 also reduce the viability of improving footpaths in development proposals.
- 6.13 No significant effects are considered likely under any of the options which propose small-scale development and avoid the floodplain. Option 1 is ranked marginally more favourably than the remaining options due to the potential safe active and sustainable transportation opportunities it presents on the adjacent Fowlmere Road.

## Community wellbeing

- 6.14 All the options are considered likely to lead to significant positive effects by providing additional land for housing, supporting the locally identified community needs.
- 6.15 None of the options intersect public rights of way (PRoW), though it is noted Options 3 and 4 are in proximity to two separate public footpaths that allow for safe travel and connection between Middle Street, Lower Street and Church Street. Additionally, none of the options would result in the loss of public green spaces or recreational areas.
- 6.16 Option 1 is within walking distance of the centre of Thriplow, and there is pavement on the adjacent Fowlmere Road to the north that will allow for safe pedestrian and cycle access to and from the site. Additionally, this option is within proximity to the allotments to the north (on the other side of Fowlmere Road) as well as a wooded area to the southeast and is directly opposite the cricket ground.

- 6.17 Option 2 is within walking distance of the centre of Thriplow; however, this would involve walking on Lodge Road or Lower Street (without pavement to facilitate safe pedestrian and cycle access) until meeting Fowlmere Road to the north. The site is adjacent to a wooded area but is a distance from other community infrastructure features.
- 6.18 Option 3 is located closest to the centre of Thriplow but is still a distance from the existing community facilities like the village hall, the shop, and public green space. Whilst there is no pavement provision on Middle Street to allow for safe active travel opportunities to the centre of the settlement, it is recognised that there is a public footpath adjacent to the site to the north that allows for active travel to Lower Street to the west.
- 6.19 Option 4 is located the furthest away from the centre of Thriplow and as such is a distance from existing community infrastructure. Whilst there is no pavement provision on Middle Street to allow for safe active travel opportunities to the centre of the settlement, it is recognised that there is a public footpath to the south the provides active transport opportunities to Church Street to the east.
- 6.20 All options are considered likely to support significant positive effects in the long-term through the contribution to local housing supply (especially should this housing be targeted at meeting locally identified tenure needs). Given the better connections to the village at Option 1 and its larger housing contribution, this Option is considered to perform marginally better than the remaining options (which are ranked to perform broadly on par with each other).

## Historic environment

- 6.21 Options 2, 3 and 4 are within the Thriplow Conservation Area and within 50m of at least one Grade II listed building. Option 1 lies adjacent to the Thriplow Conservation Area.
- 6.22 Option 1 is considered least constrained (as reflected in the ranking of options), as the site lies outside of the conservation area and the potential impacts relate to the setting of nearby assets, where there is potential to reduce impacts through appropriate design. However, it is noted that a larger development scheme could be proposed under this option when compared to the other options, which gives way to some uncertainty.
- 6.23 Of most significance, Option 3 contains the Grade II listed 'Tithe Barn at Rectory Farm' where it is assumed that any proposal would seek to develop the listed asset and Option 4 is within 50m of five listed buildings (including the Grade II\* listed The Manor House).
- 6.24 The landscape sensitivity study supporting the THNP has explored historic and cultural landscape factors for each of the site and identifies Option 1 as of medium sensitivity, and Options 2, 3, and 4 as of high sensitivity. Option 1 notably has a high visual sensitivity though, linked to the site both containing and blocking views outward from the village, from points within the Conservation Area. Option 4 is considered notably constrained by its role within the setting of the listed assets nearby and it is considered that impacts are unlikely to be overcome by mitigation.
- 6.25 As such, development across all options could impact on existing historic environment features and their settings as well as the conservation area. The



potential for significant negative effects (pre-mitigation) is identified under all options at this stage. With greater uncertainty noted for Option 1, this Option is ranked more favourably to the remaining options. Option 4 is ranked least favourably reflecting the findings of the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment which indicate impacts are unlikely to be overcome by mitigation.

## Land, soil, and water resources

- 6.26 All four options lie within a nitrate vulnerability zone (NVZ) for surface water (S390 – Ely Ouse and Cut-off channel). There is no overlap with any of the options and the policies outlined in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan. Furthermore, none of the options have a water body on site, nor are any in proximity.
- 6.27 In the absence of a formal, in-depth land assessment, the provisional agricultural land classification (ALC) places all four options within Grade 2 ‘Very Good’ agricultural land. According to the provisional ‘best and most versatile’ (BMV) classification map, the sites under Options 2, 3 and 4 are within urban / industrial land use – and Option 1 has a high likelihood of being BMV land (>60%).
- 6.28 However, the supporting Site Options Assessment identifies that Option 1 is known to contain both greenfield and previously developed land (including a farm and vehicle repair shop), Option 2 currently forms a garden, Option 3 is greenfield but not in agricultural use, and Option 4 is undeveloped curtilage land to the Manor House. Given former uses at Option 1 (vehicle repair shop) any potential land contamination should be investigated and remediated where necessary. The remediation of any contaminated land would ultimately improve soil quality in the long-term.
- 6.29 With small-scale development proposed under all options, no significant effects are deemed likely, residual effects are considered likely to be minor negative in the long-term. As a part brownfield site Option 1 is considered to rank more favourably than the remaining sites.

## Landscape

- 6.30 The Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area does not overlap with an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or National Park, nor is it in proximity to either of these designation types. Thriplow and Heathfield are both surrounded by open countryside, and development under any of the options potentially encroaches upon this countryside. As such, all options will need to include careful landscaping and high-quality design measures to reduce impacts.
- 6.31 The site under Option 1 is adjacent to the settlement of Thriplow in the west. Given its location at the village entrance, development here would need to be mindful of character. Furthermore, development here may be seen from existing dwellings on Fowlmere Road, which is adjacent to the site to the north. It is noted however, that the site is part brownfield (including a vehicle repair shop) and regeneration could improve the immediate setting to some degree. The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment supporting the plan identifies the site has an overall ‘moderate’ sensitivity rating as “*although sensitive in visual terms, the brownfield site is much less sensitive in landscape terms*”.

