



# Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Statement

## Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan

July 2024

# Contents

1. Introduction .....	2
2. Protected sites covered by this screening report.....	4
3. Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan .....	4
4. Other Plans and Projects .....	5
5. Assessment of likely significant effects of the Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan on Habitat sites.....	6
6. Summary and conclusions.....	12
Appendix 1: Sources of background information .....	13
Appendix 2: Locations of Habitat sites.....	14
Ramsar Sites.....	14
Special Areas of Conservation .....	15
Special Protection Areas.....	16
Appendix 3: Relevant Habitat sites .....	17
Appendix 4: Natural England Consultation Response .....	22

# 1. Introduction

1.1 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended) provide protection for sites that are of exceptional importance in respect of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species. The network consists of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Both types can also be referred to as European Sites. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also states that Ramsar sites should be afforded the same level of protection and refers to SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites as ‘Habitat Sites’.

1.2 The requirement to undertake Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) of development plans is set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended). It is also a requirement of Regulation 32 schedule 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended). In order to proceed to referendum a Neighbourhood Plan must meet a series of ‘basic conditions’, which include that it does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.

1.3 Regulation 105 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended through EU Exit legislation) states:

‘Where a land use plan:

(a) Is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and

(b) Is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site,

The plan-making authority for that plan must, before the plan is given effect, make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that site’s conservation objectives.’

1.4 The HRA is therefore undertaken in stages and should conclude whether or not a proposal or policy in the Plan would adversely affect the integrity of any sites.

Stage 1: Determining whether a plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site. This needs to take account of the likely impacts in combination with other relevant plans and projects. This assessment should be made using the precautionary principle. The screening assessment must reflect the outcomes of the 2018 judgement of the Court of Justice of the European Union<sup>1</sup>, which has ruled that where

---

<sup>1</sup> C-323/17 – People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta

mitigation is necessary this must be identified through an Appropriate Assessment.

Stage 2: Carrying out Appropriate Assessment and ascertaining the effect on site integrity. The effects of the plan on the conservation objectives of sites should be assessed, to ascertain whether the plan has an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site.

Stage 3: Identifying mitigation measures and alternative solutions. The aim of this stage is to find ways of avoiding or significantly reducing adverse impacts, so that site integrity is no longer at risk. If there are still likely to be negative impacts, the option should be dropped, unless exceptionally it can be justified by imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

- 1.5 The Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan is being produced by Westerfield Parish Council. This report considers whether there are likely to be significant effects on protected Habitat Sites and where a full Appropriate Assessment may be required.
- 1.6 The Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan will need to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. East Suffolk Council is covered by two Local Plans, the East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan adopted September 2020 and the Waveney Local Plan adopted March 2019. The relevant Local Plan for Westerfield is the East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan.
- 1.7 The Suffolk Coastal Local Plan was subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment as part of its production. Where screening identified a likely significant effect, an Appropriate Assessment was undertaken and mitigation measures identified were incorporated within the Local Plan, resulting in a conclusion that the plan will not lead to any adverse effects on Habitat sites within and in the vicinity of the (then) Suffolk Coastal District. The Local Plan Appropriate Assessment identified recreational disturbance particularly from dog walkers as the main significant effect. The Council has therefore produced a Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) and requires payment towards mitigation from residential developments within 13km of the protected Habitat Sites.
- 1.8 This screening report contains the results of Stage 1 (above) in relation to the Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan. Stages 2 and 3 are only required if the screening stage concludes that there is likely to be a significant impact on a Habitat site. The

initial screening has been undertaken by East Suffolk Council and was subject to consultation with Natural England as a statutory consultee.

## 2. Protected sites covered by this screening report

- 2.1 Sites included in this assessment are listed in Table 1. This includes all sites that are within 20km of the Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan area (for consistency with the distances applied within the HRA of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and adopting the precautionary approach). The locations of the sites are shown on maps in Appendix 2 and the Qualifying Features and Conservation Objectives of the sites are contained in Appendix 3, along with a summary of the pressures and threats as documented in the Appropriate Assessment for the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan.

