



Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Post Adoption Statement

November 2023

Introduction

Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely significant effects of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding or mitigating negative environmental effects and maximising positive effects.

SEA involves a series of procedural steps which are designed to meet the requirements of the SEA Regulations. The final step in the process involves preparing a 'statement' at the time a neighbourhood plan is 'made'. This SEA Post Adoption Statement addresses this under Part 4 of the SEA Regulations.

The SEA Adoption Statement includes information on:

- how environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Plan
- how the SA/SEA has been taken into account
- how the results of public consultation have been taken into account
- the reasons for choosing the made Plan, in light of the other reasonable alternatives, and
- how any significant sustainability/environmental effects of implementing the Plan will be monitored.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan

Wickham Market Parish Council, as the Qualifying Body, applied for Wickham Market Parish to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area under The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Neighbourhood Area was designated by (the former) Suffolk Coastal District Council on 12th January 2016.

The Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan was published by Wickham Market Parish Council for pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14) between 18th February 2019 and 1st April 2019. Following the submission of the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan (submission version) to East Suffolk Council the Plan was publicised and comments invited over a six-week period which closed on 21st December 2022.

East Suffolk Council, with the agreement of Wickham Market Parish Council, appointed an independent examiner to review the Plan and to consider whether it met the Basic Conditions required by legislation and whether it should proceed to Referendum. The Examiner's Report (received 28th June 2023) concluded that, subject to modifications identified in the Report, the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan met the basic conditions.

The referendum for the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan took place on Thursday 12th October 2023. Following a successful referendum result, the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' (adopted) by East Suffolk Council on 22nd November 2023. From this date the Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the Development Plan for the determination of planning applications in the neighbourhood plan area.

How environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Plan?

Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) of the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan has been conducted in such a way that it meets the requirements of the EU Strategic Environment Assessment Directives (including through EU exit legislation) and UK Government guidance on SEA.

As required by the regulations, SEA has been developed as an iterative process and has informed decision making in developing the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan.

The Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan proposed allocations of land for housing and so it was likely to have significant effects on the environment and therefore SEA was required. The SEA Scoping Report (dated April 2019) set out the context and baseline and set out a framework about how the full SEA should be undertaken. Subsequently, SEA was undertaken. This is contained in the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan Sustainability Report and SEA (July 2022).

All reports relating the SEA of the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan can be found at:

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-plans-in-the-area/wickham-market-neighbourhood-area/>

How the SA/SEA has been taken into account

Drawing on the review of the sustainability context and baseline, the Scoping Report (April 2019) identified a range of sustainability issues that should be a focus of the SEA for the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan. From this, an SEA framework was developed. The SEA Framework provides a methodological framework for the appraisal of likely significant effects of the plan on the baseline. The SEA Framework assessed each of the Neighbourhood Plan policies against the following criteria:

1. Preserve and enhance natural beauty
2. Protect the landscape setting
3. Ensure that housing addresses the need
4. Maximise potential and existing employment
5. Improve retail provision
6. Protect the identity through conserving heritage
7. Ensure the community has a healthy lifestyle
8. Provision of community facilities
9. Improve safety and sustainability of movement
10. Access to key community services

The reasonable alternative site options and spatial strategy alternatives were appraised against the SEA framework. The conclusions of this were used to inform the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan.

In light of the findings of the options appraisal, the sites identified for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan were Land at Old School Farm and Land at Simon's Cross.

How the results of public consultation have been taken into account

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive requires that the authorities referred to in article 6(3) shall be consulted when deciding upon the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the Environmental Report. In England the key bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England. Article 6(2) of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive requires the public to have an early and effective opportunity within appropriate timeframes to express their opinion on the draft plan or programme, and the accompanying Environmental Report, before the adoption of the plan or programme or its submission to the legislative procedure.

The Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England were consulted on the SEA Scoping Report and they were also consulted during respective public consultations throughout the Neighbourhood Plan process. A summary of representations to the Scoping Report consultation, along with how they have been considered, is set out in table 1.2 of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report incorporating SEA.

A report, summarising the consultation undertaken on the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan was published alongside the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The reasons for choosing the made Plan, in light of the other reasonable alternatives

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes 2004 (12) (2) requires environmental reports to examine reasonable alternatives for the plan or programme whilst taking into account the objectives and scope of the plan or programme.

The SEA of the Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan considered reasonable alternatives as detailed in the Sustainability Report Incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (July 2022).

There was an assessment of alternative levels of housing growth including: allocating housing that meets housing needs, allocating sites that do not meet full housing needs and allocating sites that exceed housing needs.

Four site options were also considered as reasonable alternatives for delivering Wickham Market's housing need:

- Option 1: Site 5b/6 Land west of Old School Farm, delivering up to 85 dwellings (preferred option).
- Option 2: Site 27 Simon's Cross Allotments, delivering up to 25 dwellings (preferred option).
- Option 3: Site 1b Land Adjacent to British Telecom telephone exchange, delivering up to 28 dwellings.
- Option 4: Site 18 Land opposite the Post Office High Street (very small site with capacity for one dwelling).

The appraisal of these options is fully set out in the Sustainability Report Incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment. The conclusion of the appraisal identifies Site 5b/6 (Land west of Old

School Farm) and Site 27 (Simon's Cross Allotments) as the preferred sites. These two site options were identified from the pool of 'Issues and Options' sites which the 2018 AECOM site assessment found to be potentially suitable for development, subject to mitigation of identified issues. The preferred residential sites performed most strongly in the SEA site assessment when tested against the reasonable alternatives.

The policies within the submission Neighbourhood Plan were cumulatively assessed under ten headings of the SEA Framework. The policies assessed had a range of impacts when assessed against the ten sustainability objectives in the SEA Framework. None of the impacts were likely to be significant due to the scale and limited area of proposed development. The effects of policies were identified as being largely positive. Those that were negative are not significant and are largely capable of mitigation. All policies have a positive effect when considered against the 'do nothing scenario', but none of these are significant. Even policies judged to have a neutral effect are positive when compared to the 'do nothing' scenario because they prevent the baseline situation from worsening. It is also considered that planning for the level of growth set out in the neighbourhood plan is the most sustainable when compared to reasonable alternatives.

How any significant sustainability/environmental effects of implementing the Plan will be monitored

Any significant environmental impacts would be monitored through the East Suffolk Council Authority Monitoring Report. However, given that no likely significant environmental effects have been identified, it is not considered that monitoring is necessary.