- 6.32 The site under Option 2 is within the Thriplow settlement boundary. Situated on Lodge Road, it would have a limited impact on the view from neighbouring houses – as the only building in proximity is to the south of the site (however, this is a listed building and development could impact the setting of this designation as previously discussed). However, as the site is in a sensitive location it is possible it could impact the character of the settlement in the immediate vicinity. The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment supporting the plan identifies the site has an overall ‘moderate’ sensitivity rating, it is highly sensitive in terms of heritage and the landscape sensitivity of the site *“lies in its contribution to the lightly settled, historic, quiet, wooded character of Lower Lane”*.
- 6.33 Option 3 involves a site within the eastern part of the Thriplow settlement. Part of the site is within the settlement boundary and part of it is outside of it. As the site under this option is located on Middle Street it is likely development of this site will impact upon views from nearby dwellings, like those across the road and to the north and south. However, the size of the site means development here is unlikely to significantly change the size and character of the existing settlement. The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment supporting the plan identifies the site has an overall ‘moderate’ sensitivity rating, it is highly sensitive in terms of heritage and the landscape sensitivity of the site lies in trees on site and retaining its mature, rural feel.
- 6.34 Option 4 includes a site that is also within the eastern part of the Thriplow settlement. Like the site under Option 3, it is located on Middle Street, and it is likely development of this site will impact on views from existing dwellings to the west and north. Though the site is seen to be outside the existing settlement boundary, it is not expected to significantly change the size or character of Thriplow. However, the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment supporting the plan identifies the site has an overall ‘high’ sensitivity rating relating to its role as part of the setting of designated heritage assets and historic landscape features that are unlikely to be overcome by mitigation.
- 6.35 Considering this information, each site has the potential to impact on the landscape and setting of Thriplow through changes to the visual interpretation of the settlement. As brownfield development, Option 1 is ranked more favourably than the remaining options, and significant effects are likely to be avoided. As small-scale development, significant effects are likely to be avoided under the remaining options, but Option 4 is ranked least favourably reflecting its higher landscape sensitivity rating.

## Transportation and movement

- 6.36 All options are considered likely to lead to increases in vehicular usage on the local road network, therefore minor negative effects can be anticipated. However, Option 1 could promote active travel journeys into the centre of Thriplow via the existing pavement on Fowlmere Road adjacent to the site to the north. Option 2 could also offer this given the connection of Lower Street to Lodge Street, which connects to Fowlmere Road.
- 6.37 All sites are a similar distance from the bus stop on Lower Street, which will allow for sustainable travel connections to neighbouring settlements. In terms of public rights of way (PRoW) to allow for safe active transportation opportunities, Option 3 has a public footpath to the north of the site that

connects Middle Street to Lower Street to the west. Additionally, Option 4 has a public footpath to the south that connects Middle Street to Church Street to the east.

- 6.38 Considering the above, Option 1 is found to perform the best given its proximity to a pavement, which allows for safe active transportation to the centre of Thriplow. Following this, Options 3 and 4 are found to perform the second most favourably given their proximity to PRowS. Option 2 is found to perform the least favourably. No significant effects are anticipated under any of the options.

## 7. Developing the preferred approach

### 7.1 The Parish Council's reasons for developing the preferred approach considering the alternatives assessment are identified below:

*“The environmental assessment described in this report demonstrates how Option 1 performs the best against the SEA objectives. In addition, Option 1, presents the best opportunity for delivering sustainable development in the parish in a way that delivers on the NP vision, in particular the plan objectives sitting under two of its three themes; “Theme 1: Protecting and enhancing the natural environment and the character of the parish and Theme 2: Living village and sustainable development”. It will do so by delivering approximately 20 homes, with a sizeable proportion as affordable homes prioritised for local people, on a suitable site. Option 1 is the only one of the available sites which has potential to address Thriplow’s need for affordable homes, as identified in the 2018 Housing Needs Survey. There is little likelihood the other options will address this need. Option 2 at 34 Lower Street would involve one dwelling. Option 4, land in the grounds of the Manor House, has been put forward for up to 3 homes. Land at Rectory Farm (assessed under Option 3) is now (as at 24 August 2022) subject to a planning consent “Part demolition of existing barns extensions alterations and conversions of three barns to dwellings and erection of four new dwellings and widening of access”. None of the homes are proposed as affordable homes.*

*The site assessment work undertaken to support the plan is itself supported by a landscape and visual sensitivity assessment. This assessed each of the sites with respect to 1) Physical and natural factors 2) Cultural and historic factors 3) Visual sensitivity – views 4) Relationship to settlement/settlement form and edge and 5) Perception aspects. The overall sensitivity result for Option 1 was ‘moderate’, which was the case for the other sites assessed, with the exception of Site Option 4 (the Manor House), which was assessed as having an overall ‘high’ sensitivity. However, the landscape and visual sensitivity indicates that there is good scope for development, if a sensitive and landscape-led scheme were to be brought forward.*

*It states:*

*“Although sensitive in visual terms, this brownfield Site is much less sensitive in landscape terms and has good scope for development. Something of the agricultural language of the Site’s forms and structures could be carried through to any future design proposal. Retain all trees and hedges to help assimilate development and provide maturity. Enclose with a strong boundary along the west side to reinforce the village edge” (quote from the Landscape and visual sensitivity assessment)*

*A landscape-led masterplan was therefore developed for this site and put out to community and stakeholder engagement in November 2021, resulting in amendments which are now reflected in the site allocation policy included in the Regulation 14 version of the plan.”*

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

## 8. Introduction (to Part 2)

8.1 The aim of this section of the Environmental Report is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the current ‘pre-submission’ (draft) version of the THNP. This section presents:

- An appraisal of the current version of the THNP under the seven SEA topic headings (Chapter 9).
- Consideration of potential cumulative effects (Chapter 9); and
- The overall conclusions at this current stage and recommendations for the next stage of plan-making (Chapter 10).