**Table 1: Relevant Habitat sites**

Name
Alde-Ore and Butley Estuaries SAC
Orfordness – Shingle Street SAC
Staverton Park and The Thicks, Wantisden SAC
Alde-Ore Estuary SPA
Deben Estuary SPA
Outer Thames Estuary SPA
Sandlings SPA
Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA
Hamford Water SPA
Hamford Water Ramsar
Alde-Ore Estuary Ramsar
Deben Estuary Ramsar
Stour and Orwell Estuaries Ramsar

## 3. Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.1 Westerfield Parish Council is producing a Neighbourhood Plan for Westerfield in order to set out the vision, objectives and policies for the development of the parish up to 2036, within the context of the Local Plan. This Habitats Regulations Assessment screening assessment reviews ‘Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan 2023-2036 Pre-Submission Draft Plan November 2023’.

- 3.2 The Neighbourhood Plan includes a range of policies covering the Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan area. A number of policies relate to the full Neighbourhood Plan area whilst others are area/location specific. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate specific sites for development.
- 3.3 The policies in the Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan are listed in Table 2 below. An assessment of whether each policy is likely to have a significant effect on Habitat sites is included in section 5 of this report.

**Table 2: List of Neighbourhood Plan policies**

WFD1	Landscape Buffer
WFD2	Sensitive Landscape
WFD3	Local Green Spaces
WFD4	Protection of Important Views
WFD5	Protection of Trees, Hedgerows and Natural Features
WFD6	Design Considerations
WFD7	Artificial Lighting
WFD8	Parish Services and Facilities
WFD9	Public Rights of Way

## 4. Other Plans and Projects

- 4.1 Regulation 105 of the 2017 Regulations (as amended) requires consideration to be given to whether a Plan will have an effect either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.
- 4.2 As noted in the introduction, the other key plan is the Local Plan. The Local Plan was adopted in September 2020. The Local Plan sets out the broad scale and distribution of development across the area of East Suffolk formerly covered by Suffolk Coastal District. This was subject to an Appropriate Assessment as part of its production.
- 4.3 Policy SCLP12.1 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan does not allocate a minimum housing figure to the Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan area, this is because Westerfield did not have a Neighbourhood Plan area designated at the time the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan was prepared. and the draft Neighbourhood Plan does not include any site allocation policies. The draft Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan policies interpret the strategy and policies of the local plan at a local level. The policies contained in the draft Westerfield

Neighbourhood Plan are proposed to provide locally specific policy for the determination of planning applications in compliance with the local plan's strategy.

- 4.4 A screening process considered each policy in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and concluded whether significant effects were likely and if an Appropriate Assessment was needed. The Appropriate Assessment subsequently considered the following themes - recreation pressure from new residential development, recreation pressure from tourism, urbanisation effects in close proximity, air quality from increased road traffic, water quality and resources and biodiversity net gain. Mitigation measures were identified within the Appropriate Assessment and were incorporated within the final Local Plan, resulting in a conclusion that the plan will not lead to any adverse effects on Habitat Sites within and in the vicinity of the (then) Suffolk Coastal District.
- 4.5 The (now superseded) 2013 Core Strategy was also previously subject to strategic level Appropriate Assessment which concluded that without mitigation there would be a significant effect on Habitat Sites, alone and in combination with other plans. The Appropriate Assessment of that Plan identified recreational disturbance particularly from dog walkers as the main significant effect. The Council subsequently produced a Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy and now requires payment towards mitigation of likely significant effects from residential developments within 13km of a Habitat Site. This approach continues to operate and was included within policies in the Local Plan, adopted in 2020.

## 5. Assessment of likely significant effects of the Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan on Habitat sites

- 5.1 Table 3 below considers each policy of the Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan in relation to whether there is potential for a likely significant effect on Habitat sites. This constitutes Stage 1 as set out under paragraph 1.4 above. Consideration is given to the characteristics and location of the protected sites. The policies are considered within the context of the Local Plan policies which they must be in general conformity with and which have themselves been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment, as set out in section 4 above.