8.2 This introductory chapter outlines the draft plan policies and the methodology for the appraisal.

### Draft plan policies

8.3 The THNP puts forward 14 policies to guide development in the neighbourhood area, as identified in Table 8.1.

**Table 8.1: THNP policies**

| Policy reference | Policy name   |
|------------------|---|
| THP1             | Improving the character and quality of Heathfield   |
| THP2             | Provision of additional amenities in Heathfield   |
| THP3             | Protecting and enhancing village character in Thriplow  |
| THP4             | Important countryside frontages in Thriplow village   |
| THP5             | Parish-wide locally valued views  |
| THP6             | Supporting the rural economy  |
| THP7             | Heathfield Local Green Spaces   |
| THP8             | Promoting nature recovery by protecting existing sites and features, increasing parish biodiversity, and delivering biodiversity net gain |
| THP9             | Protecting and enhancing the parish tributary feeding the Hoffer Brook  |
| THP10            | Grainstore site allocation  |
| THP11            | Rural exception sites in Thriplow   |
| THP12            | Improving parking provision and improving road safety in Thriplow and Heathfield  |
| THP13            | Protecting and improving the rural footpath network and sustainable connections to neighbouring settlements                               |
| THP14            | Development proposals resulting in better links between the Heathfield and Thriplow communities   |

## Methodology

- 8.4 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see Table 3.1) as a methodological framework.
- 8.5 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the strategic nature of the policies under consideration and understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario) that is inevitably limited. Given uncertainties there is a need to make assumptions, e.g., in relation to plan implementation and aspects of the baseline that might be impacted. Assumptions are made cautiously and explained within the text (with the aim of striking a balance between comprehensiveness and conciseness). In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict 'significant effects', but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.
- 8.6 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e., the potential for the Neighbourhood Plan to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes, and projects. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.

## 9. Assessment of the draft plan

### Biodiversity

- 9.1 There are no internationally designated biodiversity sites within or in proximity to the Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area. However, there are three nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within the neighbourhood area; Thriplow Peat Holes on the eastern boundary, Thriplow Meadows to the north of School Lane, and Whittlesford-Thriplow Hummocky Fields adjacent to the western boundary on Fowlmere Road. Development in the neighbourhood area could increase the pressure on these designations through a greater number of people accessing them. Additionally, the Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area is subject to SSSI IRZs across its whole reach for development likely to be brought forward through the plan (e.g., residential, and rural residential). However, the site allocated under Policy THP10 would not require consultation with Natural England as it does not meet the housing thresholds (it is of a small-scale). There are BAP Priority Habitats within the neighbourhood area, in particular: coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, deciduous woodland, good quality semi-improved grassland, lowland calcareous grassland, purple moor grass and rush pastures, and traditional orchard. These habitats are located mostly within proximity to Thriplow, with some located on the eastern neighbourhood area boundary. As such, there are no locally important habitats or environments overlapping with the site allocation under Policy THP10, though it is noted there is boundary vegetation on the northern site boundary.
- 9.2 The site allocation under Policy THP10 is located approximately 330m east of the Whittlesford-Thriplow Hummocky Fields SSSI and approximately 450m southwest of the Thriplow Meadows SSSI. As such, the site is within an area of Network Enhancement Zone 2 and is suitable for habitat creation or the delivery of suitable green infrastructure. This is reflected in Policy THP10 which indicates existing boundary vegetation will be retained and a landscaped buffer and boundary hedge will be incorporated in the design. These features will boost biodiversity connectivity and act as new habitat areas, especially given native tree and hedge species will be used in their creation. Additionally, the policy indicates proposals should undertake an ecological study to establish whether there would be any negative impacts on flora and fauna on the site, and whether they could be mitigated, whilst also concluding whether the scheme will deliver a net gain in biodiversity. Policy THP10 also indicates that significant impacts on hedgerows or any bat flight lines must be avoided – this will maintain the value of the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC by protecting its bat population.
- 9.3 Furthermore, the wider THNP policies also work to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the neighbourhood area. Policy THP1 indicates all development schemes should retain existing landscape features that have ecological value and incorporate new landscape features, like trees and hedgerows, to increase the ecological value. This links to Policies THP7 and THP8 which work to protect local green spaces and protect and enhance sites and features of biodiversity value, as these policies protect undeveloped land and retain components of the biodiversity and green infrastructure network in the neighbourhood area. Additionally, Policies THP6 and THP14 indicate any



development linked to the rural economy or integrating the Heathfield and Thriplow communities will need to avoid negative impacts on hedgerows and disruption to bat flight lines. This will maintain the value of the Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC by protecting its bat population.

- 9.4 In conclusion, the site allocation Policy THP10 includes stipulations that will help to protect and enhance the biodiversity value of the site. This includes planting native tree and hedge species and undertaking ecological studies. Additionally, the wider plan policies work to protect the biodiversity and geodiversity by protecting green spaces and protecting and enhancing sites and features of value. As such, **minor long-term positive effects** are concluded most likely in the long-term.

## Climate change and flood risk

- 9.5 South Cambridgeshire District Council declared a climate emergency in November 2019<sup>10</sup>; as such, the THNP should encourage design features that help the area to mitigate and adapt to climate change and increase the resilience of the neighbourhood area and its community. The transport sector is the biggest contributor to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in South Cambridgeshire according to emissions data, though up to 2009 it was the industry and commercial sector. Opportunities to explore mitigation and adaptation techniques for transport, including electric vehicle charging provision and the enhancement of public transport, would be beneficial for cutting carbon emissions in the neighbourhood area. In terms of flood risk, there are areas of the neighbourhood area within Flood Zone 3 located on the eastern and western neighbourhood area boundaries and running along and adjacent to Brook Road. As such, fluvial flood risk is not a major concern for the whole area. Surface water flood risk is more prevalent throughout the Thriplow and Heathfield settlements, but areas with the higher risk are around waterbodies and roads. These areas could benefit from drainage and surface water flood mitigation.
- 9.6 The proposed site allocation under Policy THP10 is located on the edge of the Thriplow settlement. Given its proximity to Thriplow and its connection to Fowlmere Road, which provides pavement access, it is likely development at this location would allow for pedestrian and cycling opportunities. Furthermore, the site allocation policy indicates walking and cycling routes will be incorporated on site to allow for links to Lodge Road and Fowlmere Road, and the footways on these roads will be provided/ improved to allow for safe walking routes. By having the opportunity to engage in active transport options, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions resulting from travel could decrease. Additionally, the policy indicates existing boundary vegetation will be retained and new boundary vegetation and a landscape buffer put in place. This will help to reduce emissions as plants capture and convert CO<sub>2</sub> to oxygen. Furthermore, the design of the proposal needs to use sustainable building materials and facilitate low carbon living, through reducing the need for energy, incorporating low carbon heating solutions, and making use of renewable energy technology as appropriate. Again, this will help reduce emissions linked to the development

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<sup>10</sup> [SCDC \(2022\) 'Climate emergency toolkit'](#)

by included schemes to reduce energy consumption and focus on greener energy generation techniques.

- 9.7 Some of the wider THNP policies include guidance and stipulations that will work to mitigate climate change effects. Policy THP8 works to protect sites and features of existing biodiversity value, and to increase biodiversity in the neighbourhood area. By protecting existing sites and features, and increasing and enhancing biodiversity, the neighbourhood plan will help to mitigate the effects of climate change by retaining and adding features that convert CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to oxygen, such as trees and hedgerows. Policy THP9 protects and enhances the watercourse in the neighbourhood area and indicates all development proposals will need to incorporate sustainable drainage measures to manage surface water flood risk.
- 9.8 In conclusion, as the THNP is seeking to connect development to the Thriplow settlement and develop away from areas at greater risk of flooding, the proposed sites are unlikely to have significant adverse effects with respect to climate change. Additionally, the site allocation Policy THP10 includes specific detail on energy consumption and generation, as well as retaining and enhancing biodiversity, which will all contribute to reducing emissions linked to development at this location. The wider plan policies will also work to reduce the impact of flooding and contribution to climate change mitigation. As such, broadly **neutral effects** are anticipated for climate change and flood risk (i.e., no significant deviations from the baseline).

## Community wellbeing

- 9.9 The Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area has limited services which include a primary school, a church, a pub, a village shop, and small businesses. As such, the current provisions do not always retain the population, who largely travel further afield to access a wider range of goods and services, including employment opportunities. It is recognised the neighbourhood area is one of the most deprived areas in the UK with regards to barriers to housing and services, which implies there is a physical or financial block on accessing housing, as well as reaffirming the local services are not working to support the population effectively. It will be important for development to work towards enhancing the provisions that support local communities. Furthermore, it will be important for any new housing development to be adaptable to accommodate for the increasing need for flexible working practices following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 9.10 The THNP allocates one site for housing development under Policy THP10. This site was chosen following a parish-wide call for sites in 2020 and was concluded to present the best opportunity for sustainable development of the five sites assessed. The site allocation policy indicates the allocation is for approximately 20 new dwellings, which will be a mix of sizes to accommodate for downsizing adults, younger adults, and young families. Additionally, Policy THP10 indicates at least 40% of the new dwellings will be provided as affordable housing. This will help to meet the needs of the neighbourhood area, and people with strong local connections to the neighbourhood area will be given priority for these houses. This in turn will aid the Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area retain its population and work to reduce barriers to housing and services.

- 9.11 The wider THNP policies also work to enhance community wellbeing. Policy THP2 is focused on bringing forward and supporting suitable development proposals linked to new community facilities in Heathfield. This includes a shop or small community meeting space. This will bring forward benefits to the local community by providing a space for community socialisation and allowing for day-to-day and basic purchases to be made within the neighbourhood area as opposed to travelling for them, making life easier for the local population.
- 9.12 Housing quality provisions are made in the site allocation Policy THP10, indicating proposals must be design-led, should acknowledge the sensitivities and opportunities for improvement at the site location and should use high quality and sustainable building materials. This will ensure the development is of high quality and is well integrated with existing development. Like Policy THP10, Policy THP11 is concerned with housing. It indicates that small scale affordable housing schemes on rural exception sites on the edge of Thriplow will be supported where they will not exceed the identified local housing need, include dwelling types needed in the neighbourhood area, and allow for easy access to the Thriplow village centre. Additionally, Policy THP1 indicates there will be high quality architectural design and landscaping, including for residential streets; again, demonstrating high quality development and associated infrastructure is a focus of the THNP, which could help to enhance community wellbeing.
- 9.13 Maintaining and improving features that contribute to the public realm is a focus of multiple policies. Policy THP7 protects designated green spaces and indicates development on the named sites will not be permitted unless it will enhance the function of the space without comprising its primary function as a local green space. This means areas where the community can come together will be protected, allowing for continued community socialisation. The protection and enhancement of features is echoed in Policy THP8, which protects features that contribute to the biodiversity of the area. By protecting and enhancing these sites and features the THNP ensures the visual amenity of the settlements and wider neighbourhood area are safeguarded and improved, continuing to make the neighbourhood area an attractive place to live. Policies THP12 and THP13 work to protect existing public rights of way and to make roads safer. This will help to encourage the local community to participate in active transportation in the neighbourhood area, which will contribute to their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- 9.14 Economic vitality is also considered. Policy THP6 indicates development proposals that will support the rural economy of the neighbourhood area will be permitted so long as they fully consider the location of the proposed development and do not impact on the surrounding landscape features or character. The commitment to developing the local economy could have benefits for the local community through increased job opportunities whilst minimising negative impacts on the special character and qualities of the neighbourhood area, which protects the visual amenity and quality, keeping it an attractive place to live.
- 9.15 In conclusion, the site allocation policy will enhance community wellbeing in the Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area by providing additional dwellings for the local population, paying attention to the needs of the community by ensuring there is affordable housing and a range of housing sizes. The wider

THNP policies also work to improve community wellbeing by maintaining and enhancing features that contribute to community cohesion and the public realm, whilst maintaining the character of the neighbourhood area and boosting connectivity. As such, **significant long-term positive effects** are anticipated in relation to community wellbeing.