**Table 3: Likely significant effects of the Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan**

Policy	Assessment of potential impact on Habitat sites	Habitat sites that could possibly be affected	Likely significant effect identified	AA needed?
WFD1: Landscape Buffer	<p>This policy identifies a landscape buffer to the north of the settlement boundary. The policy seeks to protect the open and undeveloped nature of the defined area in order to prevent settlement coalescence and minimise harm to designated heritage assets.</p> <p>The policy does not in itself promote development and builds on SCLP10.4: Landscape Character of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan. The Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Local Plan identified no likely significant effects from policy SCLP10.4. This policy has no direct impacts on Habitat sites and therefore no likely significant effects have been identified.</p>	None	None	No
WFD2: Sensitive Landscape	<p>This policy identifies a sensitive landscape area where the open and undeveloped nature of this area will be protected in order to protect the setting of the designated heritage assets to the north of the settlement boundary. The policy requires any proposals in this area to be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Heritage Impact Assessment.</p> <p>The policy does not in itself promote development and builds on SCLP10.4: Landscape Character of the Suffolk</p>	None	None	No



	Coastal Local Plan. The Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Local Plan identified no likely significant effects from policy SCLP10.4. This policy has no direct impacts on Habitat sites and therefore no likely significant effects have been identified.			
WFD3: Local Green Spaces	<p>This policy identifies and protects four Local Green Spaces.</p> <p>The supporting text highlights the contribution these open spaces make to the character and setting of the built environment in the Neighbourhood Plan area.</p> <p>The policy may have indirect positive effects on Habitat Sites by ensuring access to local green spaces, thereby reducing potential for increased pressure on Habitat Sites. Therefore no likely significant effects are identified.</p>	None	None	No
WFD4: Protection of Important Views	<p>This policy seeks to protect important views within and into and out of the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The accompanying map identifies 12 important views to be given particular protection.</p> <p>The policy does not in itself promote development and builds on SCLP10.4: Landscape Character of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan. The Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Local Plan identified no likely significant effects from policy SCLP10.4. This policy has no direct impacts on Habitat sites and therefore no likely significant effects have been identified.</p>	None	None	No

<p>WFD5: Protection of Trees, Hedgerows and Natural Features</p>	<p>This policy seeks to avoid the loss of, or substantial harm to, distinctive trees, hedgerows and other natural features such as ponds and watercourses. The policy also identifies wildlife corridors for protection. Where such losses or harm are unavoidable, the policy requires that the benefits of the development must outweigh the impacts, and that suitable mitigation measures are secured.</p> <p>The policy builds on SCLP10.1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan. The Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Local Plan identified Likely Significant Effects through the HRA screening for policy SCLP10.1. Full Appropriate Assessment was undertaken and mitigation incorporated into the Local Plan.</p> <p>Policy WFD5 does not promote development and contributes towards the principles of the enhancement of the wider environment and therefore no likely significant effects are identified.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>WFD6: Design Considerations</p>	<p>This policy sets out a number of design criteria for new development in the Neighbourhood Plan area in order to reflect the local characteristics and circumstances as identified in the Westerfield Design Guidelines and Codes and contribute to a high quality, safe and sustainable environment.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>No</p>

	The policy builds on SCLP11.1: Design Quality of the Local Plan. The Habitats Regulation Assessment of Policy SCLP11.1 concluded no likely significant effects. This policy will not have a direct effect on any Habitat Sites and no likely significant effects are identified.			
WFD7: Artificial Lighting	<p>The policy promotes dark skies and sets a number of criteria relating to the provision of artificial lighting within development schemes.</p> <p>The policy does not in itself promote development. This policy has no direct impacts on Habitat sites and therefore no likely significant effects have been identified.</p>	None	None	No
PFD8: Parish Services and Facilities	<p>This policy identifies 7 parish services and facilities for protection. Proposals for the enhancement of the identified facilities are generally supported through the policy, subject to there being no unacceptable impact on the natural and historic environment, infrastructure and the amenity of residents.</p> <p>The policy builds on SCLP8.1: Community Facilities and Assets of the Local Plan. The Habitats Regulation Assessment of Policy SCLP8.1 concluded no likely significant effects. This policy will not have a direct effect on any Habitat Sites and no likely significant effects are identified.</p>	None	None	No
WFD9: Public Rights of Way	This policy supports the improvement and extension of the existing Public Rights of Way network in the Neighbourhood Plan area. The policy also highlights the	None	None	No