## Historic environment

- 9.16 Within the Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area there are a variety of historic environment features. This includes a designated conservation area, 36 listed buildings (five Grade II\* and 31 Grade II), and one historic environment asset on the Heritage at Risk Register (Roman settlement S of Chronicle Hills).<sup>11</sup> It is important to ensure development avoids, or minimises, impacts upon the historic environment, and pursues opportunities to enhance it and any specific historic environment assets, especially for the features that contribute to the Thriplow Conservation Area. Additionally, whilst there are no scheduled monuments within the Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area, there are five within 1km of the neighbourhood area boundaries; three of which are on or within 50m of a boundary. Development should also be considerate of these historic environment assets.
- 9.17 The proposed site under Policy THP10 is located adjacent to the Thriplow Conservation Area to the west and is within 100m of three Grade II listed buildings; The Dower House, 30 Lower Street, and The Lodge. To mitigate the possible visual impact development at this location could have on the Thriplow Conservation Area and the nearby listed buildings, the policy indicates boundary vegetation will be retained, and a new hedge and landscape buffers will be incorporated along the Lodge Road boundary to conserve and enhance the historic environment. This will help to visually screen the development from the Thriplow Conservation Area and the nearby listed buildings, which will help to mitigate impacts on the setting of these historic environment features.
- 9.18 Whilst there is no specific policy within the Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Plan that focuses on maintaining and enhancing the historic environment of the area, wider plan policies that focus on improving the public realm and green infrastructure will also help to improve historic environment due to positive changes in the setting and character of the area. In this sense, Policies THP1, THP3, THP7 and THP8 are likely to bring forward indirect positive effects for the historic environment of the Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area by protecting and enhancing settlement characters, protecting green spaces and sites and features of biodiversity importance, and increasing biodiversity. This will maintain and enhance the settings of historic environment features, which will improve their interpretation.
- 9.19 In conclusion, the site allocation Policy THP10 includes stipulations that will help to screen development from the Thriplow Conservation Area and three listed buildings within proximity to the site. Additionally, whilst the wider THNP policies do not make specific provisions for the historic environment, several policies work to maintain and enhance the features contributing the settlement characters and environment, which will help maintain and enhance the setting of historic environment features. As such, **broadly neutral residual effects**

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<sup>11</sup> [Historic England \(2022\) 'Roman settlement S of Chronicle Hills \(HE List Entry Number: 1006794\)'](#)

are anticipated in relation to the historic environment whilst recognising an element of uncertainty remains in the absence of detailed design proposals and mitigation strategies.

## Land, soil, and water resources

- 9.20 Provisional mapping indicates the whole neighbourhood area is within Grade 2 'Very Good' agricultural land, with the undeveloped land having a high likelihood (>60%) of being 'Best and Most Versatile' (BMV) land. The neighbourhood area overlaps with two waterbody catchment areas – as of 2019 both the Rhee (DS Wendy) and Hoffer Brook had a moderate ecological status and a failed chemical status. Furthermore, the whole area interests with a Nitrate Vulnerability Zone and southern half of the neighbourhood area intersects with a Source Protection Zone. As such, development will need to be considerate of the natural resources in the neighbourhood area and how it could impact land, soil, and water resources, and quality.
- 9.21 The site allocation Policy THP10 concerns a partial brownfield site located on the Thriplow settlement edge where the loss of productive agricultural land is minimised, and the regeneration of previously developed land will maximise contributions to efficient land use. Furthermore, the proposed site design includes a flood water attenuation basin, public open space, and green buffers on the site boundaries. These features will help support the capacity of the site to regulate soil and water quality. However, previous uses onsite (e.g., vehicle repair shop) may warrant a need to investigate potential ground contamination, and it is recommended that this is reflected in the site allocation policy.
- 9.22 Policy THP9 outlines the need for development proposals to demonstrate they will not cause harm to the water network, especially through run off into the Hoffer Brook. This will ensure the quality of the water networks in the neighbourhood area does not decrease from existing levels. The wider plan policies, especially Policies THP7 and THP8, also work to support the capacity of the landscape and townscape of the Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area, by safeguarding green spaces and protecting biodiversity sites and features which contribute to the enhancement of the green network and maintain and enhance soil quality.
- 9.23 In conclusion, the site allocation under Policy THP10 is a brownfield site and the design includes for a flood water attenuation basin and planting. In this way, the site allocation policy mitigates any adverse effects on land, soil, and water resources by avoiding good quality, undeveloped agricultural land and ensuring the site reduces the risk of contamination. The wider plan policies work to reduce the risk of water contamination through measures to reduce run off into waterbodies, and involve enhancing the green network, which will help to safeguard and enhance land and soil resources. As such, **minor long-term positive effects** are anticipated in relation to land, soil, and water resources. However, recognising previous uses at the proposed allocation site, appropriate ground contamination investigation may be required in development (alongside any necessary remediation), and it is recommended that this need is captured within the site allocation policy.

## Landscape

- 9.24 The Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area overlaps with one National Character Area (NCA 87: East Anglian Chalk), and according to the Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment it sits within landscape character type 8B 'Morden to Duxford Lowland Chalklands'.<sup>12</sup> It will be important for development to consider the key characteristics of the national and local landscape characters, which includes low hedges, sparse settlement pattern, long distance views, distinctive chalk rivers, the rolling downland with sparse tree cover and distinctive beech belts, and archaeological features.
- 9.25 In terms of key landscape constraints, the site allocation under Policy THP10 sits within character type TP6 according to the Thriplow and Heathfield Parish Character Assessment. This character area features few dwellings, includes the village cricket pitch and the Thriplow Farm large grain storage yard as well as grand houses like Thriplow Place. The settlement pattern is sparse, and the large structures of the grain storage site dominates the skyline. Undeveloped land makes up most of the character area, and the tree cover is relatively high which lends to the feeling of being enclosed. The grain store largely makes up the site allocated under Policy THP10, and as such development here could change the views and interpretation of this character area. The policy makes provision for the landscape, indicating a generous landscaping scheme will be adopted to minimise the visual impact for neighbouring structures through retaining existing boundary vegetation and introducing a landscape buffer and additional boundary planting using native species. It also indicates the site development proposal must be the result of a design-led process that acknowledges sensitivities and opportunities for this area given its village gateway location. This seeks to ensure landscape character and quality is maintained as much as possible, and impacts on other parts of this landscape are avoided where possible.
- 9.26 The wider THNP policies also work to maintain and enhance the landscape of the neighbourhood area. Policy THP1 indicates all development schemes will need to retain existing landscape features that have amenity value and make the most of opportunities to incorporate new landscape features. This will include the protected countryside frontages included in Policy THP4, which work to keep distinct areas separate from each other and reduce the visual impact of the built-up areas. This will also include locally valued views, which are protected under Policy THP5. Policy THP6 ensures rural economy development maintains or enhances local character, and Policies THP7 and THP8 work to protect and enhance green spaces and sites and features of biodiversity value. By safeguarding these features, the integrity of the landscape is maintained and improved, as these features also act as unofficial breaks in the built-up areas and contribute to the character of the neighbourhood area. Furthermore, Policy THP11 ensures development would not cause harm to the character of the Thriplow settlement or the setting of the landscape and countryside. These policies demonstrate the THNP is mindful of the landscape context of the neighbourhood area and is actively working to safeguard and enhance the features that contribute to its interpretation and value.

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<sup>12</sup> [Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment \(Parts A and B\)](#)

9.27 In conclusion, the site allocation policy works to ensure the landscape context of the part brownfield site and the landscape character area is maintained through development and incorporates planting schemes to reduce the visual impact of development on this site for neighbouring buildings. Planting schemes will also contribute to the wider landscape context by enhancing views and promoting landscape connectivity. The wider plan policies also work to ensure development is considerate of the landscape by seeking schemes that safeguard and enhance important features and spaces, and schemes that will not harm the character of the settlements and neighbourhood area. As such, **minor long-term positive effects** are anticipated.

## Transportation and movement

9.28 The Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area is well connected to transport infrastructure. Whilst there is no train station within the neighbourhood area, it is within proximity to Foxton train station and Whittlesford Parkway train station which provide access to Cambridge and London. Whilst the A505 passes through the southern part of the neighbourhood area, which connects to the M11 to the east and offers alternative connections to Cambridge and London, there is low public transport usage, despite several bus services operating in the Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area. There are also multiple public rights of way within and intersecting with the neighbourhood area that allow for active transportation methods. These should be safeguarded and enhanced where possible, especially as travel patterns continue to change following the COVID-19 pandemic.

9.29 The site allocation under Policy THP10 is located adjacent to Fowlmere Road and Lodge Road, which allows for vehicular access to Fowlmere to the west outside of the neighbourhood area, and the local strategic road network which allows access to Newton to the north outside of the neighbourhood area and the aforementioned A505. The nearest bus stop is located approximately 400m northeast along Fowlmere Road, which does have pavement to allow for pedestrian access. The policy indicates that vehicle access to the site would come from Fowlmere road preferably and could contribute to traffic calming measures along this road. It also stipulates that safe walking and cycling routes on the site would provide pedestrian and cycle links to Lodge Road and Fowlmere Road, and pedestrian footways along Lodge Road and Fowlmere road would be provided and improved, together with a pedestrian crossing to allow for safe access. This will boost connectivity within the Thriplow and Heathfield neighbourhood area and for the site.

9.30 The wider plan policies also make provisions for transport. Policies THP1 and THP12 outline the need for a design-led approach for addressing parking needs in the area generated by development. This includes providing parking in suitable and convenient locations, which will ensure roads remain accessible. Policy THP6 indicates development that is linked to the rural economy will need to ensure it does not have a negative impact on the road network within the neighbourhood area, for example, from congestion due to an increase of vehicles on the road. Protecting and improving the footpath network and sustainable connections is the focus of Policy THP13. All development proposals will need to protect these routeways and improve them where the opportunity arises, through works or a financial contribution. Transport will also be integral for allowing the communities of Thriplow and Heathfield to come

together by improving access between the two settlements and providing opportunities for integration under Policy THP14.

- 9.31 In conclusion, the site allocation Policy THP10 includes stipulations for transport, including how access to the site will be provided and how connectivity will be integrated into the site design. This is a benefit for the community by allowing easier and safer access in and around the neighbourhood area. The wider plan policies also ensure negative impacts on the road network are not experienced through the proposed level of development, that safe access is maintained through development, alongside parking provisions, and that public rights of way are maintained and improved to boost connectivity within the neighbourhood area. This is especially important given the plan seeks to enhance the connection and integration of the Thriplow and Heathfield settlements. Considering these points, **minor long-term positive effects** are anticipated in relation to transportation and movement.

## Cumulative effects

- 9.32 No significant cumulative effects are anticipated at this stage. The additional housing supply will contribute to the district's housing supply over the plan period, including affordable housing, which is of benefit to the district. Impacts in relation to wider landscape geographies and water catchment areas are expected to be marginal or avoided in the long-term.



## 10. Conclusions and recommendations

- 10.1 Significant long-term positive effects are considered likely in relation to community wellbeing, due to the plan bringing forward additional dwellings and improvements and enhancements to existing community and public realm features.
- 10.2 Minor long-term positive effects are considered likely in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, land, soil and water resources, and landscape through design stipulations under the site allocation policy that ensure important features within the site and in proximity are fully considered in the site design and incorporated and enhanced through development. Biodiversity and geodiversity, the historic environment and land, soil and water resources are also considered through wider plan policies that work to protect and enhance sites and features of value, which improves the setting and quality of the neighbourhood area and designated features. Minor long-term positive effects are also considered likely for transportation and movement through allocating a site close to sustainable and active transportation provision and boosting connectivity, safeguarding rights of way, and providing additional parking.
- 10.3 Neutral effects (i.e., no significant deviations from the baseline) are considered likely in relation to climate change and flood risk, and the historic environment. In relation to climate change, whilst development could result in increased emissions, the site allocation policy and wider plan policies work to reduce per capita emissions, include renewable energy infrastructure, and retain and enhance biodiversity. In relation to the historic environment the proposed policy mitigation should ensure residual effects are broadly neutral, however, it is recognised that there remains an element of uncertainty in the absence of detailed design proposals and mitigation strategies.
- 10.4 One recommendation is made for the THNP as follows:
- Recognising previous uses at the proposed allocation site, appropriate ground contamination investigation may be required in development (alongside any necessary remediation), and it is recommended that this need is captured within the site allocation policy.