	<p>potential value of existing Public Rights of Way as biodiversity corridors.</p> <p>The policy may have indirect positive effects on Habitat Sites by ensuring access to local recreation opportunities, thereby reducing potential for increased pressure on Habitat Sites. Therefore no likely significant effects are identified.</p>			
--	--	--	--	--

## 6. Summary and conclusions

- 6.1 The Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan will provide policies which will be used for determining planning applications alongside the Local Plan. It includes policies with locally specific criteria to be used for the determination of planning applications within the Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan area. The Plan does not allocate any land for development.
- 6.2 The Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to be in general conformity with the relevant policies in the East Suffolk Council- Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, September 2020.
- 6.3 Screening of the policies in the draft Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan has not identified any Likely Significant Effects on protected Habitat Sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.
- 6.4 Natural England were consulted on a draft of this Screening Statement as statutory nature conservation body and their comments are appended to this statement. Natural England agreed with the conclusion that the Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan will not lead to any Likely Significant Effects on protected Habitat Sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Signed: 

Dated: 25 July 2024

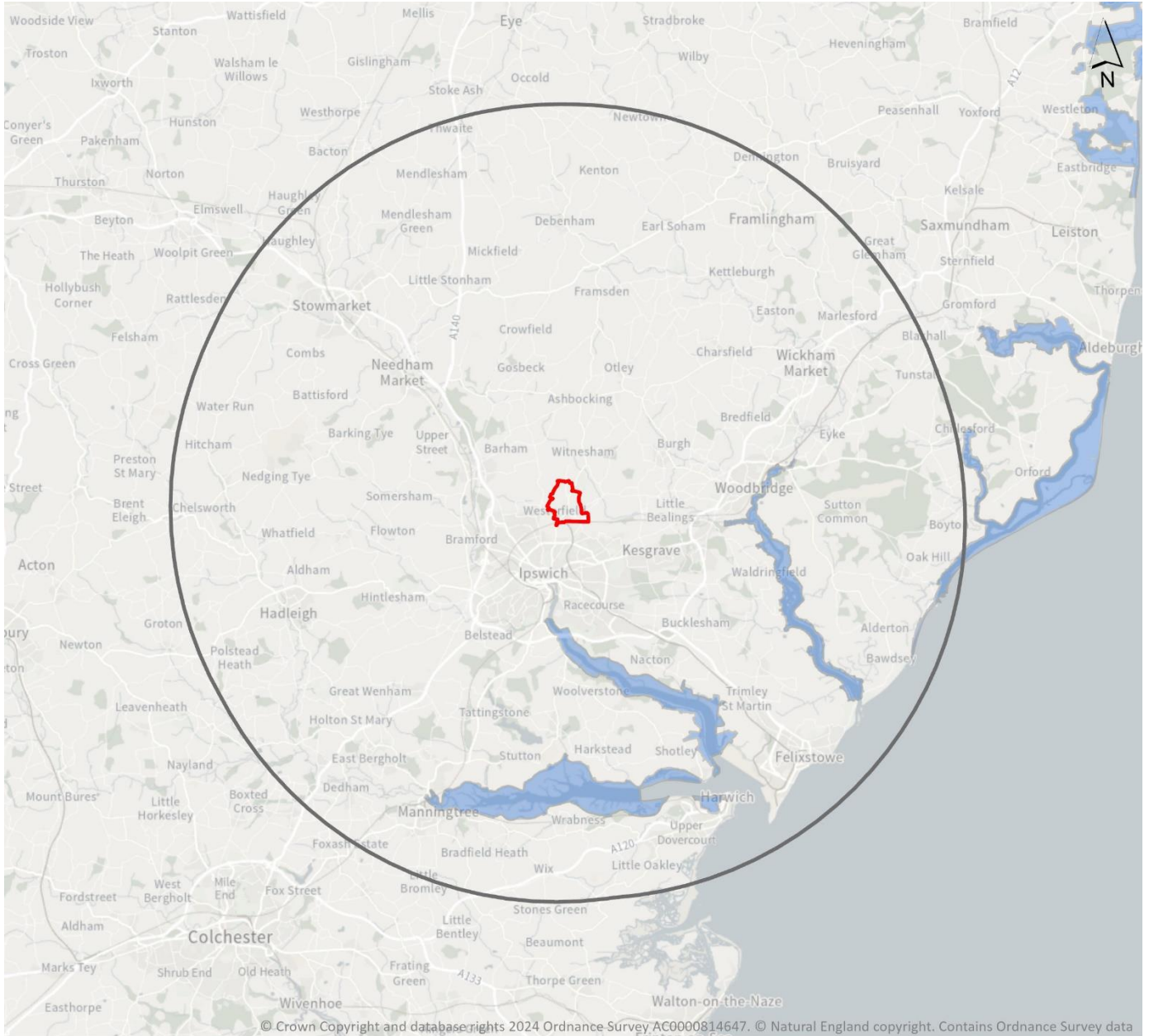
Andrea McMillan  
Planning Manager (Policy, Delivery and Specialist Services)  
East Suffolk Council

## Appendix 1: Sources of background information

- East Suffolk Council Suffolk Coastal Local Plan adopted September 2020
- Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan at Final Draft Plan stage (December 2018)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy for Ipswich Borough, Babergh District, Mid Suffolk District and East Suffolk Councils (May 2019)

## Appendix 2: Locations of Habitat sites

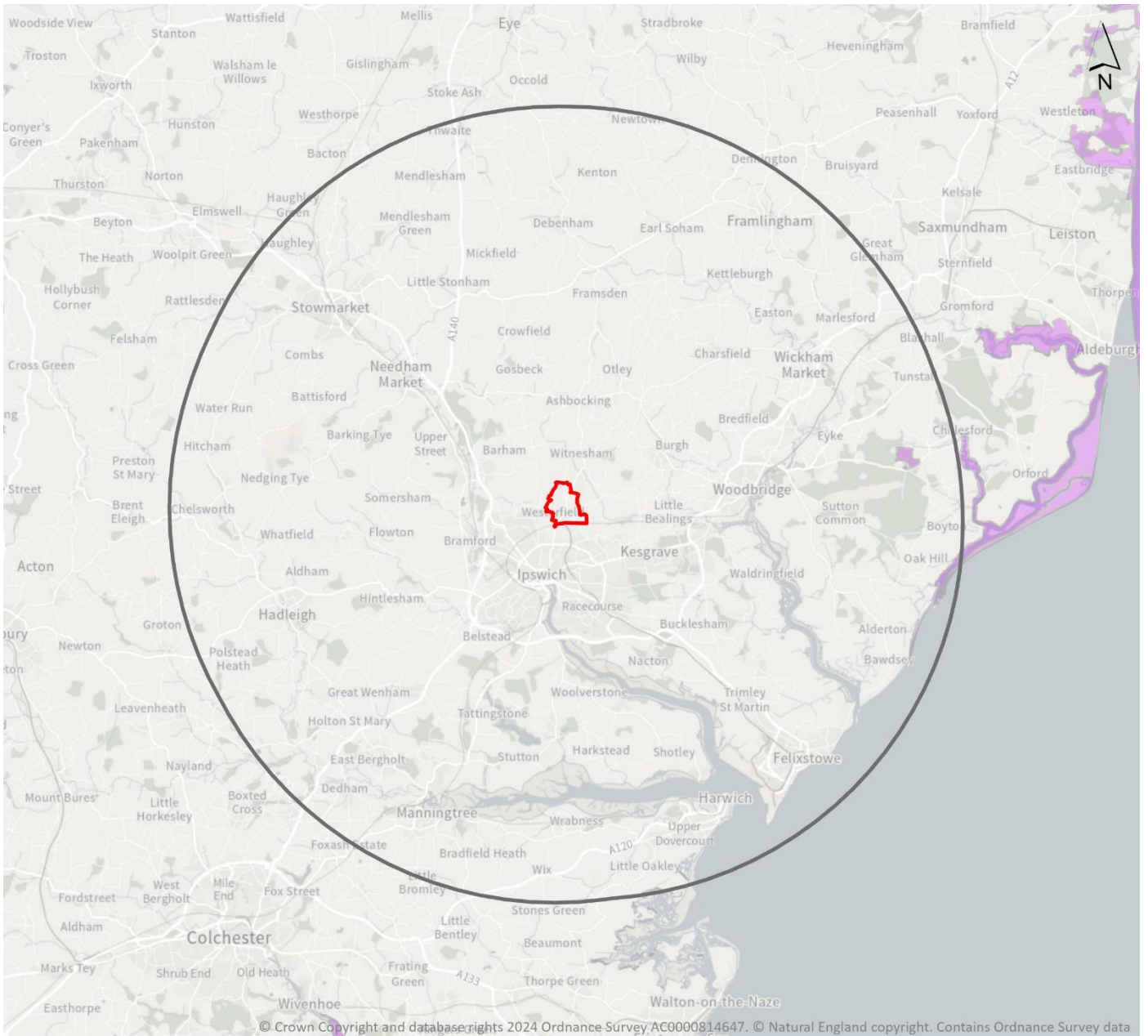
### Ramsar Sites



-  Westerfield Neighbourhood Area
-  20Km Buffer
-  Ramsar Sites



### Special Areas of Conservation

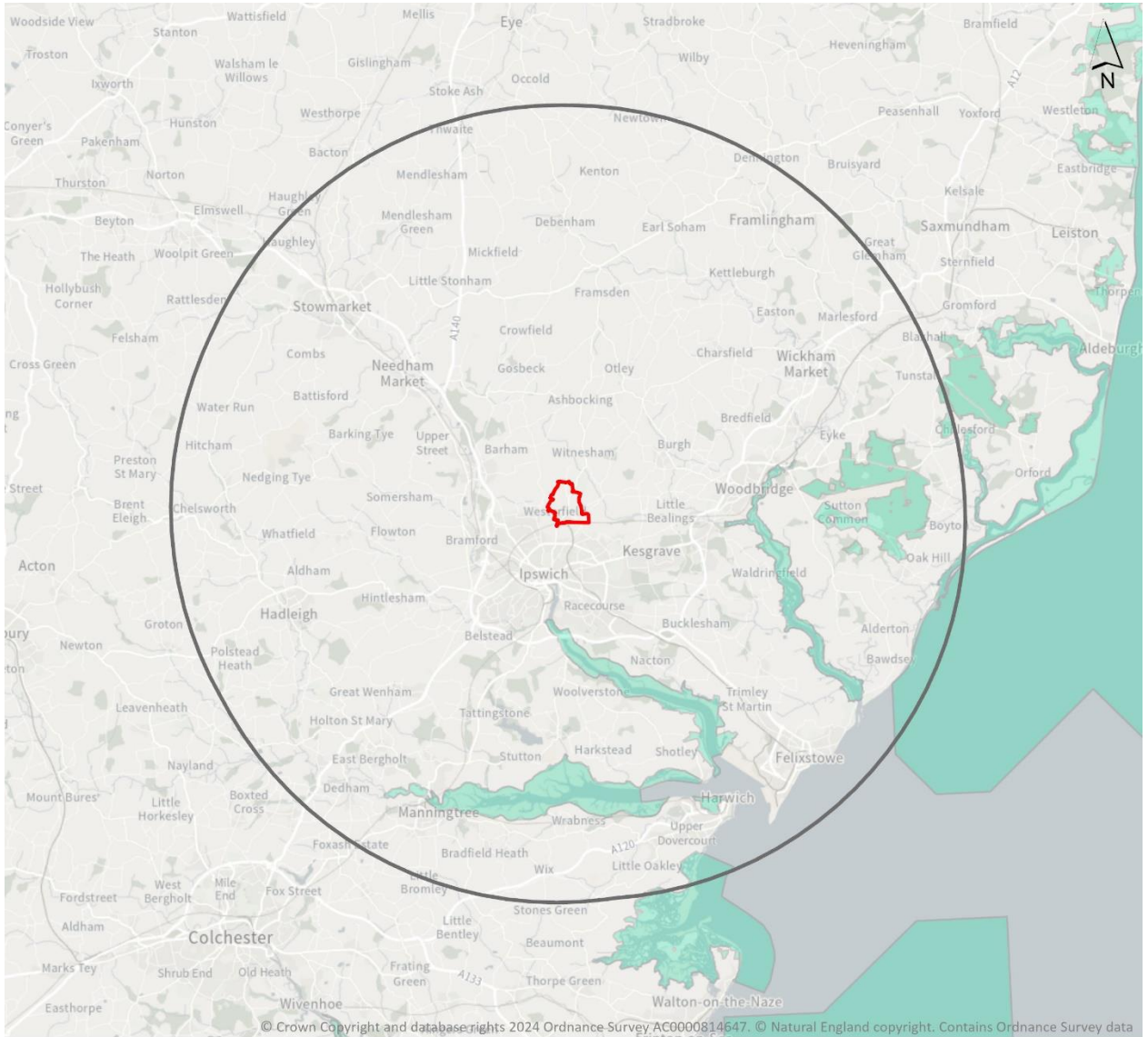





- Westerfield Neighbourhood Area
- 20Km Buffer
- Special Areas of Conservation

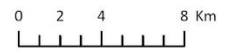




### Special Protection Areas



-  Westerfield Neighbourhood Area
-  20Km Buffer
-  Special Protection Areas



## Appendix 3: Relevant Habitat sites

Name	Qualifying features	Conservation Objectives	Pressure and threats (as summarised in the Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan at Final Draft Plan Stage (December 2018))
<b>Special Areas of Conservation</b>			