## **Part 3: What are the next steps?**

# 11. Next steps

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

## Plan finalisation

11.2 Following consultation, responses received will be considered and the THNP and SEA Environmental Report will be finalised for submission.

11.3 Following submission, the plan and supporting evidence will be published for further consultation, and then subjected to Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.

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

## Monitoring

11.5 The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

11.6 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by South Cambs District Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). No significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Plan that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken by the Council.

# Appendices

# Appendix A Regulatory requirements

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

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

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

**Table AA.2 Questions answered by the Environmental Report, in-line with an interpretation of regulatory requirements**

| Environmental Report question                         | In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include... <sup>13</sup>   |
|---|--|
| What is the plan seeking to achieve?                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan.</li> </ul>  |
| What is the sustainability 'context'?                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.</li> <li>The relevant environmental protection objectives established at international or national level.</li> <li>Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.</li> </ul>   |
| What's the scope of the SEA?                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan.</li> <li>The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.</li> <li>Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.</li> </ul> |
| What is the sustainability 'baseline'?                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan.</li> <li>The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.</li> <li>Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.</li> </ul> |
| What are the key issues and objectives?               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key problems/issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment.</li> </ul>   |
| What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with.</li> <li>The likely significant effects associated with alternatives.</li> <li>Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives appraisal/a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the current version of the plan.</li> </ul>                                   |
| What are the assessment findings at this stage?       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The likely significant effects associated with the Regulation 14 version of the plan.</li> <li>The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the Regulation 14 version of the plan.</li> </ul>  |
| What happens next?                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The next steps for the plan making /SEA process.</li> </ul>   |

<sup>13</sup> NB this column does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation.

**Table AA.3 ‘Checklist’ of how (throughout the SEA process) and where (within this report) regulatory requirements have been, are, and will be met.**

| Regulatory requirement  | Discussion of how requirement is met  |
|---|---|
| <b>Schedule 2 of the regulations lists the information to be provided within the SA Report</b>  |   |
| 1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;   | Chapter 2 (‘What is the plan seeking to achieve’) presents this information.  |
| 2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;   | These matters have been considered in detail through scoping work, which has involved dedicated consultation on a Scoping Report. The ‘SEA framework’ – the outcome of scoping – is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA?’). More detailed messages, established through a context and baseline review are also presented in Appendix B of this Environmental Report.                                    |
| 3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;  |   |
| 4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.;   |   |
| 5. The environmental protection, objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been considered during its preparation;   | The SEA framework is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA’). Also, Appendix B presents key messages from the context review.<br>With regards to explaining “how...considerations have been taken into account”, Chapter 7 explains the Steering Group’s ‘reasons for supporting the preferred approach’, i.e., explains how/ why the preferred approach is justified in light of alternatives appraisal. |
| 6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects); | Chapter 6 presents alternatives appraisal findings (in relation to housing growth, which is a ‘stand-out’ plan policy area).<br>Chapters 9 presents an appraisal of the plan.<br>With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 8 explains the role of the SEA framework/scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions, e.g., timescale.                                      |
| 7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;  | The assessment highlights certain tensions between competing objectives, which might potentially be actioned by the Examiner, when finalising the plan. Also, specific recommendations are made in Chapter 10.  |
| 8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;   | Chapters 4 and 5 deal with ‘Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with’, in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues and options.<br>Also, Chapter 7 explains the Parish Council’s ‘reasons for selecting the preferred option’ (in-light of alternatives assessment).  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10; | Chapter 11 presents measures envisaged concerning monitoring. |
|--|---|

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 10.A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings | The NTS is provided at the beginning of this Environmental Report. |
|---|--|

**The SA Report must be published alongside the Draft Plan, in accordance with the following regulations**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2) | At the current time, this Environmental Report is published alongside the Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Plan, with a view to informing Regulation 14 consultation. |
|---|--|

**The SA must be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| The environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 shall be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure. | Assessment findings presented within this Environmental Report, and consultation responses received, have been fed back to the Steering Group and have informed/ will continue to inform plan finalisation. |
|---|---|



# Appendix B Scoping information

Linked to Chapter 3 of the Environmental Report, this appendix provides further scoping information.

## Consultation responses

Statutory authorities were consulted in October 2022. Responses were received from both Natural England and Historic England and are documented below. No response was received from the Environment Agency.

| Scoping response  | Consideration through the SEA   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Historic England</b><br/><b>Edward James, Historic Places Advisor</b></p> <p>Thank you for your email requesting a scoping opinion for the Thriplow Neighbourhood Plan SEA.</p> <p>We would refer you to the advice in <i>Historic England Advice Note 8: Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment</i>, which can be found here: <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/">https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/</a></p> <p>This advice sets out the historic environment factors which need to be considered during the Strategic Environmental Assessment or Sustainability Appraisal process, and our recommendations for information you should include.</p> | <p>Many thanks, the Historic England Advice Note referred to is included within the Scoping considerations.</p> |
| <p>We would also refer you to <i>Historic England Advice Note 3: Site Allocations and Local Plans</i>. This advice note sets out what we consider to be a robust process for assessing the potential impact of site allocations on any relevant heritage assets. In particular we would highlight the Site Selection Methodology set out on Page 5. This is similar to the methodology used to assess potential impacts on the setting of heritage assets (Good Practice Advice 3) but is focused specifically on the site allocation process and is therefore a more appropriate methodology to employ in this context.</p>  | <p>Many thanks, the Historic England Advice Note referred to is included within the Scoping considerations.</p> |
| <p>We would expect a proportionate assessment based on this methodology to be undertaken for any site allocation where there was a potential impact, either positive or negative, on a heritage asset, and the SEA consequently to advise on how any harm should be minimised or mitigated. Advice Note 3 can be found here: <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans/">https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans/</a></p>  | <p>Noted, with thanks.</p>  |
| <p>We note that the Scoping Report identifies that there is no conservation area appraisal for Thriplow Conservation Area. This is a clear gap in the evidence base, and an appraisal or historic area assessment should be undertaken in order to inform the development of the neighbourhood plan and the SEA process. This will help ensure that development that comes forward as a result of the neighbourhood plan successfully achieves the SEA's objectives.</p>  | <p>Noted, with thanks. Option for plan-makers.</p>  |

## Scoping response

## Consideration through the SEA

Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of the relevant local planning 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), which should be consulted as part of the SEA process. In addition, they will be able to advise how any site 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.