Alde-Ore and Butley Estuaries	H1130:Estuaries H1140: Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; Intertidal mudflats and sandflats H1330: Atlantic salt meadows	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features by maintaining or restoring: The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats; The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely.	Hydrological changes, public access/disturbance, inappropriate coastal management, coastal squeeze, inappropriate pest control, changes in species distributions, invasive species, air pollution, fisheries (commercial marine and estuarine) (Alde-Ore and Butley Estuaries SAC and Alde-Ore SPA)
Orfordness – Shingle Street	H1150: Coastal Lagoons H1210: Annual vegetation of drift lines H1220: Perennial vegetation of stony banks; Coastal shingle vegetation outside the reach of waves	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features by maintaining or restoring: The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats; The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; and	Not identified in Suffolk Coastal Final Draft Local Plan HRA.

		The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely.	
Staverton Park and The Thicks, Wantisden	H9190: Old acidophilous oak woods with <i>Quercus robur</i> on sandy plains; Dry oak-dominated woodland.	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features by maintaining or restoring: The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats; The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats; and The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely.	Woodland management, disease, atmospheric pollution.
Hamford Water	S4035. <i>Gortyna borelii lunata</i> ; Fisher's estuarine moth	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring; The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species; The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species; The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely; The populations of qualifying species, and, The distribution of qualifying species within the site.	Coastal squeeze, site management (scrub control), disturbance to breeding and overwintering birds, possible atmospheric air pollution issues
<b>Special Protection Areas</b>			
Alde-Ore Estuary (also Ramsar site)	A081: Eurasian marsh harrier (breeding)	Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and	Hydrological changes, public access/disturbance, inappropriate

	<p>A132: Pied avocet (non-breeding)  A132: Pied avocet (breeding)  A151: Ruff (non-breeding)  A162: Common redshank (non-breeding)  A183: Lesser black-backed gull (breeding)  A191: Sandwich tern (breeding)  A195: Little tern (breeding)</p>	<p>ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring:  The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;  The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;  The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;  The population of each of the qualifying features; and  The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</p>	<p>coastal management, coastal squeeze, inappropriate pest control, changes in species distributions, invasive species, air pollution, fisheries (commercial marine and estuarine)  (Alde-Ore and Butley Estuaries SAC and Alde-Ore SPA)</p>
<p>Deben Estuary  (also Ramsar site)</p>	<p>A046a: Dark bellied brent goose (non-breeding)  A132: Pied avocet (non-breeding)</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring:  The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;  The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;  The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;  The population of each of the qualifying features; and  The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</p>	<p>Coastal squeeze, disturbance to birds, water and air pollution.</p>
<p>Outer Thames Estuary</p>	<p>A001: Red-throated Diver (Non-breeding)  A195: Common Tern (Breeding)  A193: Little Tern (Breeding)</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving</p>	<p>Not identified in Suffolk Coastal Final Draft Local Plan HRA. SIP identifies fisheries.</p>

		<p>the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring:  The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;  The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;  The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;  The population of each of the qualifying features; and  The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</p>	
Sandlings	<p>A224: European nightjar (breeding)  A246: Woodlark (breeding)</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring:  The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;  The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;  The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;  The population of each of the qualifying features; and  The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</p>	<p>Changes in species distributions, inappropriate scrub control, deer, air pollution, public access/disturbance.</p>
Stour and Orwell Estuaries (also Ramsar site)	<p>A046a: Dark bellied brent goose (non-breeding)  A054: Northern pintail (non-breeding)  A132: Pied avocet (non-breeding)</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring:</p>	<p>Coastal squeeze, disturbance to birds, air pollution and new development.</p>

	<p>A141: Grey plover (non-breeding)  A143: Red knot (non-breeding)  A149: Dunlin (non-breeding)  A156: Black-tailed godwit (non-breeding)  A162: Common redshank (non-breeding)  Waterbird assemblage</p>	<p>The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;  The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;  The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;  The population of each of the qualifying features; and  The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</p>	
<p>Hamford Water  (also Ramsar site)</p>	<p>A046a Branta bernicla bernicla; Dark-bellied brent goose (Non-breeding)  A048 Tadorna tadorna; Common shelduck (Non-breeding)  A052 Anas crecca; Eurasian teal (Non-breeding)  A132 Recurvirostra avosetta; Pied avocet (Non-breeding)  A137 Charadrius hiaticula; Ringed plover (Non-breeding)  A141 Pluvialis squatarola; Grey plover (Non-breeding)  A156 Limosa limosa islandica; Black-tailed godwit (Non-breeding)  A162 Tringa totanus; Common redshank (Non-breeding)  A195 Sternula albifrons; Little tern (Breeding)</p>	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring:  The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;  The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;  The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;  The population of each of the qualifying features, and,  The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</p>	<p>Coastal squeeze, site management (scrub control), disturbance to breeding and overwintering birds, possible atmospheric air pollution issues</p>

# Appendix 4: Natural England Consultation Response

Date: 15 July 2024  
Our ref: 480610  
Your ref: [Click here to enter text.](#)



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

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Dear Laura Mundy

## **Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan**

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 28 June 2024 which was received by Natural England on 28 June 2024.

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

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

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

- **significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely; and,**
- **significant effects on Habitats sites<sup>1</sup>, either alone or in combination, are unlikely.**

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

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

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

---

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

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's [standing advice](#) on protected species.

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

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

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

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk)

Yours faithfully

Joanna Parfitt  
Norfolk and Suffolk Team