Noted with thanks, opinions are being sought through Regulation 14 consultation.

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

Noted, with thanks.

### **Natural England, Nima Julius Staniewick, Sustainable Development Lead Adviser**

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report incorporating Habitats Regulations Assessment (South Cambridgeshire District Council, January 2006) considers the implications of the Thriplow & Heathfield Neighbourhood Plan (THNP) for relevant aspects of natural environment including statutorily protected sites, wider biodiversity, local landscape and soils, including protection of the important peat resource. Natural England generally supports the no significant effects findings of the report in relation to these matters.

Noted. Opinions are being sought in relation to the THNP SEA Scoping Report (2022), which does not incorporate Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).

### Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

THNP lies within 10km of Eversden and Wimpole Woods SAC, a site which comprises a mixture of ancient coppice woodland (Eversden Wood) and high forest woods, likely to be of more recent origin (Wimpole Woods). A colony of barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus* is associated with the trees in Wimpole Woods. These trees are used as a summer maternity roost where the female bats gather to give birth and rear their young. Most of the roost sites are within tree crevices. The bats also use the site as a foraging area. Some of the woodland is also used as a flight path when bats forage outside the site therefore it is of the utmost importance consideration is given to mitigating disturbance and recreational pressure to the SAC when proposing access and public spaces within THNP.

Noted, with thanks, this information has informed the SEA.

### Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the land notified as an SSSI under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), as amended. Sites notified under the 1949 Act only are not included in the Data set. SSSI are the finest sites for wildlife and natural features in England, supporting many characteristic, rare and endangered species, habitats and natural features. Thriplow Peat Holes SSSI, Whittlesford-Thriplow Hummocky Fields SSSI and Thriplow Meadows SSSI all lie within the boundary of THNP and therefore must be considered extremely important at this stage of the SEA Scoping and moving forward.

Noted with thanks, the relevant SSSIs have been identified through scoping.

## Scoping response

## Consideration through the SEA

Creation of high quality open space on people's doorsteps, incorporating biodiversity-rich habitats and circular dog-walking routes, connected to off-site areas where possible, can provide a suitable alternative to visiting more sensitive sites for daily recreational activities. Appropriately scaled and designed this can reduce additional pressure, and avoid adverse impact, to sensitive designated sites.

Noted with thanks, potential mitigation will be considered through the SEA.

The above matter should be addressed through the revised SEA report and the draft THNP to confirm the no significant environmental effect conclusion of the report.

The SEA Environmental Report has now been produced to identify the potential for significant effects and is being consulted upon alongside the Plan. Please note, no conclusion in relation to significant effects is made through the Scoping Report which seeks to identify baseline conditions and relevant key issues that should be a focus of the subsequent assessment.

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

Noted, with thanks.

## Key issues

The following key issues for each of the SEA themes that form the SEA framework were identified through scoping.

### Biodiversity

Existing ecological connections are predominantly found in the north of the Thriplow settlement area. There will be a need to consider avoidance and mitigation for development in this part of the neighbourhood area, and there is also the potential to focus biodiversity gains in this area too as a recognised enhancement zone.

### Climate change and flood risk

CO<sub>2</sub> emissions associated with transport remain high in South Cambridgeshire, highlighting the importance of the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure, which the THNP can seek to address locally, particularly by strengthening active travel routes and opportunities to increase self-containment.

As with much of the country, extreme heat events are likely to occur more frequently in the future. In addition to this, drought is likely to become an increasing issue in summer, whilst surface water/ groundwater flooding is likely to increase during winter months. In this respect, climate change resilience should form an integral part of the THNP policy framework.

There is a need to consider flood risk, avoiding vulnerable development in areas of high fluvial flood risk, and managing, and where possible, improving drainage rates.

## Community wellbeing

The Cambridge Green Belt, covering much of the neighbourhood area, represents a significant constraint to development in Thriplow.

Thriplow is deprived in terms of the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services. The THNP represents an opportunity to provide both affordable housing and improved local services.

## Historic environment

The dense concentration of listed buildings in Thriplow village presents a constraint to future development within the neighbourhood area. The THNP can help overcome this by ensuring that any development that comes forward during the plan period is appropriately located and sensitive to the historic setting of the village in terms of design and layout.

In the absence of a Conservation Area Appraisal, the THNP provides good opportunity to provide policy that protects the key characteristics of this area, and identifies the significance associated with different settings.

## Land, soil, and water resources

Development in Thriplow will lead to the loss of productive agricultural land, although this is largely unavoidable given the rural nature of the parish.

Development will need to be sensitive to both the NVZ and SPZ that intersect with the neighbourhood area. However, given the scale of these designations, development in Thriplow is unlikely to significant impact these zones.

It will be important that future development within the neighbourhood area does not lead to further deterioration of the two waterbodies in Thriplow.

## Landscape

It will be important that the THNP seeks to protect the local landscape in future development, including its coherence and characteristics, through an appropriate spatial strategy and suitable design and layout.

## Transportation and movement

Public transport is poor in the neighbourhood area, resulting on a reliance on private vehicles, with negative knock-on impacts on climate change and air quality. The THNP provides an opportunity to encourage the use of its existing bus networking, as well as link Thriplow with nearby public transport hubs through walking and cycling infrastructure.

